



NEW GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP OF
UKRAINE



UKRAINE X THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

EXPERIENCE
THAT UNITES



INTERNATIONAL
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Nataliya Butyrska

“Ukraine – the Republic of Korea: Experience that Unites”

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Ukraine and the Republic of Korea: Experience That Unites

Nataliya Butyrskya

Summary

Ukraine and the Republic of Korea have demonstrated interest in developing bilateral relations ever since they established diplomatic relations. South Korea's experience was as relevant for Ukraine in the early 1990s as it is now, as Ukraine's government is trying to engage South Korea in the reconstruction effort after the damages caused by the Russian aggression. While being geographically distant, all these years, both countries have been seeking strong bilateral relations, focusing on the aspects that make them complement each other economically: South Korea's technology and investment, coupled with Ukraine's resources and human capital, have had strong potential, but it was often underexploited.

As the presidents and governments of both countries have been intensifying their political dialogue, this offers new opportunities to expand bilateral relations in all spheres, from finance and economy to R&D and culture. The South Korean government and business have demonstrated readiness to support Ukraine with financial and humanitarian assistance and engage proactively in the reconstruction of Ukraine. In turn, Ukraine's government should create a transparent and friendly environment for foreign businesses in order to keep foreign investors, including South Korean ones, interested and use this chance to deliver a new quality of development for post-war Ukraine.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has proven that the Republic of Korea and Ukraine share a common value-based approach. At the same time, both countries face serious security challenges from the growing geopolitical tensions and the risks of new military conflicts. Russia's actions have emboldened the destructive behaviour of North Korea, while their military and technical cooperation will negatively affect both Ukraine — by enabling Russia to wage its war on Ukraine longer, and South Korea — by increasing tensions in the Korean Peninsula.

The fact that there are no political discords between Ukraine and South Korea and that both countries share approaches to dealing with the existing global challenges, such as non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change, fight against terrorism, etc., constitutes the strength of Ukraine-South Korea relations. Therefore, the two countries should strengthen their cooperation and interaction with Western partners in security, defence, protection of the international order, and their bilateral cooperation for quality post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

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INTRODUCTION

Ukraine and South Korea established diplomatic relations on February 10, 1992, shortly after Ukraine declared independence. The Republic of Korea was interested in developing relations with Ukraine as a country with abundant natural resources, developed agriculture, heavy industry and military industry; unique technology in aerospace engineering, space industry and other areas. In turn, Ukraine always viewed South Korea's advanced economy and technology as an opportunity to draw investment and technology, and to benefit from ROK's experience for Ukraine's development.

Since establishing diplomatic relations, the two countries have signed a range of international agreements that regulate their political, economic, trade, R&D, cultural, humanitarian and other types of cooperation. The analysis of this regulatory framework reveals that Ukraine-South Korea relations have focused primarily on developing trade and economic cooperation, and on attracting investment.

Given its foreign policy priorities, Ukraine sees the Republic of Korea as an important partner in the Asia Pacific. At the same time, both countries admit that they have not managed to fully tap into the potential and opportunities in their bilateral relations. In his interview on February 8, 2019, Ambassador Lee Yang-goo (2016-2019) highlighted that Ukraine and South Korea benefited from just about 10% of their trade potential.¹ The 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine notes that "The Republic of Korea is a top trade partner for Ukraine in Asia. At the same time, the dynamics of development in bilateral relations at the level of top officials have been very low in recent years. Ukraine is interested in intensifying political dialogue and strengthening trade and investment cooperation with the Republic of Korea."²

The key reasons for underexploiting this potential include the absence of a comprehensive and consistent policy on South Korea and Asia in Ukraine, even if all Ukrainian presidents expressed interest in using the technological and investment opportunities of South Korea to modernise and reindustrialise Ukraine's economy. For many years, Ukraine's foreign policy mostly focused on Europe and the US as part of its European and Euro-Atlantic course and on countering Russia. This left South Korea and most other countries side-lined in Ukraine's foreign policy interests. In order to develop quality bilateral relations, consistent high-level Ukraine-South Korea political dialogue should become one of the key ingredients in Ukraine's policy on South Korea. This reflects South Korea's political culture where personal high- and top-level contacts, the absence of political discords, and declared understanding of the

¹ Delo.ua, *South Korean companies are interested in setting up production in Ukraine — Ambassador Lee Yang-goo*, February 8, 2019: <https://delo.ua/economyandpoliticsinukraine/juzhnaja-koreja-349964/>

² Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine*, August 26, 2021: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/448/2021#n11>

Republic of Korea's interests and motives by partner-states are important for the South Korean political elite.³

Ukraine has always been a proactive supporter of peace in the Korean Peninsula. South Korea has consistently and firmly supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

However, their bilateral relations — including economic relations — have developed slowly for many years because of the distance, the lack of knowledge of each other's potential;⁴ an unfriendly business environment in Ukraine (tax benefits or tax subsidies for industrial gas/water consumption, other bonuses);⁵ mistrust on the part of South Korean companies in Ukraine's judiciary and investor protection issues;⁶ the launch of the military conflict by Russia in 2014 and the occupation of Ukraine's Crimea and the Donbas, etc.⁷ Given all these factors, South Korean businesses categorise Ukraine as an investment risk destination.⁸

At the same time, many South Korean companies have expressed interest in cooperation on solar power, e-governance, urban heating, waste recycling, agriculture, metallurgy, pharmaceutical production, online business, logistics and power plant construction. The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine have seriously affected business activity and the overall situation in Ukraine, having an impact on its trade and economic relations and leading to serious economic losses for Ukrainian businesses and foreign investors, including South Korean companies.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy defined Asia as a priority in developing Ukraine's international relations.⁹ The launch of Ukraine's Asia Strategy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the President's plans to go on a tour in Asia after the lifting of

³ V. Marmazov. *20 years of Relations Between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea: Summary and Prospects of Cooperation Under the Euro-Pacific Integration*:

<https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/jcrees/2013Osaka/22VasyMarmazov.pdf>

⁴ Dsnews.ua, *South Korea Ambassador: South Koreans are afraid to invest in Ukraine*, February 6, 2017:

<https://www.dsnews.ua/ukr/politics/posol-yuzhnoy-korei-koreytsy-bovatsya-investirovat-v-ukrainu-01022017220000>

⁵ Comments.ua, *South Korea Ambassador Kwon Ki-chang: Sometimes there is an impression that Ukraine has zero interest in money from abroad*, April 2, 2020:

<https://comments.ua/ua/news/interview/2020/649870-posol-pivdennoi-korei-v-ukraini-kvon-ki-chang-dekoli-ski-adaet-sya-vrazhennya-scho-ukraina-vzagali-ne-zacikavlena-v-groshah-z-za-kordonu.html>

⁶ Mind.ua, *South Korea Ambassador: "Investing in Ukraine is quite risky for SMEs from South Korea"*

Ki-chang Kwon on the dynamics of South Korean investment, readership and Ukrainian apps for Samsung, February 16, 2021:

<https://mind.ua/publications/20222205-posol-respubliki-koreya-dlya-malih-ta-serednih-korejskih-pidpriemciv-in-vestuvannya-v-ukrayinu-e-dosit>

⁷ LB.ua, *Ambassador Ki-chang Kwon: "If Ukraine votes for our candidate for the WTO, it will get extensive access to agricultural markets"*, October 5, 2020:

https://lb.ua/world/2020/10/05/467473_posol_kichan_kvonesli_ukraina.html

⁸ Apostrophe, *The first conversation: What remained behind the stage of South Korea President's visit to Ukraine*, July 18, 2023

⁹ Zelensky is preparing a big tour of Asia and the US, UNIAN, 25.02.2021,

<https://www.unian.ua/politics/turne-zelenskogo-prezident-gotuyetsya-zdiysniti-vizit-u-krajini-aziji-ta-do-ssha-no-vini-ukrajina-11333663.html>

COVID-19 restrictions — including South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore — illustrated that intent to give a new impetus to Ukraine’s relations with countries in Asia.¹⁰ Russia’s aggression prevented Ukraine from implementing these plans.

On April 11, 2023, Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke to the Parliament of the Republic of Korea, requesting its help in Ukraine’s fight against Russian aggression, including military assistance. First Lady Olena Zelenska visited Seoul in May 2023 as a special envoy of Ukraine’s President. She thanked the Republic of Korea’s government and people for their support and solidarity and asked for increased assistance to Ukraine wherever possible.¹¹ She invited South Korean businesses to join Ukraine’s reconstruction effort, including in the areas where ethnic Koreans reside.

The South Korean government is not sending weapons to Ukraine because of the restrictions of its Law on Foreign Trade that bans the exports of weapons except for “peaceful purposes”¹². However, it has joined international sanctions against Russia and is supporting Ukraine proactively with financial, humanitarian, non-lethal, and technical assistance. Apart from that, President Yoon Suk Yeol visited Ukraine on July 15, 2023,¹³ for the first time in bilateral history, to demonstrate support for Ukraine’s resistance against Russian aggression¹⁴ in response to the invitation by President Zelenskyy.

¹⁰ LB.ua, *Ihor Zhovkva: “The US will not allow anyone to launch a new aggression in our region with impunity,”* April 9, 2021: https://lb.ua/world/2021/04/09/481939_igor_zhovkva_ssha_dadut_nikomu.html

¹¹ Yonhap News Agency, (2nd LD) Yoon meets with Ukraine’s first lady Zelenska, May 16, 2023: <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230516006852315?section=national/politics>

¹² Korea Legislation Research Institute, Foreign Trade Act, January 27, 2016: https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/lawView.do?hseq=37529&lang=ENG

¹³ LB.ua, South Korea President arrives on a visit to Ukraine, July 15, 2023:

https://lb.ua/news/2023/07/15/565404_prezident_pivdennoi_korei_pribuv_z.html

¹⁴ The official website of the President of Ukraine, *Cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea will give more strength to our nations and the global positions of the two countries – Volodymyr Zelenskyy after the meeting with Yoon Suk Yeol in Kyiv*, July 15, 2023:

<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/spivpracya-ukrayini-ta-respubliki-koreya-dast-bilshe-sili-na-84349>

BILATERAL RELATIONS: BACKGROUND

Political relations

The Republic of Korea was among the first countries to recognise Ukraine's independence in December 1991. On February 10, 1992, the two countries established diplomatic relations. The Embassy of the Republic of Korea has been active in Ukraine since November 1992, and Ukraine opened its Embassy in Seoul in October 1997.

Since then, Ukrainian presidents went to Seoul on two state visits in 1996 and 2006, and a working visit in 2012; Ukraine's Prime Minister visited in 2009; Verkhovna Rada's Speakers in 1995, 2000, 2010, and 2018; Foreign Affairs Ministers in 1995, 2004, and 2015, and Ukraine's First Lady in 2023.

Four South Korean high-level parliamentary delegations visited Kyiv in 2000, 2006, 2013, and 2015; two Prime Ministers visited in 2005 and 2011, and government representatives visited Ukraine on a number of occasions. The first -ver visit of the South Korean President to Ukraine took place on July 15, 2023, when President Yoon Suk Yeol came with First Lady Kim Keon-hee. In addition to his official meeting with President Zelenskyy and members of the Ukrainian government, the South Korean President went to Bucha and Irpin, sending an important signal of support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in their fight against the Russian aggression. President Yoon Suk Yeol expressed hope that his talks with the Ukrainian President would become a new landmark in the relations between Ukraine and South Korea.

During the visit of South Korea's President in 2023, the two leaders launched the Ukraine Peace and Solidarity Initiative to provide Ukraine with military, humanitarian, and post-war reconstruction assistance. President Yoon Suk Yeol assured Ukraine that South Korea would continue supporting Ukraine in demining, reconstruction of infrastructure, education, and entrepreneurship.

Ukraine and South Korea have an opportunity to take their relations to a new level, given the ambition of President Yoon Suk Yeol's administration to boost South Korea's geopolitical status and expand its foreign policy interests beyond East Asia, turning it into a pivotal global state. This matches Ukraine's government course towards "opening new horizons" as Ukraine pursues a proactive policy in Asia, Africa, and South America, and Ukraine's focus on new promising actors and powerful regional alliances.¹⁵

Since the launch of their diplomatic relations, Ukraine and South Korea have proactively built full-scale cooperation in the spheres where they have shared

¹⁵ RBC Ukraine, *Beyond the West: Why Southeast Asia is important for Ukraine's victory*, November 9, 2022: <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/tilki-zahid-chomu-pivdenno-shidna-aziya-vazhliva-1667985955.html/amp>

interests. By 2021, Ukraine had two interstate agreements, 25 intergovernmental, and 24 interagency agreements with South Korea.¹⁶ They launched a range of institutional mechanisms that contributed to deepening their bilateral relations, including the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, Joint Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, Joint Ukrainian-Korean Committee on Cooperation in the Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes, and Joint Commission on Cooperation in Defence and Supply. The two countries set up a mechanism of political consultations between their Ministries of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷

When Won Hee-ryong, South Korea's Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, visited Ukraine on September 14, 2023, leading a South Korean government delegation, the governments of Ukraine and the Republic of Korea signed the Agreement on loans from the Korea Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF). The Agreement provides preferential loans for projects in Ukraine involving South Korean companies.¹⁸

At the same time, Ukraine's 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy did not list South Korea as one of the 13 countries of strategic importance for Ukraine.¹⁹ South Korea's support for Ukraine during the Russian aggression and the level of their bilateral relations meet the criteria of the Foreign Policy Strategy, and they should be reclassified as strategic.

Allowing visa-free travel for Ukrainians to South Korea is the next important issue that is yet to be resolved. Ukraine and South Korea have two visa facilitation agreements — the Visa Exemption Agreement for Diplomatic Passport Holders, signed in 2006²⁰ and the Visa Exemption Agreement for Official and Service Passport Holders, signed in 2013.²¹ In 2006, Ukraine introduced visa-free travel for up to 90 days for the Republic of Korea's citizens unilaterally.²² Representatives of the Ukrainian authorities have been waiting for South Korea to reciprocate, but they have not abolished visas for Ukrainian citizens. Fear of illegal migration has been its main concern about

¹⁶ The official website of the Embassy of Ukraine in South Korea:

<https://korea.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/398-dogovirno-pravova-baza-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-korejeju>

¹⁷ The official website of the Embassy of Ukraine in South Korea <https://korea.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo>

¹⁸ Government website, *Ukraine will receive substantial funding from the Republic of Korea to develop innovative economic project* — Yulia Svyrydenko, September 15, 2023:

<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ukraina-otrymaie-suttieve-finansuvannia-vid-respubliky-koreia-na-rozvytok-innovatsiinykh-ekonomichnykh-proektiv-iuliia-svyrydenko>

¹⁹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine*, August 26, 2021:

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/448/2021#Text>

²⁰ https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=410_015#Text

²¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Agreement Between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of South Korea on Visa Exemption for Official and Service Passport Holders*, September 23, 2013:

https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_036/#Text

²² Government website, *Agreement (Exchange of Notes) Between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Visa Fee Exemption for Ukrainian and South Korean Citizens and Visa-Free Entry of Up To 90 Days to Ukraine for the Citizens of South Korea*, April 19, 2006:

<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/34615426>

abolishing visas. Obviously, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the flow of refugees from Ukraine may create the same barrier now.

Trade and economic relations

Ukraine sees South Korea as a top trade partner and investor in Asia, even if both parties recognise that they are not fully exploiting their cooperation potential.²³ The analysis of statistics shows fluctuating trade cooperation as a result of some negative factors. These include low bilateral trade turnover, uneven balance of foreign economic relations, underdeveloped infrastructure for attracting investment, and a range of regulatory barriers that hamper the development of Ukraine-South Korea trade and economic cooperation.²⁴

Ever since Ukraine and South Korea established diplomatic relations, they have signed a range of international documents that regulate their economic and trade relations. These include the Trade Agreement Between the Governments of Ukraine and the Republic of Korea,²⁵ the Agreement on Mutual Investment Facilitation and Protection between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea,²⁶ the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Joint Trade, Industry, and Energy Committee;²⁷ the Intergovernmental Agreement on Commercial Shipping; the Intergovernmental Agreement on Grant Assistance and Technical Cooperation;²⁸ the Convention to Avoid Double Taxation and Prevent Income and Capital Tax Evasion between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea;²⁹ the Agreement on Customs Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea,³⁰ and other agreements.

Since its establishment in 2008, the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation had four meetings. The latest meeting took place in Seoul in

²³ Delo.ua, *South Korean companies are interested in setting up production in Ukraine — Ambassador Lee Yang-goo*, February 9, 2019: <https://delo.ua/economyandpoliticsinukraine/juzhnaja-koreja-349964/>

²⁴ Fedoriv I., Chekryhina Y., *Trade and Economic Cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea: Condition and Prospect*, Consensus, №1, 2023: <https://konsensus.net.ua/index.php/konsensus/article/view/52/47>

²⁵ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Trade Agreement Between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea*, April 11, 1997: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_723#Text

²⁶ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Agreement on Mutual Investment Facilitation and Protection between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of South Korea*, October 16, 1997: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_001#Text

²⁷ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Joint Trade, Industry and Energy Committee with the Republic of Korea*, April 19, 2006: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_020#Text

²⁸ *Intergovernmental Agreement on Commercial Shipping; Intergovernmental Agreement on Grant Assistance and Technical Cooperation* <https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/MU05367>

²⁹ *Convention to Avoid Double Taxation and Prevent Income and Capital Tax Evasion between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of South Korea* https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_003#Text

³⁰ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Agreement on Customs Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of South Korea*, March 3, 2004: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_009#Text

2018, co-chaired by Ukraine's First Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade, Maksym Nefiodov and South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister, Yun Kang-hyeon. The fifth meeting was scheduled for September 2022. It did not take place because of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine.

Bilateral trade between Ukraine and South Korea peaked in 2012 at US \$2.029bn. In 2013, bilateral trade began to decline from US \$1.238bn to US\$ 988.5mn in 2014, US \$651.8mn in 2015, and US \$377.9 in 2016.³¹ According to South Korea's Ambassador Kwon Ki-chang (2019-2021), the 2013-2014 political developments in Ukraine and Russia's invasion of Crimea and the Donbas were the key reasons for the decline in bilateral trade that, otherwise, had had the potential to hit US \$3bn.³² In 2020 and 2021, bilateral trade rose again to US \$849mn and US \$994mn, respectively.³³

Ukraine's exports to South Korea are mostly agricultural produce, including maize, wheat, barley, rice and other cereals; ferrous metals and products; wood and wood products; non-precious metals, and tobacco. Apart from cereals, sunflower oil, organic food and other non-GMO produce, as well as pork and beef have the best potential for boosting exports. The key categories of goods Ukraine imports from South Korea included passenger cars, equipment and machinery, plastic and polymer materials, pharmaceutical products, and others. Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine has substantially affected the situation in Ukraine and stifled trade. As a result, trade between Ukraine and South Korea has plummeted.

In early 2021, South Korea's FDI in Ukraine was slightly over US \$200mn. Industry was the biggest destination for its FDI, accounting for 74.3%, followed by R&D with 23.6%, and trade and maintenance of auto transport. According to the Republic of Korea Embassy in Ukraine, Ukraine's FDI in South Korea totalled US \$11.2mn.

Until 2014, over 20 South Korean investing companies operated in Ukraine. Now, 12 remain.³⁴ While Korean companies have repeatedly expressed interest and spoken about the potential of investing in Ukraine, Ukraine's political and economic turbulence has made its market smaller, and the presence of South Korean companies has shrunk. Additionally, some companies had negative experience in Ukraine. This did not help expand their investment activity and attract new investors.

³¹ A. Mazaraki, T. Melnyk, *Foreign Policy relations of Ukraine and the Republic of Korea*, Foreign Trade: Economy, Finance, Law. 2017, №1: [http://zt.knute.edu.ua/files/2017/01\(90\)/ZT_01_2017_st_01.pdf](http://zt.knute.edu.ua/files/2017/01(90)/ZT_01_2017_st_01.pdf)

³² LB.ua, *Ambassador Ki-chang Kwon: "If Ukraine votes for our candidate for the WTO, it will gain extensive access to agricultural markets"*, October 5, 2020:

https://lb.ua/world/2020/10/05/467473_posol_kichan_kvonesli_ukraina.html

³³

<https://korea.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/400-torgovelyno-jekonomichne-spivrobotnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-kor-ejeju>

³⁴ Mind, Republic of Korea Ambassador: "Investing in Ukraine is quite risky for small and medium South Korean companies", February 16, 2021

<https://mind.ua/publications/20222205-posol-respubliki-koreya-dlya-malih-ta-serednih-korejskih-pidpriemciv-in-vestuvannya-v-ukrayinu-e-dosit>

Agriculture, the aerospace industry, defence, and IT were the key promising industries in which South Korean companies invested before the full-scale invasion. This was illustrated by the opening of a Samsung R&D centre in Kyiv that employed nearly 600 Ukrainian engineers. They are developing software for smartphones and other products of the HQ in Korea.

POSCO Daewoo has grown into one of the key players in Ukraine's grain exports market. It opened a new grain terminal in the Mykolayiv port in 2019, investing US \$65mn. The Mykolayiv port is currently closed because of Russian aggression, and the Russian military targets the port infrastructure with its shelling as it tries to inflict maximum damage on Ukrainian cities and businesses. GS Construction, a South Korean construction company, built two solar power stations in the Zakarpattia region in mid-2019, investing US \$24mn. However, this experience was not positive: Ukraine had a privileged "green" tariff in place for renewable energy until the end of the construction period, but the Government slashed it substantially in early 2020. This undermined the expected investment revenue, so this business no longer benefited foreign investors.³⁵ Shortly before the war, Dasan Networks, an IT group, entered the Ukrainian market. Its CEO visited Ukraine, praised its technological prospects, and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Kyiv Polytechnic University.³⁶

In early 2019, Hyundai and Kia Automotive closed their offices in Ukraine and reoriented to EU member-states from Eastern Europe. The official reason was the plummeting sales of new cars in recent years. Allowing accessible imports of used cars resulted in the loss of substantial investment for Ukraine: Kia Motors opened its car factory in Slovakia, and Samsung SDI opened a production facility for electric car batteries in Hungary.³⁷

Ambassador Kwon Ki-chang (2019-2021) said in an interview that South Korean companies faced difficulties in the Ukrainian business environment, and investment was quite risky for small and medium South Korean companies.

In recent years, Ukraine has conducted a range of reforms to improve its investment image. On June 23, 2022, Ukraine was officially named as an EU candidate country. On November 8, 2023, the European Commission passed an interim decision to start talks on Ukraine's accession to the EU. The European Commission's positive assessment and Ukraine's EU integration may open a new window of opportunities for South Korean investment in Ukraine.

³⁵ Mind, *South Korea Ambassador: "Investing in Ukraine is quite risky for SMEs from South Korea"*, February 16, 2021:

<https://mind.ua/publications/20222205-posol-respubliki-koreya-dlya-malih-ta-serednih-korejskih-pidpriemciv-in-vestuvannya-v-ukrayinu-e-dosit>

³⁶ Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, the National Technical University of Ukraine, *Memorandum of Understanding with Dasan Networks*, February 20, 2029: <https://kpi.ua/2019-02-20>

³⁷ Kistersky L., *Ukraine-South Korea: Economic cooperation potential*, Economy and Management Organization, №2 (46), 2022: <https://jeou.donnu.edu.ua/article/view/12542/12441>

The key task for Ukraine's government is to restore its economy in the context of war and to create new opportunities for business in Ukraine. It is important that the South Korean government has a consolidated stance on supporting Ukraine at the level of the state and the businesses that are interested in the reconstruction of Ukraine and are considering investment in its economy. In her meeting with Won Hee-ryong, the Republic of Korea's Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Yulia Svyrydenko, First Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine and Minister of Economy, said that "The reconstruction of Ukraine consists of two parts – immediate assistance for the restoration of the damaged infrastructure and homes, and post-war reconstruction. We are currently focused on early reconstruction and call on international partners to send a signal to their companies that Ukraine is an investment-friendly country that offers many opportunities and prospects for business development. It is important to understand that we do not want to reconstruct the old. We aim to build a new country with new technology from the world's leading countries, including South Korea."³⁸ Ukraine views the Republic of Korea as an important partner whose expertise in post-war recovery and industrialisation, and innovative expertise in technology and transport can help with Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.

R&D cooperation

The Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea was the first document signed on July 1, 1992, following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.³⁹ Among other things, it included an exchange of researchers and scientists, research findings and R&D information, joint events and training, joint research projects, etc.

Apart from that, a range of institutional mechanisms was set up that contribute to deeper bilateral relations: The Joint Ukraine-Republic of Korea Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation; Joint Ukraine-Republic of Korea Committee on Cooperation in Defense and Supply Industry; and Joint Committee on Cooperation in the Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes. The latter Committee is regulated by

³⁸ Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, *The Republic of Korea is looking to expand technical assistance for humanitarian demining of Ukrainian land*, Yulia Svyrydenko, May 19, 2023: <https://me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=f8277cb6-b5b4-4602-b09c-9dfc3987b24d&title=RespublikaKoreiaRozgliadaZbilshenniaTekhnichnoiDopomogiDliaGumanitarnogoRozminuvanniaUkrainskikhZemel-YuliiSviridenko>

³⁹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Governments of Ukraine and the Republic of Korea*, July 01, 1992: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_016#Text

the Agreement between the State Space Agency of Ukraine and the Ministry of Science and ICT of South Korea dated December 7, 2011.⁴⁰

The priority areas of scientific and research cooperation between Ukraine and South Korea have included peaceful space exploration, energy-saving solutions and ICT. As early as 1995, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the Korea Foundation for the Advancement of Science and Creativity signed a memorandum of cooperation. Under this framework, the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Problems of Materials Science, Bakul Institute for Superhard Materials, Institute of Physics, Usikov Institute for Radio Physics and Electronics, Institute of Environmental Geochemistry, and other research institutions have been working successfully with South Korean institutions. In 2004, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy of the Republic of Korea established the Korea-Ukraine Cooperation Centre for Industrial Technology. Its priority areas include electrotechnology and electronics, semiconductor technology, informatics, optics and sensors.

Cooperation on the use of outer space for peaceful purposes has resulted in the successful launch of three South Korean satellites with the Ukrainian Dnipro rocket carrier in 2013 and 2015.⁴¹

On the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Lee Yang-goo praised the prospects of Ukraine-South Korea cooperation in technology: "In agriculture, the industry of the future, Korea can develop with Ukraine the sixth industrialisation of agriculture that includes farming, processing, renewable energy, biotechnology, logistics, and tourism."⁴² The two countries planned to expand cooperation in irrigation, green production, and the application of new technology, and production of agricultural machinery. For example, the South Korean drone producer SafeusDrone signed an agreement with the National Aviation University in Kropyvnytsky to assemble drones that could be used in agriculture to spray substances over fields, which would allow farmers to save their financial resources and use the labour force reasonably. Another South Korean company, Kreves Development, signed an agreement with the Institute of Agriculture of the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine to grow winter crops of rapeseed in Ukraine after a trial in 2018.⁴³

⁴⁰ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Agreement between the State Space Agency of Ukraine and the Ministry of Science and ITC of the Republic of Korea*, December, 2011: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/410_033#Text

⁴¹ V. Vehner, *Prospects of cooperation development on priority economic activities between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea*, European scientific journal of Economic and Financial innovation № 1(5) (2020): <https://journal.eae.com.ua/index.php/journal/article/view/79/72>

⁴² Vectornews, *Ukraine-South Korea: 25 years of close and fruitful cooperation*, February 13, 2017: <https://www.vectornews.net/exclusive/21489-nadzvichayniy-povnovazhniy-posol-respubliki-koreya-v-ukrayin.html>

⁴³ Delo.ua, *South Korean companies are interested in setting up production in Ukraine – Ambassador Lee Yang-goo*, February 8, 2019: <https://delo.ua/economyandpoliticsinukraine/juzhnaja-koreja-349964/>

Amid the war, the South Korean telecommunications giant KT presented a plan to the Ukrainian Government to improve Ukraine's telecommunications infrastructure and launch energy-efficient solutions for the operation of key government communication systems. Among other things, KT presented the project titled ICT Partner for Ukraine, that suggests creating Public Security-LTE, a highly secure government communications network to respond to disasters.⁴⁴ South Korea presented a proposal to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about the option of using a military-broadband convergence network (M-BcN) that ensures stable signal and 24/7 monitoring. South Korea tested this solution in 2018 when KT launched "the first in the world" government network of natural disaster response.

Cultural and humanitarian cooperation

Ukraine and the Republic of Korea have two intergovernmental agreements on cultural and humanitarian cooperation: The Agreement on Cooperation in Tourism between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea signed on September 25, 2001, and the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Korea signed on June 7, 2004. Another 19 documents offer the framework for cooperation between Ukrainian and South Korean universities and memorandums at the ministerial level.

Ever since Ukraine and South Korea established diplomatic relations, their cultural and humanitarian cooperation has been growing steadily. On November 6-8, 2012, South Korea hosted the first Days of Ukrainian Culture since the start of bilateral relations.⁴⁵

Ukrainian musicians, dancers, and filmmakers frequently perform in South Korean international competitions and festivals, such as the Seoul International Music Competition, the Korea International Ballet Competition, the Jecheon International Music and Film Festival, and the Seoul International Film Festival. They tour South Korean cities, introducing Ukraine to the local audience through culture and art. Bilateral cultural and humanitarian cooperation continues even amid the military action in Ukraine.

Ukrainians are interested in South Korean culture thanks to its successful soft power known as the Korean Wave. It covers music and other aspects of modern culture, including popular TV shows, video games, Korean food, fashion, language, etc. Essentially, the Republic of Korea has managed to create an Asian wonder in culture

⁴⁴ The Korea Times, KT offers to rebuild telecommunication infrastructure in Ukraine, September 17, 2023: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2023/09/419_359310.html

⁴⁵ The official website of the Embassy of Ukraine in South Korea: <https://korea.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/402-kulyturno-gumanitarne-spivrobotnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-korejeju/kulturno-gumanitarne-spivrobotnictvo-mizh-ukrayinoyu-ta-respublikoyu-koreya>

that has embraced all continents and serves as an important promotion tool for the country. Many young Ukrainians are fans of K-pop, anime, and K-dramas. Importantly, many South Korean pop-idols with fans across the world have expressed support for Ukraine during the war with messages on social media, participation in charity online concerts, and financial support.⁴⁶

Since 2015, Ukraine has been hosting the Korean Ambassador's Taekwon-do Cup. Additionally, the South Korean Embassy holds annual K-Drama Impact short film competitions; Global Youth Compet, an international competition of videos by young people; the Korean Language Speech Contest, etc. On October 30, 2019, Ukraine hosted the Days of Korean Culture for the first time.

In 2017, the Government and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea supported the establishment of a Korean Education Centre in Kyiv, tasked with promoting Korean language and culture. This is the first centre of this scale in Ukraine and the sixth in Europe.

Ukrainian and South Korean universities do regular student exchanges. Ukrainian students are entitled to scholarships to study in South Korea under various education programs. The most well-known South Korean universities that have cooperation agreements with Ukrainian universities include the Seoul National University, Konkuk Language Institute, Hanyang University, Korea University, Chungnam National University, KDI School and others.

The only faculty of Ukrainian Studies in South Korea is at the Konkuk Language Institute, one of the top education institutions in South Korea, where students learn the Ukrainian language, history, and culture. It is an important element of bilateral cooperation in education. In 1995, Kyiv National Linguistic University opened a Korean Language Department. In 1996, Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University followed suit. In 1998, the International Institute of Linguistics and Law, now Kyiv International University, launched its Korean language course. Other universities across Ukraine that teach Korean include Lviv National Ivan Franko University, Kyiv Borys Hrinchenko University, and Ostroh Academy. This illustrates the growing interest in the Korean language in Ukraine.

In 2006, Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University opened the Centre of Korean Language and Literature. In 2017, Kyiv National Linguistic University opened the Korean Studies Centre, Korean philology department and a Korean IT centre at the Faculty of Oriental Studies.

Cooperation in filmmaking is seen as a promising vector of bilateral cooperation. The Memorandum of Cooperation in Animation between the respective institutions of Ukraine and South Korea was signed in September 2017 and provides for closer

⁴⁶ Suspilne Cultura, *K-pop in Ukraine: Who supported Ukraine and who keeps working with Russia*, August 15, 2022: [https://suspilne.media/268911-k-pop-i-vijna-v-ukraini-hto-pidtrimav-a-hto-prodovzue-pracuvati-z-rosieu/](https://suspilne.media/268911-k-pop-i-vijna-v-ukraini-hto-pidtrimav-a-hto-prodovzue-pracuvati-z-rosie/)

cooperation in animation, co-production of quality films, exchange of innovative technology in the industry, data sharing for TV, film and theatre distribution, and joint study and exchange programs for students from dedicated public and private schools.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has been in Ukraine since 1995. Over these decades, the Republic of Korea government has repeatedly provided humanitarian and technical assistance to Ukraine through KOICA, allocating funding for the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, implementing various projects, funding the construction of a unit for the Ukrainian-Korean IT Educational Centre at the Kyiv Polytechnic University and all the necessary equipment for it, conducting workshops and courses for Ukrainian civil servants and employees of government agencies, funding special programs for Ukrainian specialists, student programs to study Korean language and culture, etc. Ukraine currently views KOICA as an important partner in engaging technical assistance for the reconstruction plan.

Korean diaspora in Ukraine

Solving the problems of ethnic Koreans in Ukraine is an important element of cooperation between Ukraine and South Korea.

The Korean community emerged in Ukraine in the early 20th century. Mass relocation of ethnic Koreans to the territory of Ukraine started in the 1960s, preceded by the Soviet deportation to Central Asia in 1937. They moved to Southern Ukraine in order to do farming on fertile land. Many Koreans came to study in universities in Ukraine's cities.

As of 2020, Ukraine had nearly 35,000 representatives of the ethnic Korean community.⁴⁷ Most ethnic Koreans live in Crimea, and Kherson, Odesa, Mykolayiv, Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia regions. Since the 2000s, the number of ethnic Koreans in Ukraine has grown threefold as a result of intense migration from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to Ukraine.

While most ethnic Koreans are well integrated into Ukrainian society, many migrants from other countries have had some issues with their legal status. Some did not have Ukrainian citizenship or permanent residence permits. Ukraine set up the Special Committee for Ethnic Koreans in 2007 to solve the issue of legal status for ethnic Koreans. The Committee met eight times between 2007 and 2010. In August 2010, the office of the International Organisation for Migration in Ukraine launched the project of Economic and Social Integration of Ethnic Koreans in Ukraine. It focused on supporting ethnic Koreans in obtaining legal status in Ukraine, developing education programs, and micro-lending for ethnic Korean farmers.

⁴⁷ The official website of the Embassy of South Korea in Ukraine:
<https://korea.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/5631-jetnichni-korejci-v-ukrajini>

Crimea, parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions where many ethnic Koreans reside, are currently under Russian occupation. This has disabled government and international programs there. On top of that, some were forced to migrate across Ukraine or abroad as a result of the war.

The Association of Koreans of Ukraine is the main community hub launched in 1992. It has initiated the opening of Sunday schools for the Korean language, national ensembles and cultural centres in many cities across Ukraine. The Association of Teachers of the Korean Language has been publishing a newsletter on the life of the Korean diaspora in Ukraine. Essentially, the Association pioneered the introduction of Korean culture to independent Ukraine. The Korean Cultural Centre has been operating in Kyiv since 2007. It has a library that hosts cultural events and Korean language competitions. Over 20 cities across Ukraine have regional associations of Koreans.

As of December 2022, 5205 Ukrainian citizens – including 3438 ethnic Koreans – resided in South Korea under short- and long-term visas. The South Korean government agreed to extend resident visas for all for an undefined period as a result of the war on Ukraine's territory. After the launch of the full-scale invasion, the South Korean Ministry of Justice abolished visa fees for ethnic Koreans fleeing the war, and simplified the visa regime for entry to South Korea.

On February 24, 2022, nearly 15,000 ethnic Koreans were forced to flee Ukraine. Most found refuge in European countries. 1,200 ethnic Koreans from Ukraine asked for asylum in South Korea.⁴⁸ Ukrainian refugees of Korean origin who ended up in South Korea as a result of the war face a number of issues, including temporary visas that make planning their life in the country difficult (instead of the legal status as refugees, they were issued F-2 long-term residency visas or H-2 working visas, both only applicable to “co-ethnic compatriots”); economic instability (no direct government support, the only support available is through NGOs, Red Cross and Christian missionaries); little to no knowledge of the Korean language which makes adjustment and search for work more difficult (South Korea is known for barely any recognition of asylum or refugee status. For example, the RRR rate in South Korea was at a mere 2% compared to 40% in EU countries).

⁴⁸ CAST, *Ukrainian refugees of Korean descent seek fresh start in South Korea*, March 28, 2023: https://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/publication-pdf/Insight_NEA_Mar28_V2_0.pdf

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE IN WAR

The Republic of Korea Government condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine. At the beginning of the war, President Moon Jae-in stated that his country would join export controls and support international sanctions against Russia along with the international community but was not considering unilateral sanctions on Russia. A representative of the Presidential Administration specified that South Korea would “take part alongside the international community in Russian export controls and other sanctions if Russia proceeds in any way with full-scale war.”⁴⁹

On February 28, 2022, South Korea’s Ministry of Economy and Finance imposed a ban on the exports of “strategic goods” to Russia. This covers any goods, software or technology that can be used to build arms, weapons of mass destruction or missiles.⁵⁰ The Republic of Korea government said that it would impose sanctions in three areas on Russia, including a ban on transactions with big Russian banks; suspension of investment in Russian treasury bonds; and cutting Russian banks off SWIFT.⁵¹

On March 7, 2022, the South Korean government imposed additional financial sanctions on Russia, including a ban on transactions with the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, sovereign wealth funds, and the Bank “Russia”.

The Republic of Korea expressed readiness to free up more strategic oil reserves to help stabilise the global energy market and consider other measures, including reselling LNG to Europe.

On April 24, 2023, the Republic of Korea government added 741 items to the list of sanctioned goods. These included semiconductors, chemical substances, steel, cars, technology, quantum computers, etc. As a result, its export sanctions expanded from 57 to 798 types of products.

South Korea consistently supports Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity: it supported and voted in favour of the UN GA resolutions on Aggression against Ukraine (02.03.2022), Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine (24.03.2022), Territorial integrity of Ukraine: Defending the principles of the Charter of the UN (12.10.2022), Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine (14.11.2022), Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine (15.12.2022), and

⁴⁹Hankyoren, Moon voices regret over Russian invasion of Ukraine, vows to join economic sanctions, February 25, 2022: https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1032615.html

⁵⁰ Global trade Alert, republic of Korea: *Government imposes sanctions package on Russia in response to the Ukrainian crisis*: <https://www.globaltradealert.org/state-act/62283/republic-of-korea-government-imposes-sanctions-package-on-russia-in-response-to-the-ukrainian-crisis>

⁵¹ Hyonhee Shin and Cynthia Kim, South Korea bans exports of strategic items to Russia, joins SWIFT sanctions, 28.02.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/skorea-bans-exports-strategic-items-russia-join-swift-sanctions-2022-02-28/>

Principles of the Charter of the UN underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine (23.02.2023). On April 7, 2022, South Korea voted to exclude Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.

In response, Moscow listed the Republic of Korea as an “unfriendly” country. There has been a recognition in Russia that relations between the two countries have deteriorated substantially.⁵²

After Russia’s occupation of Crimea and the Donbas in 2014, the South Korean government tried to maintain a balance in its relations with Russia since it is a neighbour and has a strong influence on North Korea, denuclearization and unification processes on the Korean Peninsula. Seoul took a relatively mild stance of compliance with international sanctions while not imposing unilateral sanctions on Russia. It did not abolish the agreement on visa-free tourism to the Republic of Korea for the citizens of the Russian Federation, and continued its trade and economic relations with Moscow, remaining one of its top ten trade partners at 3.4% of total trade in 2021. Russia was the 12th biggest trade partner for South Korea.⁵³

Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine pushed the government of the Republic of Korea to a harsher response on Russia. The previous liberal government of Moon Jae-in found it hard to keep its moderate approach to Russia amid pressure from South Korean society and Western partners.

When President Yoon Suk Yeol came to power in May 2022, South Korea’s support for Ukraine increased substantially. Over two years of the full-scale war, the Republic of Korea has provided Ukraine with humanitarian assistance worth over US \$250mn (US \$100mn in 2022 and US \$150mn in 2023). For example, at the International Forum on Economic Resilience and Reconstruction of Ukraine in Paris on December 12, 2022, the South Korean government allocated US \$3mn worth of humanitarian support for the winter period for Ukraine, including restoration of infrastructure, power and water supply systems damaged by Russia’s missile attacks.

In May 2023, First Lady Olena Zelenska visited Seoul as a special envoy of the Ukrainian President. She met with South Korea’s President Yoon Suk Yeol and First Lady Kim Keon-hee. As part of her visit, Zelenska met with South Korea’s Foreign Minister Park Jin. Subsequently, the Republic of Korea declared readiness to provide Ukraine with demining vehicles and mobile X-ray equipment. Additionally, she attended the Conference for the Future on Cooperation of the Republic of Korea and Ukraine focused on the participation of South Korean companies in Ukrainian infrastructure recovery projects co-organized by the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Korea.

⁵² RIAC, At a Standstill: Russian-South Korean Relations, March 24, 2022:

<https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/at-a-standstill-russian-south-korean-relations/>

⁵³Big Asia, *Trade between Russia and South Korea increases*,

<https://bigasia.ru/tovarooborot-mezhdu-rf-i-yuzhnoj-koreej-vyros/>

The visit of President Yoon Suk Yeol and First Lady Kim Keon-hee to Ukraine on July 15, 2023, was an important development in bilateral relations. In the briefing with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President Yoon Suk Yeol supported the Ukrainian Peace Formula and expressed South Korea's readiness to mediate with the countries of the Global South. South Korea's President announced an additional US \$2.3bn as assistance in the recovery of peace and post-war reconstruction. The initial US \$300mn will come as humanitarian assistance in 2024, and US \$2bn will start coming in 2025 as long-term financial assistance through the Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF). The agreement entails privileged loans for projects in Ukraine that will engage South Korean companies. The visit of President Yoon Suk Yeol resulted in agreements on the humanitarian demining of Ukrainian territory, infrastructure recovery, and development of education and entrepreneurship.⁵⁴

The Republic of Korea supports joint international efforts on justice for Ukraine and punishment for all entities implicated in war crimes. It is part of the working group that works on the implementation of the Peace Formula in three areas: food security, energy security, and environmental security.

During the full-scale war, South Korea has implemented a range of initiatives in support of Ukraine through its public and private sectors. Between March 2022 and September 2023, the Republic of Korea provided four deliveries of non-lethal military assistance that included helmets, bulletproof vests, military uniform, mine detectors, EOD protective costumes, gas masks, special food, medical kits, tents, blankets, ambulances, mobile X-ray equipment, etc.

South Korea has sent ten deliveries of humanitarian assistance, including 20 backup power stations and five mini excavators used in large-scale energy infrastructure repairs. The South Korean government has provided equipment and gear for humanitarian demining, 100 SsangYong Musso pickup trucks, 5 DOOSAN mini excavators, 12 ambulances with medical equipment and more.

Also, the Republic of Korea is engaged in Ukraine's Grain from Ukraine initiative by providing financial assistance, and in a joint effort to supply Ukraine with US 5mn worth of fertilizers through USAID.

In cooperation with Sean Penn's CORE Response Ukraine, the South Korean company Ssang Yong Engineering and Construction Co is planning to fund the construction and renovation of seven social infrastructure objects, including two kindergartens and two schools, renovation of a hospital in Mykolayiv region, a lyceum in Mykolayiv, and a school in Kharkiv.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Strategic Industries of Ukraine, *Volodymyr Zelensky meets with South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol*, July 17, 2023: <https://mspu.gov.ua/news/volodymyr-zelenskyi-proviv-zustrich-iz-prezydentom-respubliky-koreia-iun-sok-iolem>

South Korea is one of the top exporters of weapons. Ukraine and its Western partners have repeatedly requested military assistance from the Republic of Korea. Its government rejected those requests due to legislative restrictions that prohibit South Korea from selling weapons to parties to a conflict.

In his visit to Ukraine, President Yoon Suk Yeol announced a “greater scale of military support”. This was the donation of two K600 minefield breaching vehicles. These vehicles are designed to make their way through minefields on the front. However, the condition of the Administration of Yoon Suk Yeol was that Ukraine could only use them for humanitarian missions.

The transfer of 550,000 155mm artillery shells to the US in 2022 and 2023 – not a direct delivery to Ukraine – was an important contribution of South Korea in support of Ukraine.⁵⁵ This enabled the US to supply Ukraine with shells from its own stocks. Another important contribution was licensing Poland to export the Krab self-propelled artillery system that uses South Korea-produced K9 Thunder chassis and is supplied to Ukraine.

Reconstruction of Ukraine

Ukraine’s post-war recovery is currently estimated to cost US \$750bn.⁵⁶ President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has offered South Korean businesses to join projects in nuclear and renewable power generation, machine building, car production, lithium mining, oil processing, green metallurgy, water resources, local infrastructure, power generation, development and strengthening of transportation capacities – including railway transport – and the development of a speed rail network for connection with European countries.⁵⁷

Ukraine has offered South Korean businesses to participate in nearly 5,000 projects estimated at US \$20bn. The South Korean government plans to engage public and private entities in reconstruction projects worth nearly US \$52bn.⁵⁸

In September 2023, the One Team Korea delegation visited Ukraine. Led by Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport Won Hee-ryong, it included many entrepreneurs from 18 public and private companies, including Samsung, Hyundai, Rotem and others, who can provide substantial help with reconstruction. The South Korean government

⁵⁵ [양낙규의 Defence Club]탄 빌려간 미국 ‘성능개량 탄’으로 돌려주나

<https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2023061509184626149>

⁵⁶ Economichna Pravda, *Ukraine presents a US \$750bn reconstruction plan: What the postwar reconstruction will be like*, July 04, 2022: <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/07/4/688833/index.amp>

⁵⁷ Interfax-Ukraine, *Ukraine is interested in South Korean investment – Zelensky in the meeting with South Korean government and business representatives*, September 14, 2023:

<https://interfax.com.ua/news/investments/934961.html>

⁵⁸ The Korea Herald, *S.Korea eyes \$52b Ukraine reconstruction project*, July 14, 2023:

<https://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20230714000064>

and representatives of South Korean companies came to facilitate the practical implementation of the Ukraine Peace and Solidarity Initiative declared by the leaders of the two countries in July 2023.

President Zelenskyy and Minister Won Hee-ryong participated in the signing of the donor agreement (A/G) as the first step in support of the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) for Ukraine. The government of the Republic of Korea declared that it would provide over US \$2bn worth of mid- and long-term support for Ukraine through the EDCF in the future. The two sides held the Forum of South Korea and Ukraine Cooperation in Reconstruction and announced six major projects they were planning to focus on:

- developing a master plan for smart and low-carbon transport infrastructure for Kyiv and the capital region similar to Seoul's transport network with Korea Overseas Infrastructure and Urban Development Corporation (KIND) in charge;
- design of a master plan for smart city in Uman focused on urban infrastructure, environment, clean energy, and mobility with KIND and K-Water in charge;
- extensive modernisation of Boryspil airport, involving the Korea Airports Corporation (KAC), including upgrade of systems and security complexes, building wider runways and infrastructure maintenance;
- reconstruction of purification systems in Bucha with the support of the Korean Environmental Industry and Technology Institute (KEITI);
- rebuilding of the Kakhovka Dam with the help of K-Water. K-Water signed a memorandum of understanding that includes technical assistance in the reconstruction of the Kakhovka Dam. It will provide technical oversight at the stage of reconstruction and possibly sponsor the reconstruction effort and
- upgrade and expansion of the railway network that connects Ukraine and Poland with the support of the Korea National Railway (KNR).

Additionally, the South Korean government opened a Centre of Cooperation for Ukraine Reconstruction in Warsaw to collect data and establish a network of contacts for South Korean business. In his visit to Poland on July 13, President Yoon Suk Yeol signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on the Reconstruction of Ukraine with Poland's President Andrzej Duda. It provides for cooperation on infrastructure and reconstruction between the Republic of Korea and Poland to expand bilateral interaction.⁵⁹

The delegation led by Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Won Hee-ryong signed four agreements on local cooperation to strengthen cooperation on reconstruction. As part of the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation on Reconstruction signed by the South Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and

⁵⁹ 조선일보, 한국·폴란드 정상회담 “우크라 공동 재건, 원전 건설도 협력”, July 13, 2023: https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics_general/2023/07/13/OLYWLPXJLJGDPDARUHEIH4M5NI/

Transport and Ukraine's Ministry of Infrastructure in May 2023, KIND and the Ukrainian Reconstruction Agency signed a memorandum of understanding. Also, KIND signed a memorandum of understanding with Ukraine's Oshchadbank to provide financial support for the reconstruction and opening of investment projects for South Korean companies. Apart from that, there is interest in deepening cooperation on hydropower generation, renewable energy – including wind and solar power – introduction of small modular reactors, and the potential of locating research and production bases focused on these areas in Ukraine.⁶⁰

On October 31, 2023, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea hosted the International Forum on Reconstruction of Ukraine, organised by the Korea-Ukraine New Buildings Association and supported by the National Assembly MPs Ahn Sang-soo and Lee Man-hee, in cooperation with South Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and the Embassy of Ukraine to South Korea. The attendants discussed ways and mechanisms to provide Ukraine with the necessary support in restoration and reconstruction.

On November 9, 2023, a special conference titled Global Cooperation on Reconstruction After Conflicts and Disasters in the Digital Era co-organized with Korea Land & Housing Corporation with the support of South Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Territory. The conference was part of the Smart GEO Expo-2023 - an annual international expo - and focused mainly on the reconstruction of Ukraine. The organisers invited representatives of South Korean businesses, NGOs, international business, the World Bank, government organisations and local self-governance organisations of Ukraine. The attendees spoke in detail about urgent needs and ways to restore Ukraine's infrastructure. Apart from that, the Korea Land & Housing Corporation and Ukraine's Ministry of Community, Territory and Infrastructure Development signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in reconstruction.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Energy of Ukraine, *Ukraine and South Korea will deepen cooperation in drawing investment for the reconstruction of the energy sector*, September 13, 2023: <https://www.mev.gov.ua/novyna/ukrayina-i-respublika-koreya-pohlyblyat-spivpratsyu-u-zaluchenni-investytsiy-dlya>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ever since diplomatic relations were established between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea, the two countries have been proactively developing cooperation in the areas of common interest. However, trade and economic cooperation has been the key priority for both countries. They have great potential for bilateral cooperation that has not been used for a number of factors.

During his visit to Kyiv, South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy laid the foundation for a new era in the Ukraine-South Korean partnership that can become strategic. The experience of post-war reconstruction, speedy industrialisation and economic growth, cutting-edge technology and investment opportunities – all this make South Korea a valuable partner for Ukraine's resistance in wartime and post-war reconstruction and development. Ukraine's EU integration and deepening relations with countries, such as the Republic of Korea, will allow Ukraine to upgrade its economy technologically and integrate into the added value chains of Western countries.

The South Korean government and private business have been supporting Ukraine throughout the war and demonstrating consistent interest in post-war reconstruction. They see solar power, e-governance, urban heating systems, waste recycling, agriculture, metallurgy, pharmaceutical production, online business, logistics, construction of power plants and small modular nuclear reactors, and other areas as industries with potential.

Given the great potential new projects by South Korean businesses can have in Ukraine, the prospect of Ukraine joining the EU, the Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, and the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and South Korea, it makes sense to launch talks about an FTA between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea.

Russia's aggression and war on Ukraine have left food security in the world in the spotlight. Prior accomplishments of Ukraine and South Korea in agriculture can help improve the profitability and efficiency of farms in Ukraine through automation and IT technology, including energy-saving solutions. Also, this will allow Ukrainian farmers to grow organic fruit and vegetables in greenhouses in winter to meet the domestic demand and export them to European countries.

Amid the growing military and technical cooperation between Russia and North Korea and the supply of North Korean weapons to Russia in violation of the UN resolutions, South Korea could revise its approach to Ukraine in terms of the necessary arms deliveries. This could open access to various military systems for Ukraine and help the two countries set up joint production of weapons.

In order to expand the scope of bilateral contacts, abolishing visas for Ukrainian citizens is important.

In turn, Ukraine should offer a long-term development prospect for South Korean companies that would include localization of production on Ukraine's territory, among other things. For this, Ukraine needs an efficient investment policy and a transparent judiciary to minimise investment risks and create a friendly investment and business environment.

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