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MALAYSIA: MAIN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES AND BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH UKRAINE**Iryna Krupenya*****Abstract**

The article examines the main priorities of Malaysia's foreign policy and bilateral relations between Malaysia and Ukraine. It was established that in the first years of independence, the foreign policy of Malaysia was mainly in the wake of the foreign policy of the former Great Britain. It was emphasized that the foreign policy of Malaysia underwent the greatest fundamental changes during the rule of M. Mohammad, who served as prime minister twice (1981–2003), (2018–2021). It was established that the main priorities of Malaysia's foreign policy were pragmatism, guaranteeing political stability, readiness for modernization, creating a favourable investment climate, regional cooperation with ASEAN partners and strengthening relations with Muslim countries. Malaysia's current foreign policy priorities are determined by such key factors as its strategic location in the PSA, the country's positioning as a trading nation, as well as its unique demographics.

The article also analyses the current state of interstate relations (political, trade-economic, humanitarian, etc.) between Ukraine and Malaysia and the possibilities of their further development. It has been established that there are many opportunities for further development of mutually beneficial bilateral trade and sectoral cooperation. The position of Malaysia regarding the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine was separately investigated.

Keywords: ASEAN, bilateral cooperation, diplomacy, foreign policy, Malaysia, neutrality, peace, position, pragmatism, Russian-Ukrainian war, Southeast Asia (SEA), Ukraine, war

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**МАЛАЙЗІЯ: ГОЛОВНІ ПРІОРИТЕТИ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ
ТА ДВОСТОРОННІ ВІДНОСИНИ З УКРАЇНОЮ****Ірина Крупеня*****Анотація**

У статті досліджено головні пріоритети зовнішньої політики Малайзії та двосторонні відносини між Україною. Констатовано, що в перші роки незалежності зовнішня політика Малайзії перебувала переважно в руслі зовнішньої політики колишньої Великобританії. Наголошено, що найбільших принципових змін зовнішня політика Малайзії зазнала під час урядування М. Мохаммада, який двічі обіймав посаду прем'єр-міністра (1981–2003), (2018–2021). Встановлено, що основними пріоритетами зовнішньої політики Малайзії були прагматичність, гарантування політичної стабільності, готовність до модернізації, створення сприятливого інвестиційного клімату, регіональне співробітництво з партнерами АСЕАН і зміцненні відносин з мусульманськими країнами. Сучасні зовнішньополітичні пріоритети Малайзії визначаються такими ключовими факторами як стратегічне розташування в ПСА, позиціонуванні країни як торгової нації, а також її унікальної демографії.

У статті проаналізовано також сучасний стан міждержавних зв'язків (політичні, торгово-економічні, гуманітарні тощо) між Україною й Малайзією та можливості їх подальшого розвитку. Встановлено, що є чимало можливостей для продовження розвитку взаємовигідної двосторонньої торгівлі та секторальної співпраці. Окремо досліджено позицію Малайзії щодо загарбницької війни Російської Федерації проти України.

Ключові слова: АСЕАН, війна, двостороння співпраця, дипломатія, зовнішня політика, Малайзія, мир, нейтралітет, Південно-Східна Азія (ПСА), позиція, прагматизм, російсько-українська війна, Україна

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«Malaysia – the Flower of Southeast Asia»

Formulation of the problem of the research. Malaysia – is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country in Southeast Asia and one of the wealthiest and most developed countries, outranked in GNP only by Singapore and oil-rich Brunei. The Federation of Malaya became an independent country on 31 August 1957. On 16 September 1963, the federation was enlarged by the accession of Singapore, Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) and Sarawak. The name “Malaysia” was adopted from that date. Singapore left the federation on 9 August 1965. Malaysia is a federation of 13 states, 9 of which are headed by traditional

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Malay rulers of royal descent (sultans), and three federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Labuan Island). The country's political system is a constitutional monarchy based on the British Westminster parliamentary system. The representative head of state is the sultan. The sultan is chosen every five years from the ranks of the rulers of the nine Sultanates (according to the principle of rotation). The executive power of Malaysia is vested in the cabinet led by the prime minister, who is the head of government.

The peculiarity of the country's economy is that being traditionally commodity-oriented, it underwent a period of transformation to an industrial type, and then to a post-industrial one (oriented, primarily, to the development of the service sector) in a relatively short period of time. The transition from an agrarian to an industrial-oriented economy in Malaysia took place in less than two decades. The main sectors of the economy: the service sector (58% of GDP, the basis of which is information and telecommunication services, wholesale and retail sales, and finance and insurance), industry (22%), mining industry (8%), agriculture (6.5%) and construction (4.5%)¹. Malaysia is the world's number eight producer of electronic chips and microcircuits². In June 2022 the Semicon Southeast Asia chip industry hosted conference in the Malaysian city of Penang to celebrate Penang's reputation as the Silicon Valley of the East. Among others, US giant Intel announced in December 2022 it will invest \$7 bn into the city to build a new chip-packaging and testing factory, creating 9000 jobs. The president of the Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association Datuk Seri Wong Siew Hai explained reasons why Malaysia attractive to investors – a stable government, compared to other countries; the country's experience and technical expertise: English and Chinese language skills³.

Thereby due to its pragmatic foreign policy, political stability, and the creation of a favourable investment climate, Malaysia is considered one of the successful post-industrial countries of the Southeast Asian subregion, which makes it interesting for detailed research and study⁴.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The outlined research topic is extremely relevant for Ukraine because Malaysia has made a powerful economic breakthrough in a short period of time and turned from a poor colonial country into a prosperous state with a high standard of living of the population. The Malaysian experience of modernizing the economy thanks to a wise and pragmatic foreign policy could serve as an example for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. In Ukraine, studies devoted to the domestic and foreign policy of Malaysia appeared relatively recently. For the first time in

¹ Малайзія. *Посольство України в Малайзії*. 2023. URL: <https://malaysia.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo>

² Cheema R. Top 10 Semiconductor Manufacturing Countries in the World. 2022. URL: <https://yhoo.it/4oesZnA>; Semiconductor Manufacturing by Country. 2023. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/semiconductor-manufacturing-by-country>

³ Malaysia chips in to global industry. *fDi Intelligence*. 2022. URL: <https://www.fdiintelligence.com/content/feature/malaysia-chips-in-to-global-industry-8o853>

⁴ Крупеня І.М. Еволюція зовнішньополітичних пріоритетів Малайзії (1957–2022 рр.). *Політологічний вісник: збірник наукових праць* / голов. ред. В.Ф. Цвих; Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка. 2022. Випуск 89. С. 214–231. URL: <https://zpv.knu.ua/index.php/pb/article/view/157>

Ukraine, Iryna Krupenya began to investigate the evolution of foreign policy priorities of Malaysia as one of the leaders of the countries of the Southeast Asian subregion and the Islamic world⁵. I. Lossovskiy, First-Class Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine highlighted the Malaysian foreign policy from colonial dependence to regional leadership⁶. The current state of interstate relations between Ukraine and Malaysia and the possibilities of their further development are analyzed in Serhiy Koshoviy's research⁷. Some aspects of the research topic are reflected in the scientific publications of N. Horodnia⁸ and S. Shergin⁹.

The purpose of research is to investigate the main foreign policy priorities of Malaysia which helped transform the country into a post-industrial society and bilateral relations between Ukraine.

Main research results. Modern Malaysia was formed on the basis of dynamic foreign political relations with Great Britain, at least in the first years of independence. Malaysia's history explains the reason for such ties, which lies in its colonial dependence on Great Britain; large British capital in the economy; the presence of a powerful British military contingent on the territory of Malaysia and unwillingness to conduct an independent defense and foreign policy; significant ideological influence of the former metropolis; a significant number of British citizens who remained to work in the state apparatus; absence or shortage of national personnel – experts in foreign policy, limited financial resources and other opportunities.

Malaysia's foreign policy underwent the greatest fundamental changes during the reign of the country's fourth prime minister, Mahathir Mohammad (1981–2003). Although its main directions, goals and principles remained unchanged, it acquired an increasingly pragmatic and economic orientation, characterized by persistent efforts to protect its own rights and interests. One of the main external priorities of Malaysia at that time was the development of South–South cooperation, the active development of bilateral relations with ASEAN partners and the strengthening of relations with Muslim countries. The first years under the power of Prime Minister M. Mohammad were marked by the deterioration of relations with Great Britain. In Malaysia, London's decision to raise tuition fees at British universities for about 16,000 Malaysian students since 1981 was sharply negative. At the

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Лоссовський І.Є. Зовнішня політика Малайзії: від колоніальної залежності до регіонального лідерства. *Зовнішні справи*. 2010. № 1. С. 34–37; № 2. С. 10–13; Lossovskiy I. Some elements of strategy and prospects of Ukraine's relations with the countries of the East Asian region. *Ukraine Analytica*. 2019. URL: <https://ukraine-analytica.org/some-elements-of-strategy-and-prospects-of-ukraines-relations-with-the-countries-of-the-east-asian-region/>

⁷ Кошовий С. Пріоритетні завдання та механізми розвитку відносин України з Малайзією на сучасному етапі. *Україна дипломатична*. 2020. Випуск XX. С. 539–560. URL: <http://ud.gdip.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/57.pdf>

⁸ Городня Н.Д. АСЕАН як модель регіональної взаємодії держав Південно–Східної Азії. *Гілея: науковий вісник*. 2015. Вип. 99. С. 109–113.

⁹ Шергін С.О. “Золотий” ювілей АСЕАН: досягнення і проблеми розвитку. *Зовнішні справи*. 2017. № 9. С. 5–10.

same time, Great Britain expressed disagreement with the Malaysian government's efforts to strengthen control over the country's natural resources, perceiving it as a covert nationalization. In this situation, the Malaysian leader introduced strict restrictions on the purchase of goods from the UK and the conclusion of contracts with British campaigns. Each such contract required special approval from the Malaysian government. This policy was called "Buy British last". Only M. Mohammad's visit to London in 1983 and his negotiations with the British Prime Minister M. Thatcher somewhat eased the tension in relations between the countries. Under conditions of worsening relations with the former metropolis, the Malaysian Prime Minister, seeking to use the experience of economic development of such successful countries as Japan and South Korea, announced a new foreign policy initiative – "Face to the East", which provided for the deepening of relations and intensive development of cooperation with these countries.

In the 1980s, the Malaysian government initiated independent foreign policy priorities, taking into account the favourable geopolitical situation in the region, in particular: rethinking views on relations with China and establishing diplomatic relations in May 1974; emphasis was placed on regionalism and diversification of investment following the fall of the Saigon regime of South Vietnam and the reunification of that country in 1975, which effectively ended the American military presence in the Southeast Asian subregion and no longer had to choose between communist and capitalist ideologies; emphasis was placed on the national development of one's own state.

During the years of stay in power of the next prime ministers of Malaysia, the foreign policy initiatives were clarified and refined. Among the most notable, the following can be singled out: formation of pragmatic responses to modern geopolitical and economic challenges; a more comprehensive and scientific approach to the formulation of Malaysia's official position on one or another international issue; establishing personal contacts with colleagues from ASEAN countries; to play a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement, OIC and ASEAN; activation of bilateral cooperation with China; formulation of the concept of Islam Hadhari, positioning of Malaysia as a leading example of a progressive and tolerant Islamic state; the noticeable intensification of the Malaysian-American dialogue under the administration of Najib Tun Razak; introducing a massive transformation of the country through the concepts of "One Malaysia", "Serving the People Today", Government Transformation Programme, New Economic Model, "Malaysia Moving Forward"¹⁰.

The current priorities of Malaysia's foreign policy are determined by a number of factors, in particular, dynamic and inevitable changes in the external and security environment, the main of which are: that ASEAN is becoming an arena for major power competition in which its member states may become proxies of major powers; the US-China trade tensions; unresolved territorial disputes between the countries of the SEA subregion; increased military tensions arising from potential flashpoints i.e. South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, Korean Peninsula; maritime security and issues of freedom of

¹⁰ Крупеня І. Еволюція зовнішньополітичних пріоритетів Малайзії (1957–2022 рр.)...

navigation; Islamic and international terrorism; cyber threats; illegal migration; unemployment and economic recession, climate change and more intense and frequent weather events like droughts, floods, cyclones, rising sea level; an increase in energy and food prices due the invasion of Ukraine by Russia¹¹.

Malaysia continues to pursue an independent, principled, and pragmatic foreign policy which values was laid by Mahathir Mohammad. The overarching thrust of modern foreign policy has been to safeguard Malaysia's sovereignty and national interests as well as to contribute meaningfully towards a just and equitable community of nations through the conduct of effective diplomacy. At the same time, the Malaysia's foreign policy is largely influenced and shaped by three key factors, namely its strategic location in Southeast Asia, its attributes as a trading nation as well as its unique demography.

ASEAN remains the cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy and the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015 has significantly elevated Malaysia's approach and engagement at the regional level. Concurrently strengthening bilateral and multilateral aspects of Malaysia's engagement with the world will continue to be an important focus. The nation's well-being is founded on the strong and friendly relations with other countries and its commitment to the multilateral system. Malaysia continues to promote a forward-looking and pragmatic foreign policy that facilitates trade, attracts foreign investment as well as projects Malaysia as a stable and peaceful country. As a member of the UN, Malaysia is fully committed to multilateralism in advancing global peace, security, and prosperity. Malaysia's record in peacekeeping operations under the UN is a testimony of its dedication in carrying out the mandate of the international community in advancing global peace and security. At the UN and other international fora, Malaysia will continue to actively participate in the deliberations and efforts toward finding solutions to various global issues. Malaysia will continue with the principles of engagement and cooperation rather than isolationism and unilateral action.

In terms of technical cooperation with other developing countries, Malaysia has worked with other countries through the sharing of its experience and knowledge through various foreign policy mechanisms, namely: the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), the Langkawi International Dialogue, bilateral humanitarian assistance, public diplomacy programmes.

As a country with a large Muslim majority, Malaysia also gives importance to the solidarity of the Ummah and the spirit of cooperation among the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Malaysia engages actively in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth, Group of Seventy Seven (G77), Developing Eight (D8), Asia Middle East Dialogue (AMED), Far East Asia Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

¹¹ The State of Southeast Asia: 2023 Survey Report. *The ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, Singapore. 2023. URL: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-State-of-SEA-2023-Final-Digital-V4-09-Feb-2023.pdf>

Malaysia actively promotes the South-South Cooperation among the developing countries and the Muslim world and at the same time Malaysia also advocates the “Prosper thy neighbour” policy to enhance economic relations and cooperation with its neighbouring countries through Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-the Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) and other entities.

The defining principles that will guide Malaysia in conducting its own foreign policy in the future are respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the affairs of other nations; peaceful settlement of disputes; peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit in relations¹².

Determining documents in the field of foreign policy are Diplomatic and Consular Officers (Oaths and Fees) Act 1959 (Revised 1988) [Act 348]; Diplomatic Privileges (Vienna Convention) Act 1966 [Act 636]; Consular Relations (Vienna Convention) Act 1999 [Act 595]; Foreign Representative (Privileges and Immunities) Act 1967 (Revised 1995) [Act 541]; International Organisations (Privileges and Immunities) Act 1992 [Act 485]; and Chemical Weapons Convention Act 2005 [Act 641].

In addition, the Federal Constitution allows Parliament to make laws related to external affairs that include: treaties, agreements and conventions with other countries; implementation of treaties, agreements and conventions with other countries; diplomatic, consular and trade representation; international organisations; participation in international bodies and implementation of decisions taken thereat; extradition, fugitive offenders; admission into, and emigration and expulsion from, the Federation; passports, visas, permits of entry or other certificates, quarantine; foreign and extra-territorial jurisdiction; and pilgrimage to places outside Malaysia¹³.

The main functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are uphold, protect and promote Malaysia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interests; monitor and analyse regional and global developments; develop foreign policy and advise the Government on international affairs; coordinate and lead the Government’s position on international issues with other Ministries and Agencies; facilitate other Ministries and Agencies in their international engagements; articulate and advocate the Government’s foreign policy and positions; and provide consular services and assistance¹⁴.

The main strategic thrusts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are strengthen and consolidate bilateral diplomacy; engage effectively in multilateral diplomacy; proactive role in ASEAN; uphold sovereignty and integrity of maritime areas; provide effective and timely

¹² Malaysia’s Foreign Policy. *Official Portal the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia*. 2023. URL: <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/foreign-policy>

¹³ Legal Framework. *Official Portal the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia*. 2023. URL: <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/legal-framework>

¹⁴ Roles and Function. *Official Portal the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia*. 2023. URL: <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/role-function>

services to the Ministry's stakeholders and clients; effective strategic communication and public diplomacy; strive for excellence in human capital¹⁵.

In the first decades of Ukrainian state formation, there was no great interest of Ukrainian political scientists and experts in researching the main priorities of Malaysia's foreign policy and bilateral relations between Ukraine. This was due to the geographical remoteness of the country and the declared desire of Ukraine to join the European civilizational space. Today, we observe the existing disposition of the leadership of Ukraine to expand dialogue and cooperation with Malaysia in all spheres. And the tragic event on July 17, 2014, in the sky over Ukraine, when an airliner of "Malaysian Airlines" was shot down by "the Buk complex" by servicemen of the 53rd Kursk anti-aircraft missile brigade of the Russian Armed Forces, influenced the increase in the attention of bilateral cooperation¹⁶.

Malaysia is one of Ukraine's important partners in the Southeast Asian region. It should be recalled that Malaysia was one of the first countries to recognize independent Ukraine in 1992. On March 3, 2012, both countries celebrated the 20th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations. Over the past two decades, Ukraine and Malaysia have established friendly bilateral relations and mutually beneficial cooperation within the framework of international organizations, primarily in the UN and its specialized agencies.

In the period from August 3 to 5, 2016, the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko made the first official visit of the Ukrainian Head of State to Malaysia. As part of the visit, the President of Ukraine held meetings and negotiations with the Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Tun Razak, the Defense Minister of Malaysia Hishammuddin Hussein, visited the national oil and gas company of Malaysia Petrolam Nasional Berhad (PETRONAS), the headquarters of the MATRADE Corporation, where he spoke to representatives of Malaysian and Ukrainian companies within the framework of the two-day Ukrainian-Malaysian business forum.

On September 20, 2016, during the 71st session of the UN General Assembly, a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Joint Group to Investigate the MH-17 plane crash took place in New York, which was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Malaysia (Klimkin P.A., Anifa Aman). And exactly one year later, in New York during the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Australia, the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Government of Malaysia, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Government of Ukraine regarding political support for the criminal prosecution of those responsible for the downing of flight MH17 on July 17, 2014. On October 29, 2019, the first round of political consultations was held in Malaysia at the level of the leadership of the foreign ministries of

¹⁵ Strategic Thrusts. *Official Portal the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia*. 2023. URL: <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/strategic-objectives>

¹⁶ Кошовий С. Пріоритетні завдання та механізми розвитку відносин України з Малайзією...

the two states. On October 30, 2019, a deputy group of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on inter-parliamentary relations with Malaysia was formed¹⁷.

Ukraine remains one of the important trading partners of Malaysia among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. During 2021–2022, positive dynamics of bilateral trade were recorded. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the export of goods from Ukraine to Malaysia amounted to \$33,722.5, import to Ukraine \$26,349.4. The positive balance for Ukraine is \$7,373.1. Despite the existing trade turnover, in which there is a tendency to increase the positive balance, the range of trade operations between the countries remains quite limited. The structure of Ukrainian–Malaysian trade is dominated by the supply of raw materials and finished products. In 2022, the main product groups of Ukrainian exports included ferrous metals, base metals, cereals, sunflower oil, vegetables, dairy products, eggs, honey. Instead, the basis of the import structure of Malaysian goods were electrical machinery, rubber, rubber, furniture, palm oil, essential oils, cocoa and its products, grain products, other food products, etc.¹⁸.

There is no agreement on a free trade zone between Ukraine and Malaysia. At the same time, the Trade Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia, signed on August 19, 2002 (entered into force on July 5, 2003), creates a sufficient legal framework for regulating economic relations between the countries. In particular, Article 3 of this Agreement envisages providing the parties with the regime of greatest assistance in relation to all issues of customs regulation and foreign trade formalities regarding the import and/or export of products in accordance with WTO rules.

On the export of goods, the Malaysian Customs applies a customs tariff of 0 to 10 percent under the “ad valorem” system. According to the Customs Law of 1976, for goods that were imported into the country for the purpose of further re-export, the amount of paid export duty is subject to a refund of up to 90%. Enterprises operating in free economic and industrial zones can import raw materials, products, and production equipment without paying customs duties. There are currently in Malaysia 13 Free Industrial Zones (FIZ) and 12 Free Economic Zones (FCZ).

Since July 18, 2012, Malaysia has observer status in the Government Procurement Committee of the World Trade Organization. Exporters need to consider the feasibility of using a local distributor or agent to enter the Malaysian market. A local distributor is usually responsible for learning about tender procedures, customer negotiations, customs clearance, relationships with established wholesalers/retailers, marketing the product directly to large corporations or the government, and providing after-sales service.

To participate in the process of government (public) procurement in Malaysia, foreign companies must establish a local subsidiary and register it in the Ministry of Finance of Malaysia or have a local consulting firm (agent) as a partner. Individual foreign consultants may also be directly appointed where the value of the services does not exceed RM500,000. In addition, it should be noted that in public procurement by the Malaysian

¹⁷ Малайзія. Посольство України в Малайзії. 2023. URL: <https://malaysia.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo>

¹⁸ Державна служба статистики України. 2023. URL: <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

Government, Government Linked Companies (GLC) or procurement in priority sectors of the economy, preference is given to local agents and/or joint ventures classified as Bumiputera companies. A Bumiputera company must meet the following criteria: incorporated under the Companies Act 1965; the paid-up capital is not less than RM25,000; 100% of shareholders are ethnic Malays (Bumiputra); the composition of the board of directors, management, professional and support staff is more than 51% Bumiputra. At the same time, the Malaysian government uses compensation and other measures to encourage technology transfer, especially in defense procurement¹⁹.

Ukrainian-Malaysian cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian sphere before the introduction of restrictive measures on the entry of foreigners into Malaysia in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic was in positive dynamics, in particular in the field of tourism. So, in 2018, the number of travelers from Ukraine was about 14,500, in 2019 – about 16,000, in 2020, before the introduction of restrictive measures on the entry of foreigners to Malaysia on March 18 due to the COVID-19 pandemic – about 6,000. After the lifting of restrictions on entry to Malaysia, the tourist flow is gradually recovering.

The Embassy of Ukraine in Malaysia conducts systematic work in the humanitarian direction of cooperation. In particular, in 2020–2021, on the Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People, the National News Agency of Malaysia Bernama published articles that gained wide publicity both in Malaysia and abroad. On Flag Day and Independence Day of Ukraine in 2021, the telecommunications tower KL Tower in the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, was illuminated with the colours of the Ukrainian flag. In 2022, the Saloma Bridge in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the telecommunication tower in Alor Setar, were illuminated in blue and yellow colours.

In October 2020, the Ukrainian-Slovak film “Mezha” was presented as part of the «EU Film Festival». This is the first Ukrainian-made film that was presented in the format of this festival in Malaysia. Given the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival was held online. In 2021, the Ukrainian animated film “Mykyta Kozhumyaka” was presented at the festival. In 2022, a Ukrainian film was shown for the first time at the opening ceremony of the “EU Film Festival”. Screenings of the Ukrainian film “Storozhova Zastava” were also held as part of the festival.

In September 2022, the Charge d’Affaires of Ukraine and the Ambassador of the European Union to Malaysia held a joint lecture at the University of Malaya. The embassy is working to involve the Ukrainian community in Malaysia as widely as possible in events related to the history and culture of Ukraine. So, on November 17, 2018, Embassy employees, family members, and the Ukrainian community in Malaysia joined the global campaign to honor the victims of the Holodomor “Let’s light a memorial candle”, since then this event has been held annually²⁰.

¹⁹ Торговельно-економічне співробітництво між Україною та Малайзією. *Посольство України в Малайзії*. 2023. URL: <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

²⁰ Культурно-гуманітарне співробітництво між Україною та Малайзією. *Посольство України в Малайзії*. 2023. URL: <https://malaysia.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/463-kulturno-gumanitarne-spivrobitnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-malajizijeju>

Since October 2018, Ukraine has received the status of a strategic partner and recipient country of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program, which opens significant opportunities for a new form of bilateral cooperation, in particular by sending Ukrainian specialists of various profiles for internships and studies into Malaysia. The purpose of the Program is the development of human resources by providing opportunities for training in various areas that are important for the development of the country, such as state administration, public administration, diplomacy, health care, education, sustainable development, agriculture, poverty alleviation, investment promotion, IT, banking, etc. The program provides more than 100 short-term specialized courses in 79 educational institutions, many of which are centers of excellence in the field of personnel training. According to the areas of activity, the courses are conducted through almost 50 institutions and departments – National Institute of Public Administration, Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Central Bank of Malaysia, Palm Oil Board of Malaysia, Department of Fisheries, Customs Academy, Fire Service, Department of Civil Aviation, etc.²¹.

The legal framework of Ukrainian-Malaysian relations covers a wide range of different spheres. As of Mai 2023, there are nine international treaties signed: Agreement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, 1992; Trade Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia, 2002; Protocol between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia on mutual access to markets of goods and services, 2004; Memorandum of Understanding between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia on Cooperation in the Defence Sphere, 2007; Agreement between Ukraine and Malaysia on the deployment of Malaysian personnel to Ukraine following the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, 2014; Agreement between Ukraine and Malaysia on prolongation of the Agreement between Ukraine and Malaysia on the deployment of Malaysian personnel to Ukraine following the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, 2016; Treaty between Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, 2016; Treaty between Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia on Extradition, 2016; Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, 2016 (entered into force on December 29, 2021). On 12th April 2021 the Treaty between Ukraine and the Government of Malaysia on the International Transfer of Prisoners was signed. Ratification of the Treaty is under way. The Treaty will be effective after ratification is fulfilled. Under consideration: drafts intergovernmental agreements on Cooperation in Education, on Visa-Free regime, and on Tourism²².

²¹ Співробітництво у галузі освіти і науки. *Посольство України в Малайзії*. 2023. URL: <https://malaysia.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/465-naukovo-tehnichne-spivrobitnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-malajzijeju>

²² Договірні-правова база українсько-малайзійських відносин. *Посольство України в Малайзії*. 2023. URL: <https://malaysia.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/461-dogovirno-pravova-baza-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-malajzijeju>

An analysis of the official position of Malaysia regarding the condemnation of the brutal war may be compared with the policy of a «toothless tiger». Malaysia Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said that “the best possible settlement to resolve the conflict could be a peaceful eventuate”²³. At the same time, during the vote on March 2, 2022 for UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1 regarding the condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the demand for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops and the cancellation of the decision to recognize the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, Malaysia voted “for”. Thus, Malaysia supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the absolute observance of international law in relations between countries²⁴.

Conclusions. Malaysia is a unique country in the subregion of Southeast Asia, which, thanks to the right emphasis and pragmatic foreign policy, was able to transform from an agrarian country to a post-industrial one in a fairly short time. This “jump” in economic development owes a lot to the following priorities in foreign policy: pragmatism in the foreign policy that facilitated trade, attracted foreign investment; guaranteeing political stability; readiness for modernization; creation of a favourable investment climate; regional cooperation with ASEAN partners; trade and economic cooperation with the USA; rethinking views on relations with China; promotion of the South-South cooperation among the developing countries; advocating the “Prosper thy neighbour” policy to enhance economic relations and cooperation with its neighbouring countries through Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-the Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) and other entities; strengthening relations with Muslim countries and cooperation with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. At the same time the Malaysia’s foreign policy is largely influenced and shaped by three key factors, namely its strategic location in Southeast Asia, its attributes as a trading nation as well as its unique demography. As a member of the UN, Malaysia is fully committed in adherence of principles of international law and will continue with the principles of engagement and cooperation rather than isolationism and unilateral action. In terms of technical cooperation with other developing countries, Malaysia has worked with other countries through the sharing of its experience and knowledge through various foreign policy mechanisms which mentioned above. Participation of Malaysia in the Non-Aligned Movement partly explained its neutral official position toward Russian aggression into Ukraine. This position reminds the policy of a «toothless tiger».

In the context of bilateral cooperation Malaysia is one of Ukraine’s important partners in the Southeast Asian region. Today, the leadership of Ukraine is willing to expand dialogue and cooperation with Malaysia in all spheres. Given the Russian-Ukrainian war and the state Ukraine is in, the following should be the main priorities of Ukrainian foreign policy within the framework of relations with Malaysia: activation of political

²³Joanne Lin Is ASEAN a toothless tiger in the face of Ukraine crisis? *Asialink*. 2022. URL: <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/is-asean-a-toothless-tiger-in-the-face-of-ukraine-crisis>

²⁴Aggression against Ukraine. *United Nations. Digital Library*. 2022. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220303094544/https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3959039>

contacts with Malaysian politicians in order to explain the real situation in Ukraine to ensure political support for Ukraine on the international arena in the context of the Russian Federation's long-term aggression against Ukraine; strengthening of economic cooperation between countries; expansion of the legal framework of bilateral relations with Malaysia; take measures to prevent the spread of Russian propaganda and the involvement of humanitarian aid for the needs of Ukraine; support Volodymyr Zelenskyy's 10-point Peace formula, which was first voiced at the G20 summit, held in Indonesia in November 2022 to restore of territorial integrity of Ukraine; strengthen bilateral cooperation in the military-technical sphere; the inclusion of Malaysia in the International Contact Group for the Defense of Ukraine («Ramstein» coalition) for the joint victory of the aggressor; encourage academic exchanges, strengthen scientific cooperation in order to inform the scientific circles of Malaysia about the situation in Ukraine and about the consequences of Putin's war; promote the mutual provision of trade privileges and liberalization of the movement of specialists (workers).

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