

**POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
BETWEEN UKRAINE AND ASIAN COUNTRIES
IN THE CONTEXT OF COOPERATION
IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION (2022–2026)**

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Abstract. *This chapter analyzes Ukraine’s educational diplomacy toward Asia during 2022–2026 amid a full-scale war that has brought about a profound transformation of the country’s foreign policy. During this period, education evolved from a supporting element of international relations into an independent instrument of public diplomacy and strategic influence. The relevance of this study stems from the fact that since 2022, Ukraine has been actively diversifying its international ties, paying particular attention to cooperation with Asian states – specifically Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, India, and ACEAH countries – while the educational dimension of these relations remains underdeveloped in academic discourse. An additional factor is the recent developments of 2025-2026, which open up new opportunities for trilateral cooperation in the EU – Ukraine – Asia format.*

The object of this study is Ukraine’s relations with Asian countries, and the subject is the educational component of these relations during the 2022–2026 period. The state institution “South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky” was selected as a case study, which allows us to demonstrate the implementation of various models of educational diplomacy at the level of a regional institution of higher education. The theoretical foundation is J. Nye’s concept of “soft power,” which emphasizes the role of education in shaping a state’s international

appeal, as well as the distinction between educational cooperation as a practice and educational diplomacy as a foreign policy tool. The study also draws on concepts of the internationalization of education, universities as independent actors in international relations, and approaches to analyzing interdependence. Methodologically, the work combines comparative, systemic, and case study methods, as well as content analysis of documents and programs, integrating retrospective analysis with trend forecasting.

The study identifies several models of educational diplomacy. The Japanese approach represents a model of infrastructural solidarity, which involves investment in both educational content and physical infrastructure, as well as research collaboration. The Republic of Korea implements a model of transferring state development expertise through vocational education, digitalization, and cultural diplomacy. The Chinese case demonstrates a combination of active educational interaction with tightening regulatory restrictions, creating a paradoxical interdependence. India serves as an example of a partnership free of political conditions, in which educational issues take on significance at the level of interstate dialogue. Cooperation with ACEAH countries is characterized by uneven institutional frameworks and significant regional diversity. Maritime education is examined separately as an area where Ukraine is losing ground to Southeast Asian nations after 2022.

The main findings of the study are that the war served as a catalyst for the transformation of education into a strategic resource in international relations, with educational ties proving to be more resilient than other forms of cooperation. Educational diplomacy functions as a regulatory platform where technical issues are elevated to the level of intergovernmental negotiations. European integration facilitates the development of cooperation with Asian partners through the formation of trilateral formats. Universities act as independent actors in international relations, capable of implementing flexible partnership strategies, while education in general serves as a stabilizer of international relations in times of crisis.

This study fills an important gap in domestic scholarship by offering a systematic approach to analyzing Ukraine's educational diplomacy in Asia and formulating new analytical models. At the same time, it has certain limitations related to the preliminary nature of some of the data and the predictive nature of certain conclusions. The prospects for the development of educational diplomacy are outlined in the short-, medium-, and long-term: from the institutionalization of cooperation and the updating of the regulatory framework to attracting investment, restoring academic mobility,

and Ukraine's further integration into global educational networks. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using its results to shape state policy, university strategies, and further research in the field of international educational cooperation.

Keywords: international relations, public diplomacy, educational diplomacy, soft power, international educational cooperation, internationalization of higher education, academic mobility, universities as actors in international relations.

교육 분야 협력 맥락에서의 우크라이나와 아시아 국가 간 정치·외교 관계(2022~2026)

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국문초록. 본 연구는 2022~2026년 전면전 상황 속에서 변화한 우크라이나의 대아시아 교육외교를 분석하고, 국제관계에서 교육이 수행하는 전략적 기능과 외교적 의미를 규명하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 2022년 전쟁 발발 이후 우크라이나의 외교정책은 근본적인 전환을 겪었으며, 교육은 단순한 국제협력의 보조 수단을 넘어 공공외교 및 국가 소프트파워를 실현하는 핵심 정책 도구로 부상하였다. 특히 우크라이나는 국제적 고립을 극복하고 협력 다변화를 추진하는 과정에서 일본, 중국, 대한민국, 인도, 동남아시아국가연합(ASEAN) 국가들과의 교육협력을 강화하고 있으나, 해당 영역은 기존 학술연구에서 체계적으로 다루어지지 못한 한계를 가진다. 또한 2025~2026년 국제정세 변화는 EU-우크라이나-아시아 간 삼자협력 구조의 형성을 촉진하는 새로운 환경을 제공하고 있다.

연구 대상은 우크라이나와 아시아 국가 간 국제관계이며, 연구의 초점은 2022~2026년 기간 동안 전개된 교육협력과 교육외교의 구조 및 실천 양상이다. 사례연구로는 우신스키 국립 남우크라이나 사범대학교를 선정하여, 지역 거점 국립대학 수준에서 교육외교가 어떻게 구현되고 국제협력 네트워크가 형성되는지를 분석하였다. 이론적 기반으로는 Joseph S. Nye의 소프트파워 이론을 중심으로 교육이 국가의 국제적 매력과 영향력 형성에 기여하는 메커니즘을 검토하였다. 더불어 교육협력과 교육외교를 개념적으로 구분하고, 교육의 국제화, 대학의 국제관계 행위자성, 그리고 상호의존성 이론을 분석틀로 활용하였다. 연구방법은 비교분석, 체계분석, 사례연구, 내용분석을 포함하며, 과거 데이터 분석과 미래 전망 분석을 통합적으로 적용하였다.

분석 결과, 국가별로 상이한 교육외교 모델이 확인되었다. 일본은 교육 콘텐츠 개발, 연구협력 및 교육 인프라 지원을 결합한 '인프라 연대형 교육외교' 모델을 구현하고 있다. 대한민국은 직업교육, 디지털 전환 및 문화외교를 기반으로 국가 발전 경험을 이전하는 발전협력형 모델을 보여준다. 중국의 경우 활발한 교육교류 확대와 동시에 규제 강화가 병존하는 구조로 나타나 교육협력의 상호의존성과 제약이 공존하는 특징을 보였다. 인도는 정치적 조건성이 낮은 협력 구조를 통해 교육을 국가 간 신뢰 구축 및 외교 의제의 주요 영역으로 발전시키고 있다. ACEAH 국가들과의 협력은 제도적 불균형과 국가별 다양성이 동시에 존재하는 비균질적 협력 구조로 나타났다. 또한 해양교육 분야에서는 전쟁 이후 우크라이나의 경쟁력이 동남아시아 국가들에 비해 상대적으로 약화된 것으로 분석되었다.

연구의 주요 결과는 다음과 같다. 첫째, 전쟁은 교육을 국제관계의 전략적 자원으로 전환시키는 결정적 계기로 작용하였다. 둘째, 교육협력은 정치·경제적 협력보다 높은 지속성과 회복력을 보이며 국제관계 안정화 기능을 수행하였다. 셋째, 교육외교는 기술적·행정적 협력 사안을 정부 간 협상 의제로 전환하는 제도적 조정 메커니즘으로 기능하였다. 넷째, 유럽통합 과정은 아시아 국가들과의 삼자협력 확대를 가능하게 하는 구조적 기반으로 작용하였다. 다섯째, 대학은 국제관계의 수동적 기관이 아니라 능동적 행위자로서 다양한 외교 전략을 수행할 수 있는 주체로 확인되었다.

본 연구는 우크라이나의 대아시아 교육외교를 체계적으로 분석하고 새로운 분석모델을 제시함으로써 관련 연구의 이론적 공백을 보완한다는 의의를 가진다. 동시에 일부 자료의 예비적 성격과 전망적 분석에 따른 한계도 존재한다. 향후 교육외교는 제도화 단계의 심화, 법·제도적 기반 정비, 국제 학술교류 확대, 투자 유치 및

글로벌 교육 네트워크 통합을 중심으로 발전할 것으로 전망된다. 본 연구의 결과는 국가 교육외교 정책 수립, 대학 국제화 전략 개발 및 국제교육협력 분야의 후속 연구를 위한 기초자료로 활용될 수 있다.

주제어: 교육외교, 공공외교, 소프트파워, 국제교육협력, 고등교육 국제화, 학술교류, 우크라이나-아시아 관계, 대학의 국제관계 행위자성.

Introduction. In today's context of globalization and the transformation of international relations, education is increasingly emerging as a key instrument of states' foreign policy and a determining factor in their international competitiveness. In the 21st century, educational diplomacy has become an integral part of public diplomacy, enabling states to build a positive image, develop international ties, and strengthen their positions in the global scientific and educational landscape. This is particularly relevant given the growing role of "soft power" as a means of achieving strategic goals in international relations.

The relevance of this study stems from the profound changes that have taken place in Ukraine's political and diplomatic relations since the start of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion in 2022. The war has led not only to a transformation of the domestic education system but also to a reorientation of Ukraine's foreign policy, including the intensification of cooperation with new regional partners. In this context, Asian countries are taking on particular significance as a promising direction for political, economic, and humanitarian cooperation. Educational cooperation with countries such as Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, and the nations of Southeast Asia is becoming a vital tool for expanding international support for Ukraine, facilitating knowledge exchange, and integrating into global networks of science and education.

At the same time, scholarly analysis of the political and diplomatic aspects of Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian countries remains underdeveloped. Most studies focus on specific areas of cooperation or are fragmentary in nature, which prevents the formation of a comprehensive understanding of educational diplomacy as an element of Ukraine's international policy. This necessitates a comprehensive study of this issue, taking into account contemporary challenges and transformations.

Literature Review. Current academic discourse views Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian countries as an important tool of foreign policy and public diplomacy, one that has taken on particular significance following the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Studies document the destruction of educational infrastructure, the mass displacement of students and faculty, and the shift to distance learning (Martynets et al., 2024). Under these conditions, international partnerships have become crucial, enabling the continuity of the educational process and ensuring its quality (Zayachuk, 2025). At the same time, the war has served as a catalyst for the development of new forms of internationalization, particularly online education and international digital academic platforms (Smyslova, 2025). In this context, Ukraine's integration into the global educational space is viewed as a crucial element of its post-war recovery strategy (Debych, 2023).

Under these conditions, education is transforming from a secondary area of international cooperation into a strategic resource that simultaneously fulfills humanitarian, communicative, and geopolitical functions. In particular, the foreign literature emphasizes that the war has caused a global crisis in the field of education, as it "disrupted educational aspirations for more than five million children and youth" (Tamtik & Felder, 2024, p. 164). This, in turn, has spurred international partnerships, including cooperation with Asian countries.

Educational cooperation is viewed as an important tool of public diplomacy and "soft power," enabling states to cultivate a positive international image and strengthen their position in global politics. Educational diplomacy is defined as the strategic use of educational programs, academic exchanges, and research initiatives to foster international cooperation and advance national interests (Jaggi et al., 2024). In this context, international education is increasingly integrated into states' foreign policies and interacts with security and geopolitical factors (Desai Trilokekar & El Masry, 2022).

Ukraine's cooperation with Asian countries is of particular importance, serving as a strategic direction for the diversification of international relations. In particular, Japan is one of Ukraine's key partners in the fields of education, science, and reconstruction. Japanese support is aimed at developing educational infrastructure, training

teachers, and ensuring access to education for children affected by the war (UNESCO, 2025). At the same time, Japanese universities are actively accepting Ukrainian students, demonstrating educational diplomacy as an effective tool for international solidarity (JapanGov, 2022). Research highlights that Ukrainian-Japanese relations have taken on the character of a strategic partnership encompassing the educational, technological, and scientific spheres (Szczepanska et al., 2025; Polishchuk, 2024).

Equally important is the area of cooperation with China, which is characterized by its systematic nature and institutional depth. The academic literature notes that Ukrainian-Chinese collaboration encompasses academic mobility, joint research, and educational projects (Popova, 2024). As Wang (2024) demonstrates, university partnerships facilitate the integration of both countries into the global educational landscape and form the foundation for long-term scientific cooperation.

Expanding the study also allows for the inclusion of other important regional areas, notably India, the Republic of Korea, and the countries of Southeast Asia. India actively uses education as a tool for international cooperation and diplomacy, developing academic networks and educational programs on a global scale (Jaggi et al., 2024). Cooperation with South Korea and ACEAH countries holds significant potential in the fields of technological education, digital innovation, and human capital development, aligning with current trends in global educational integration (Desai Trilokekar & El Masry, 2022).

The institutional dimension of educational diplomacy is defined by Ukraine's regulatory framework. Ukraine's Public Diplomacy Strategy for 2021–2025 establishes education and science as key instruments for shaping a positive image of the state and promoting its interests abroad. At the same time, Ukraine's Higher Education Development Strategy for 2022–2032 identifies integration into the global educational landscape as one of its priority areas, with a focus on developing academic mobility and international cooperation. The Law of Ukraine “On Education” and the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” establish the legal framework for achieving these strategic goals.

Summarizing the approaches of Ukrainian and foreign researchers, it can be stated that educational cooperation is increasingly viewed

as a component of educational and public diplomacy. Contemporary research highlights a trend toward shifting the focus from traditional forms of “hard diplomacy” to the use of “soft power” tools, among which education plays a key role (Mietule et al., 2024). In this context, Ukraine’s integration into the Asian educational space in 2022–2026 is taking place through a combination of two interrelated processes: the preservation of national academic autonomy and adaptation to the demands of the global knowledge market.

Accordingly, the revitalization of Ukraine’s educational diplomacy in the Asian region is taking on new strategic significance.

At the same time, an analysis of academic sources allows us to identify a number of key trends and challenges in the study of Ukraine’s educational cooperation with Asian countries.

First, education is undergoing a transformation from a supporting component of international cooperation into an independent tool of foreign policy and public diplomacy. Education is increasingly being used to forge international partnerships, strengthen political ties, and advance national interests.

Second, a key trend is the growing role of the digitalization of education and online internationalization. Amid the war, it was precisely these remote formats that ensured the preservation of Ukraine’s academic ties with international partners. At the same time, the academic literature has not yet sufficiently analyzed the effectiveness of these mechanisms, which opens up opportunities for further research.

Third, there is an uneven focus on regional areas of cooperation. Relations with Japan and China have been the most extensively studied, while the potential for cooperation with India, South Korea, and the countries of Southeast Asia remains under-explored in academic discourse.

Fourth, there is insufficient analysis of the relationship between education and security issues. Educational cooperation can serve not only as a tool for humanitarian support but also as a mechanism for fostering international solidarity and countering information threats; however, these issues have not yet been adequately addressed from a theoretical perspective.

Fifth, there is a gap between the goals declared in policy documents and the practical implementation of educational diplomacy. Despite the existence of strategic documents, the mechanisms for their

implementation in the context of the Asian region require further development.

Statement of Objectives and Tasks. Based on the literature review, the objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Ukraine's educational diplomacy toward Asia during the 2022–2026, specifically to define its role as an instrument of public diplomacy and “soft power,” to examine the main forms and mechanisms of educational cooperation with Asian countries, as well as to identify key trends, challenges, and strategic prospects for the development of Ukraine's international educational cooperation.

The object of the study is Ukraine's political and diplomatic relations with Asian countries. *The subject* of the study is educational cooperation as a component of political and diplomatic interaction between Ukraine and Asian states during the period 2022–2026.

In accordance with the stated objective, the *following tasks* must be addressed in this work:

- To explore the theoretical and methodological foundations of educational diplomacy as an instrument of public diplomacy and “soft power” within the system of international relations.
- To analyze the impact of the full-scale war of 2022 on the transformation of Ukraine's educational system and its international cooperation.
- to examine Ukraine's legal framework in the field of educational diplomacy, specifically the provisions of the Public Diplomacy Strategy, the Higher Education Development Strategy, and relevant legislation;
- to characterize the main directions and forms of Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian countries, including academic exchanges, joint research projects, and institutional collaboration;
- to conduct a comparative analysis of Ukraine's cooperation with specific Asian countries (Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, and others), taking into account their specific characteristics and levels of development;
- to determine the role of digitalization and the online internationalization of education in the development of Ukraine's educational ties with Asian states in the context of the war;
- to identify key challenges and constraints to the development of Ukraine's educational diplomacy in the Asian region and outline

prospects for deepening Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian countries in the post-war period.

The methodological foundation of this study consists of a set of general and specialized approaches aimed at a comprehensive examination of political and diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Asian countries in the context of educational cooperation during the 2022–2026 war. The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines principles from the theory of international relations, public diplomacy, educational policy, and globalization studies.

The theoretical foundation of the work is provided by the concepts of “soft power” and public diplomacy, according to which education is viewed as a tool for shaping a state's international image and promoting its interests at the global level. Within the institutional approach, the study examines the role of government agencies, international organizations, and educational institutions in shaping and implementing Ukraine's educational diplomacy. The systemic approach allows for viewing educational cooperation as a component of a broader system of international political and diplomatic relations, as well as identifying interconnections between educational, political, and security processes.

A number of general scientific methods were employed in the course of the research. In particular, the analytical method was used to examine academic sources, legislative acts and international documents governing Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian countries. The synthetic method enabled the generalisation of the findings and the formation of a comprehensive picture of the current state and trends in the development of educational diplomacy. The inductive method was used to draw generalisations based on individual facts and cases of cooperation, whilst the deductive method was used to test theoretical propositions against practical evidence.

Among the specialised methods, the comparative method plays an important role; it is used to analyse the characteristics of Ukraine's cooperation with various Asian countries (Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea and the countries of South-East Asia). This makes it possible to identify common and distinctive features, as well as to assess the effectiveness of different models of interaction. The historical-logical method is used to study the evolution of Ukraine's educational cooperation with Asian states, in particular the changes caused by the full-scale war.

The content analysis method was used to examine official documents, development strategies, international reports and publications relating to education policy and diplomacy. This made it possible to identify the key directions of Ukraine's state policy, as well as to determine the role of education in shaping international relations. The case study method was used for a detailed analysis of specific examples of cooperation (in particular with Japan and China), which allowed for the concretisation of general theoretical propositions.

Given the specific nature of the period under study, the method of systems analysis plays a significant role, allowing for an assessment of the war's impact on the transformation of educational cooperation, as well as the identification of new trends, such as the digitalisation of education and online internationalisation. The prognostic method is applied to formulate conclusions regarding the prospects for the development of Ukraine's educational diplomacy in relations with Asian countries in the post-war period.

The South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky (Ushynsky Univesity) occupies a special place in the study, having been selected as a cross-cutting institutional case study. This choice is determined by three interrelated criteria. Firstly, the university represents a typologically significant example of a regional pedagogical institution that is actively integrating into the international educational space in wartime conditions—that is, it acts as a representative of a broad segment of Ukraine's higher education system that remains overlooked by research, which focuses predominantly on leading universities in the capital. Secondly, Ushynsky University has a documented track record of educational cooperation with several key Asian partners simultaneously—Japan (through the “Eurasian Commonwealth: Ukraine as a crossroads of Europe and Asia” project), China (through the Confucius Institute and postgraduate programmes) and the Republic of Korea (through a partnership with Gyeongin National University of Education)—which allows for a comparative analysis of different models of educational diplomacy within a single institutional context. Thirdly, the university's geographical location in Odesa—a major Black Sea port city of strategic importance for engagement with Asian trade and logistics networks—lends the case study additional regional specificity. Accordingly, the Ushynsky University functions in

the text not as an end in itself, but as an analytical lens through which the implementation of educational diplomacy at the institutional level in various national contexts is examined.

Thus, the use of a comprehensive methodology and the combination of various research methods ensures a comprehensive analysis of political and diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Asian countries in the field of education, which allows for the substantiation of scientific conclusions and the identification of further directions for the development of international educational cooperation.

Educational diplomacy as an instrument of “soft power” and public diplomacy: conceptual foundations

In today's globalised world, education is becoming a vital instrument of international cooperation, facilitating not only the transfer of knowledge but also the formation of enduring political, economic and cultural ties between nations. The growing role of educational programmes, academic mobility and international research projects highlights the need for a theoretical understanding of the relationship between international cooperation in education and educational diplomacy as interrelated but not identical categories.

International cooperation in the field of education is viewed as a set of forms of practical interaction between higher education institutions, states and research institutions. It includes academic exchanges, joint research, the organisation of international conferences and the exchange of educational resources. As noted in the study, such cooperation is realised through 'international exchange of applicants... teachers... scientists; holding conferences... exchange of information' (Kiselova et al., 2020, n.p.). Thus, cooperation serves as an institutional form of organising educational and scientific processes on a global scale.

The significance of international cooperation in education is also driven by global challenges and strategic development goals. In particular, the need to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education' within the global agenda is highlighted (Yoshida, 2023, n.p.). This underscores that educational cooperation is not merely a tool for academic interaction, but also a means of implementing global education policy.

In contrast, educational diplomacy is of a more complex and multidimensional nature, as it integrates educational processes into the sphere of foreign policy. The academic literature emphasises that

'Education diplomacy involves the strategic use of education policies, programmes, and initiatives to foster international collaboration and promote a nation's interests globally' (Jaggi et al., 2024, n.p.). Thus, educational diplomacy entails the deliberate use of education as a means of influencing international relations and shaping a positive image of the state.

Furthermore, educational diplomacy fulfils an important communicative function, facilitating the development of intercultural dialogue. Through educational programmes and academic exchanges, strong social and cultural ties are formed between countries, which helps foster mutual understanding, trust, and long-term partnerships (Mietule et al., 2024).

In domestic academic discourse, educational diplomacy is viewed as a component of public diplomacy. In particular, its role in 'building partnerships... through scientific and educational exchange' is emphasised (Smirnova, 2022, n.p.). This allows educational diplomacy to be interpreted as a 'soft power' tool that influences the formation of a state's international standing.

Despite a significant number of common features, there are fundamental differences between international cooperation in education and educational diplomacy. Both phenomena use the same tools, such as academic mobility, exchanges and joint projects, yet their functional purposes differ. Cooperation is primarily focused on achieving educational and scientific outcomes, whereas educational diplomacy is aimed at realising a state's foreign policy interests. In this context, education is regarded as 'an ideal instrument of soft power' (Jaggi et al., 2024, n.p.), which underscores its significance in diplomatic activity.

An important characteristic is the hierarchical nature of the relationship between these concepts. International cooperation serves as the basic level of interaction, ensuring the practical implementation of educational initiatives, whereas educational diplomacy forms the strategic framework for utilising these initiatives in foreign policy. Thus, cooperation can be viewed as an instrumental component, and educational diplomacy as a conceptual and political level.

In today's world, universities are not merely educational and research institutions, but also active players in international relations. As de Wit et al. note, 'higher education institutions have become key actors in international relations' (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 34). This indicates the

transformation of traditional diplomacy into a multi-level system, where educational institutions act as full-fledged actors in international relations.

Thus, international cooperation in the field of education and educational diplomacy are in a relationship of functional interdependence. Cooperation creates a practical basis for the implementation of educational initiatives, whilst educational diplomacy ensures their strategic direction and integration into the foreign policy context. As a result, education emerges not only as a sphere of social development, but also as an important instrument of international policy, contributing to the strengthening of global dialogue and partnership.

The Impact of the 2022 full-Scale invasion on the transformation of Ukraine's education system and its international cooperation

The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 marked a turning point, triggering a profound structural, institutional and functional transformation of the national education system. In the context of war, education ceased to fulfil an exclusively social and reproductive function and took on new significance as an element of national resilience, humanitarian policy and international cooperation.

One of the most significant consequences of the war was the destruction of educational infrastructure, accompanied by the mass displacement of students and staff and the relocation of universities. As Y. Zayachuk notes, 'the war has caused extensive disruption to higher education, including the destruction of facilities, forced displacement, and institutional instability' (Zayachuk, 2025, p. 137). This demonstrates the comprehensive nature of the war's impact on all elements of the education system.

In response to these challenges, there was an accelerated digitalisation of education, which became a key tool for ensuring the continuity of the learning process. Distance learning technologies, online platforms and virtual learning environments enabled the educational process to be adapted to wartime conditions. Studies emphasise that 'digital tools such as video lectures, online platforms, and virtual classrooms became crucial for maintaining continuity of education during wartime' (Martynets et al., 2024). Thus, the war acted as a catalyst for transformations linked to the digital modernisation of education.

International educational cooperation has also undergone significant changes. Amid restrictions on physical mobility, online formats of

interaction began to play a key role, contributing to the development of the digital internationalisation of education. As S. Smyslova notes, 'online higher education projects have become critical spaces for sustaining international academic collaboration and knowledge exchange under conditions of crisis' (Smyslova, 2025). This indicates the emergence of a new model of international cooperation based on digital technologies.

In these circumstances, the role of universities as key actors in international interaction has grown significantly. They function not only as educational institutions but also as platforms for the development of international cooperation, academic mobility and cultural diplomacy. According to contemporary approaches, 'higher education institutions have become critical actors in shaping international relations and responding to global crises' (de Wit et al., 2015). This confirms their transformation into key players in educational diplomacy.

Practical evidence of this trend is provided by the experience of the Ushynsky University, which is implementing the international educational project 'Eurasian Community: Ukraine as a Crossroads between Europe and Asia'. The project is based on the principles of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and combines distance learning with intercultural international interaction.

The project involves the integration of joint courses involving students and lecturers from various countries (Japan, Poland, Turkey, China, South Korea), which are incorporated into educational programmes with ECTS credits. This approach aligns with contemporary trends in internationalisation, which envisage 'integration into the global academic system' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 292). Despite the predominantly lecture-based format, the inclusion of interactive elements allows this project to be interpreted as a hybrid form of COIL.

At the same time, the experience of Ushynsky University reflects a broader trend towards the implementation of COIL models within Ukraine's higher education system. In response to restrictions on physical mobility, Ukrainian universities are actively integrating international online courses, virtual exchanges and joint educational modules. This approach aligns with the concept of 'internationalisation at home', which involves integrating an international component without physical mobility (Knight, 2012). COIL creates conditions for the development of global

competencies and intercultural dialogue, fostering 'global competencies and intercultural understanding' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 302).

In addition to institutional changes, the content of international educational cooperation is also undergoing transformation. It is acquiring not only academic but also political and humanitarian significance, contributing to the formation of international support for Ukraine. In this context, international education is increasingly being integrated into the sphere of public diplomacy, as 'international education is increasingly linked to global political and diplomatic priorities' (Desai Trilokekar & El Masry, 2022).

These processes align with the concept of 'soft power', according to which 'soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2004, p. 5) and 'attraction can be more effective than coercion' (Nye, 2004, p. 6). In this context, education serves as a tool for building international trust, fostering a positive image of the state, and strengthening its position in the global arena.

Consequently, the full-scale invasion became a defining factor in the transformation of Ukraine's education system. It led to the digitalisation of education, the intensification of international cooperation, the development of new forms of internationalisation, and the strengthening of the role of universities as actors in educational diplomacy. As a result, education has been transformed into a key instrument of Ukraine's foreign policy and its integration into the global educational landscape.

Ukraine's regulatory framework for educational diplomacy

The regulatory framework for educational diplomacy is a key element in shaping the state's foreign policy in the field of education, aimed at strengthening international ties and integrating Ukraine into the global educational landscape. In Ukraine, this area is regulated by a set of strategic documents and legislative acts that define education as an instrument of public diplomacy and 'soft power'.

The key document is Ukraine's Public Diplomacy Strategy for 2021–2025, which identifies education and science as priority areas for shaping the country's positive international image (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021). In this context, education serves as a tool for building trust and international appeal, in line with the concept of 'soft power'.

The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022–2032 also plays an important role in shaping the regulatory

environment, defining integration into the global educational space as one of the key areas of state policy (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022). The document provides for the expansion of international cooperation, the development of academic mobility and the introduction of innovative educational practices. Such approaches are consistent with the concept of the internationalisation of education, according to which 'internationalisation is a process of integrating an international... dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education' (Knight, 2012, p. 21).

The regulatory framework for educational diplomacy is also provided by the basic laws—the 'On Education' Act (2017) and the 'On Higher Education' Act (2014), which enshrine the principles of international cooperation, academic mobility and the autonomy of higher education institutions. They provide the legal mechanisms for Ukrainian universities to participate in international educational programmes and projects, which facilitates integration into the European Higher Education Area.

In domestic academic discourse, the regulatory framework for educational diplomacy is assessed as being at a stage of dynamic development and adaptation to European standards. In particular, M. Debych notes that 'the internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine has become a strategic priority, especially in the context of European integration and post-war recovery' (Debych, 2023). This confirms that Ukraine's education policy is closely linked to the objectives of European integration.

In this context, Ukrainian researchers emphasise that the adaptation of the regulatory framework entails harmonisation with the principles of the European Higher Education Area, including quality assurance in education, the development of academic mobility, and the expansion of institutional autonomy. As Y. Zayachuk notes, such a transformation requires 'alignment of national education policies with European standards' (Zayachuk, 2025, p. 142), which indicates the systemic nature of the reforms.

At the same time, research points to certain challenges in the implementation of regulatory provisions. In particular, it is emphasised that 'the transformation of higher education during wartime conditions requires not only regulatory adaptation but also effective implementation mechanisms' (Martynets et al., 2024). This highlights a disconnect between strategic documents and the practice of their implementation.

Of particular relevance in the current context is the adaptation of the regulatory framework to the challenges of war, which manifests itself in the development of the digitalisation of education and new forms of internationalisation. In this context, it is important to introduce 'internationalisation at home' approaches, which involve integrating an international component without physical mobility (Knight, 2012, p. 23). Such approaches are in line with current trends in the development of education and contribute to the formation of global competencies among students.

Overall, Ukrainian authors assess the regulatory framework as demonstrating positive dynamics and aligning with key European benchmarks. At the same time, its further development requires strengthened institutional coordination, improved implementation mechanisms, and a more comprehensive consideration of new forms of international cooperation. In this context, educational diplomacy emerges as an important tool for Ukraine's integration into the European Union and the strengthening of its international agency, which is consistent with contemporary approaches to international education as a component of foreign policy (Desai Trilokekar & El Masry, 2022).

Thus, Ukraine's regulatory framework in the field of educational diplomacy is sufficiently established, yet remains in a state of further development and adaptation. It combines a strategic focus on European integration, the internationalisation of education, and the use of educational tools in public diplomacy, which allows it to be regarded as an important component of the state's contemporary foreign policy.

Japan as Ukraine's strategic partner in the field of educational diplomacy

Ukraine's cooperation with Japan in the field of education in the mid-2020s is taking on the character of a strategic partnership that combines humanitarian, technological and security dimensions. This approach is consistent with the contemporary understanding of educational diplomacy as a component of 'soft power', since, as J. Nye notes, 'soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2004, p. 5).

A distinctive feature of Japanese policy is the integration of educational cooperation into a broader geopolitical context, in particular into the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) strategy. In this context, support for Ukraine's education sector is viewed not merely as

humanitarian aid, but as a tool for strengthening the international legal order and stability.

A key milestone in the development of bilateral relations was the signing in 2024 of long-term agreements on support and cooperation, which cemented the transition from short-term forms of interaction to a systematic partnership. At the heart of this model lies the combination of security and educational components, manifested in the development of technological education, scientific cooperation and the training of specialists for post-war reconstruction.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) plays a special role in the implementation of this model, acting as the central instrument of Japan's educational diplomacy towards Ukraine. Its activities demonstrate a shift from traditional humanitarian aid to a comprehensive model of institutional development, in which education is viewed as the foundation for building human capital and the long-term sustainability of the state.

In practical terms, JICA provides institutional support to Ukrainian higher education institutions, facilitating the continuity of the educational process in wartime through the development of distance learning, the introduction of digital platforms, and logistical support. This is in line with contemporary approaches to education as a system capable of functioning in times of crisis, as highlighted in global research on educational policy (UNESCO, 2021).

In parallel, the agency is implementing the technological modernisation of the educational environment by introducing digital tools, innovative learning solutions and elements of artificial intelligence. This approach facilitates the integration of Ukrainian universities into the global technological landscape and aligns with current trends in the internationalisation of education, as 'the internationalisation of research is a critical component of global academic collaboration' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 300).

A separate area of activity is the development of universities' research potential, which is achieved through support for joint projects and academic initiatives. In this context, JICA acts as an intermediary between the education systems of Ukraine and Japan, providing the institutional framework for expanding international cooperation.

Another key aspect is the training of personnel for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, particularly in the fields of engineering, infrastructure and

technology. The educational programmes supported by JICA are practice-oriented and designed to train specialists capable of contributing to the country's reconstruction.

In this way, JICA's activities integrate the educational, technological and economic components of cooperation, making education a key instrument of the long-term partnership between Ukraine and Japan.

A concrete manifestation of this support was the implementation in 2024 of a large-scale programme to equip Digital Learning Centres (DLCs) in Ukraine. JICA handed over equipment to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for 85 Digital Learning Centres in nine regions—Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Sumy regions (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). The list of equipment included tablets, laptops, networking equipment, generators for uninterrupted internet access, interactive whiteboards, 3D printers and robotics kits. The choice of these nine regions is telling: all of them are either frontline regions or have been under occupation at various times—that is, JICA is deliberately directing educational aid to where access to education is most limited. In this way, Japanese educational diplomacy takes on a distinct security and humanitarian function: it not only builds human capital for recovery but also ensures the continuity of education in areas where this is physically most challenging.

In parallel, JICA is implementing the Knowledge Co-Creation Programmes (KCCP)—training courses for Ukrainian specialists held directly in Japan. In the Japanese financial year 2024, Ukraine was allocated 25 training courses under this programme (JICA, 2024). The thematic scope covers public administration, agriculture, infrastructure and technology—areas directly linked to the needs of post-war reconstruction. It is important to note that the KCCP operates not as a scholarship programme for students, but as an instrument for institutional capacity building: practising professionals and civil servants are involved in the training, and upon their return, they become bearers of Japanese management experience and technologies within their organisations. A symbolic example of this approach is the JDS (Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship) programme: since 2024, two Ukrainian civil servants have been studying at universities in Tokyo under this programme, which is geared towards training leaders capable

of acting as a 'bridge' between their countries and Japan upon their return home (JICA, 2025). It is telling that both participants are involved in JICA's agricultural projects in Ukraine and plan to apply the knowledge they have gained about Japanese agricultural technologies and irrigation systems directly to the restoration of damaged land.

The participation of Ukrainian higher education institutions in joint educational and scientific projects with Japan is systematic in nature and primarily involves leading classical and technical universities. Among the Ukrainian partners, the most actively involved are Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Lviv Polytechnic National University, as well as individual regional and sector-specific educational institutions. On the Japanese side, cooperation involves leading universities, including the University of Tokyo, Tohoku University, and Osaka University, as well as a network of research centres and state institutions.

Institutional cooperation is primarily implemented in the following forms:

- academic exchanges (through MEXT programmes);
- joint research projects in the fields of technology, engineering and security;
- inter-university cooperation agreements;
- participation in consortia and international research networks.

Such formats of cooperation are in line with current trends in international education, according to which universities 'have become key actors in international relations' (de Wit et al., 2015).

Funding for educational cooperation between Ukraine and Japan is multi-level in nature and reflects a strategic approach to education as an instrument of international policy. The combination of state, institutional and private sources allows for the formation of a sustainable support framework geared towards the long-term modernisation of the Ukrainian education system.

In this context, educational cooperation serves not only as a mechanism for knowledge transfer, but also as an instrument of influence in international relations—in line with the concept of 'soft power'.

An important area of cooperation is academic mobility, which is facilitated through the Japanese government's (MEXT) scholarship

programmes. Students and researchers from Ukrainian universities, including Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute” and Lviv Polytechnic National University, participate in these programmes.

Such programmes contribute to the development of highly qualified personnel and are in line with the general trends towards the internationalisation of education, where ‘mobility of students and scholars is one of the most visible forms of internationalisation of higher education’ (Knight, 2012, p. 22).

At the same time, institutional partnerships between universities are developing, encompassing joint educational programmes, research initiatives and academic exchanges, and representing one of the most dynamic forms of Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation.

A concrete example is the participation of Ukrainian students in the Japan–Ukraine University Pathways (JUUP) programme, implemented with the support of Japanese universities and international educational organisations. As part of this initiative, a number of Japanese universities, including Keio University, Waseda University, Sophia University and Rikkyo University, offer Ukrainian students the opportunity to study with full or partial funding, including coverage of tuition fees, accommodation and scholarship support (Refugee Education Japan, 2024; JICUF, 2022).

An important example of cooperation at the level of individual institutions is the implementation of joint educational projects between Ukrainian and Japanese universities. In particular, West Ukrainian National University has launched a project in collaboration with Kyoto Sangyo University (Japan), which involves students participating in academic and intercultural programmes in the field of international communication (West Ukrainian National University, 2024).

Another example is the cooperation between the National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky KPI” and Japanese partners, which combines educational and technological components. In 2025, the university, in collaboration with Japanese companies and government bodies, demonstrated remote control technologies for engineering equipment used in infrastructure restoration (Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, 2025). At the same time, the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute hosts the Ukrainian-Japanese Centre, established with the

support of the Japan Foundation, which facilitates language, cultural and educational programmes (Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, n.d.).

Another key area is the development of academic research and international scientific networks. In particular, Kobe Gakuin University has established a research centre dedicated to Ukrainian studies and joined the Global Coalition for Ukrainian Studies, which promotes knowledge about Ukraine in the Asia-Pacific region (President of Ukraine, 2025).

At the intergovernmental level, the development of institutional partnerships is coordinated through joint mechanisms, notably the Ukraine-Japan Commission on Education, Science and Technology, established in 2024. Within the scope of its activities, directions for the development of academic exchanges, joint research and specialist training are identified, and projects to establish training centres and technological programmes are developed (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

Thus, the institutional partnership between universities in Ukraine and Japan is multi-level in nature and includes:

- joint educational programmes;
- academic exchanges;
- research initiatives;
- the creation of institutional platforms for cooperation.

Such formats of interaction are in line with current trends in international education, which emphasise the growing role of universities as independent actors in international relations.

Cultural and educational diplomacy constitutes a distinct area of focus; it is implemented through the systematic promotion of the Japanese language and culture in Ukraine and serves as a key instrument in forging long-term intergovernmental ties. In this context, educational cooperation goes beyond purely academic exchange and transforms into a channel for intercultural communication, contributing to the formation of a sustainable humanitarian partnership.

This area is put into practice through the development of Japanese language teaching programmes at leading Ukrainian universities. In particular, relevant educational programmes operate at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, where Japanese is taught as part of Oriental and international studies, as well as at Ivan Franko National University

of Lviv, which has a long-standing tradition of training specialists in Oriental languages. Japanese language courses are also offered at certain technical and humanities institutions, notably at the Ushynsky University, reflecting the growing demand for intercultural competencies and knowledge of Asian languages in the context of expanding international cooperation.

The Japan Foundation serves as the institutional backbone of this process, playing a key role in supporting language education, cultural programmes and academic exchange. The Foundation's activities include:

- providing universities with teaching materials and methodological resources;
- organising language courses and training programmes for teachers;
- conducting cultural and educational events, including lectures, festivals and public discussions;
- supporting academic programmes related to Japanese studies.

An important aspect is that the Japan Foundation's activities are aimed not only at language learning, but also at fostering a comprehensive understanding of Japanese society, cultural practices and value systems. This approach contributes to the development of students' intercultural competence, which is a key element of the modern internationalisation of education.

Cultural and educational initiatives aimed at promoting Japanese culture among Ukrainian youth also play a significant role. These include:

- holding themed events (Japanese culture days, anime and manga festivals);
- organising lectures and seminars featuring Japanese researchers;
- supporting student associations and Japanese culture clubs at universities.

These initiatives implement the concept of cultural diplomacy, within which popular culture (in particular 'Cool Japan') is used as a tool to shape a positive image of the country and enhance its appeal. As a result, not only is academic interest in Japan fostered, but also an emotional connection, which is a key factor in long-term intergovernmental cooperation.

A significant outcome of this approach is the growing number of students interested in learning Japanese and participating in academic mobility programmes. This, in turn, creates a human resource base for

the further development of Ukrainian-Japanese relations in the fields of education, science and the economy.

Thus, the cultural and educational diplomacy of Ukraine and Japan serves as an important complement to institutional and scientific forms of cooperation. It facilitates the development of intercultural dialogue, the strengthening of humanitarian ties and the creation of a social foundation for a long-term strategic partnership between the two countries.

The strategic dimension of Japanese-Ukrainian scientific and educational cooperation was given a new institutional framework in late 2025 and early 2026, thanks to a breakthrough in Japan's relations with the European Union in the field of research and innovation. On 22 December 2025, the European Commission and Japan successfully concluded negotiations on Japan's association with the Horizon Europe programme—the world's largest research funding programme with a budget of €93.5 billion (European Commission, 2025). The agreement, which is expected to be signed in 2026, gives Japanese researchers and organisations the opportunity to participate in joint research projects on an equal footing with partners from EU countries and associated states, and Japanese participants can already submit applications for Horizon Europe calls from January 2026 (European Commission, 2025). For Ukraine, this development has direct analytical significance: Ukraine has been an associated member of Horizon Europe since 2022. Thus, with the conclusion of the negotiations, Japan and Ukraine have for the first time found themselves within the same institutional research space—both countries can form joint research consortia directly within the framework of programme calls without the need for separate bilateral agreements. Whereas Japanese-Ukrainian scientific cooperation was previously built 'from the bottom up' – through specific projects and inter-university memoranda – a common institutional framework is now emerging that systematically reduces transaction costs and opens up access to large-scale funding for Japan–Ukraine–EU trilateral consortia.

Thus, the Japanese model of educational diplomacy towards Ukraine can be defined as a 'model of infrastructural solidarity'. Japan differs from other Asian partners in that it invests not only in educational content—programmes, scholarships, university agreements—but also in the physical and institutional infrastructure that enables education to function amid active hostilities: generators and tablets for frontline

schools, digital platforms to ensure the continuity of learning, and civil service development programmes focused on practical application upon return. This infrastructure-driven approach is gradually transforming the nature of bilateral relations: from asymmetric aid – where Japan gives and Ukraine receives – to a strategic partnership, where both sides have mutual obligations and joint project consortia within the framework of Horizon Europe. Educational diplomacy in Japanese-Ukrainian relations is thus not an instrument of situational influence, but a mechanism for systemic integration that lays the foundations for a long-term partnership regardless of the current geopolitical climate.

China: The Paradox of Academic Interdependence in a Polarized World

Ukraine's cooperation with the People's Republic of China in the field of education in the mid-2020s is shaping a complex and contradictory model of educational diplomacy that combines elements of cooperation and containment. Unlike partnerships with Japan or South Korea, which are largely based on shared values, relations with China are developing under conditions of "crisis pragmatism," where the maintenance of educational ties is driven by mutual benefit, despite geopolitical disagreements.

A key feature of this case is the phenomenon of paradoxical academic interdependence, which is taking shape amid the geopolitical polarization of the modern world. On the one hand, China officially recognizes Ukraine's territorial integrity and supports institutional mechanisms for cooperation, including the implementation and extension of bilateral agreements in the field of education. This allows for the maintenance of formal channels of academic interaction, particularly in the areas of student mobility, joint educational programs, and scientific contacts. On the other hand, the deepening of China's strategic partnership with the Russian Federation significantly limits the possibilities for developing full-fledged scientific and technological cooperation, especially in sensitive sectors.

This situation reflects a broader trend in international relations, where cooperation among states can persist even in the face of conflicting interests, since, as R. Keohane notes, interaction between actors is possible "under conditions of discord, where interests are neither completely opposed nor perfectly aligned" (Keohane, 1984). In this context, academic interaction serves as a form of functional cooperation,

sustained by the mutual interests of the parties but simultaneously constrained by political and security factors.

Thus, educational relations between Ukraine and China demonstrate a complex model in which institutional stability is combined with political caution, and academic cooperation coexists with constraints dictated by the geopolitical context.

Chinese students constitute the largest national group of international students pursuing higher education in Ukraine, which underscores their key role in the structure of academic mobility. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as of 2024, more than 10,700 Chinese citizens were studying at Ukrainian universities, significantly exceeding the numbers from other countries of origin for international students (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). This number reflects a consistent trend of Chinese students dominating the international student body at Ukrainian higher education institutions and mirrors a broader global trend in which China is the leading contributor to international academic mobility. As noted by UNESCO, China is the country of origin for the largest number of mobile students in the world, “by far the highest number globally” (UNESCO, n.d.).

Structurally, Chinese students exhibit a clear concentration in specific fields and study primarily at institutions specializing in applied and professionally oriented programs. This primarily refers to technical, economic, maritime, and pedagogical fields, which aligns with global trends in international education, where applied and engineering disciplines remain key areas of mobility. The choice of such educational paths is driven by both the competitive cost of Ukrainian education and the historically established reputation of Ukrainian universities in technical and natural sciences.

Geographically, Chinese students are concentrated in Ukraine’s largest educational hubs, where a well-developed institutional infrastructure for working with international students has been established. These hubs include Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Mykolaiv, as evidenced by the distribution of international students across regions and universities (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). The example of Kharkiv is particularly telling: in 2024, approximately 2,800 Chinese students were studying there, accounting for about 40% of the city’s total international student body (Ministry of Education and Science of

Ukraine, 2024). Kharkiv's universities, specifically Kharkiv Karazin University, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, and the National Technical University "KhPI," serve as key hubs for this concentration, forming regional educational clusters of international mobility.

Pedagogical (normal) universities occupy a distinct niche within the structure of academic mobility; they also attract Chinese students, albeit on a smaller scale compared to technical or economic institutions. The interest in teacher education among Chinese citizens stems from the demand for programs related to foreign language teaching, pedagogy, and the humanities. In this context, specialized institutions play an important role, particularly the Ushynsky University, which is integrating into the international educational space through the implementation of academic mobility and distance learning programs. Although the number of international students in teacher training institutions is lower, their participation is of qualitative significance, as it contributes to the development of the humanities component of educational diplomacy. At the same time, statistics on the majors of international students confirm that educational sciences remain a prominent field of study, ranking among the most popular disciplines (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

Thus, the geographical and sectoral concentration of Chinese students in Ukraine is systemic in nature and reflects the integration of Ukrainian higher education into global educational processes. At the same time, this concentration forms a specific model of academic interdependence, in which individual universities and regions serve as key hubs of international educational interaction with China, combining educational, economic, and humanitarian components of cooperation.

Following the outbreak of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion against Ukraine in 2022, the academic mobility of Chinese students underwent a significant transformation, manifested in the emergence of interrelated trends driven by both the digitalization of education and increased state regulation in the recognition of educational qualifications. First and foremost, educational interaction was maintained in a remote format, allowing a significant portion of Chinese students to continue their studies at Ukrainian higher education institutions despite restrictions on physical mobility and heightened security risks. This format became

a necessary but effective adaptation to wartime conditions, ensuring the continuity of the educational process and the retention of the international student body. In a broader context, these processes align with the global trend toward the development of so-called “digital mobility,” which involves the transformation of the traditional model of academic exchange into blended or distance formats (Knight, 2012).

At the same time, the growing importance of distance learning has brought to the fore another, more problematic trend: increased regulatory oversight by the People’s Republic of China regarding the recognition of foreign online degrees. Starting in 2023, the PRC Ministry of Education has significantly revised its approaches to the recognition of degrees earned through distance or blended learning outside the country. Key importance is placed on criteria such as the student’s physical presence in the country of study, the format of instruction, ensuring academic integrity, and confirming actual participation in the educational process. As a result, a situation has arisen in which degrees obtained entirely through distance learning may not meet the established national criteria for recognition.

In the context of Ukrainian-Chinese educational relations, these changes have come into conflict with the existing legal framework. The key legal basis for cooperation remains the Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Mutual Recognition of Educational Documents and Academic Degrees of December 11, 1998, which enshrines the principle of automatic recognition of state-issued diplomas and stipulates that such documents “entitle the holder to continue education ... and the practice of professional activities” (Government of Ukraine & Government of the People’s Republic of China, 1998).

However, this agreement was concluded under conditions of traditional, physically realized academic mobility and does not take into account the specifics of digital learning formats. As a result, a legal and institutional conflict arose after 2022: on the one hand, the regime of mutual recognition of diplomas is formally maintained; on the other, the PRC’s current regulatory policy restricts the recognition of distance education outcomes. This has led to a situation where diplomas obtained by Chinese students at Ukrainian universities without physical attendance may, in some cases, not be subject to automatic recognition.

In practical terms, this has shifted the issue from the academic to the intergovernmental level. The question of diploma recognition has become a topic of discussion within the framework of bilateral cooperation bodies, particularly the subcommittees on education operating under the intergovernmental mechanisms of Ukraine and the PRC. The Ukrainian side argues that distance learning under martial law is equivalent to the traditional format, while the Chinese side insists on compliance with regulatory quality criteria and the physical presence of students. Thus, the issue of diploma recognition has evolved into a matter of educational diplomacy, where positions are reconciled through negotiation and regulatory instruments.

As a result, a model has emerged that can be described as “regulated digital mobility,” under which the opportunity to study abroad is formally preserved, yet its outcomes are subject to heightened state oversight and may have limited legitimacy within the national educational landscape. This situation creates additional risks for students, including uncertainty regarding the recognition of diplomas, limited employment opportunities, and difficulties with their future academic careers.

Thus, the transformation of academic mobility for Chinese students in Ukraine after 2022 reflects not only a shift from in-person to digital learning formats but also the growing politicization and regulatory complexity of international education. In this context, educational cooperation is increasingly becoming integrated into the sphere of public policy and international relations, where issues of mobility, educational quality, and the recognition of diplomas are becoming elements of strategic regulation and inter-state balancing.

Particularly illustrative in the context of the transformation of Ukrainian-Chinese inter-university cooperation is the experience of the Ushynsky University, which demonstrates the high adaptability of educational practices to wartime conditions and changes in the global regulatory environment. Until 2022, the university maintained a stable presence of students from the People’s Republic of China, who were enrolled primarily in arts, education, and humanities programs.

With the onset of the full-scale invasion, a significant portion of Chinese students were forced to leave Ukraine, leading to a sharp decline in their physical presence at the university. The educational process was quickly shifted to a remote format, which allowed the student body

to be formally retained but cast doubt on the full recognition of the qualifications earned in their home countries.

Starting in 2023, against the backdrop of changes in China's regulatory policy regarding restrictions on the recognition of foreign online degrees, a new trend has emerged: some Chinese students are gradually returning to Ukraine to continue their studies in person. This trend is driven by a desire to avoid the risk of diplomas not being recognized and aligns with Chinese requirements for physical presence while studying abroad. Consequently, in-person study is once again becoming a key requirement for academic legitimacy.

As of 2025–2026, a partial recovery of the Chinese student body is observed, though its composition has changed: currently, fields of study that require a high level of practical training and cannot be fully delivered in a distance format dominate. This primarily concerns creative and artistic fields, specifically music, visual arts, design, and choreography, where direct presence in the learning environment is crucial for acquiring professional competencies.

The training of academic and teaching staff through postgraduate programs plays a particularly significant role in the structure of Ukrainian-Chinese educational cooperation, remaining one of the most stable and valuable areas of collaboration. Unlike bachelor's and master's programs, which are more sensitive to regulatory changes and mobility conditions, postgraduate studies ensure long-term academic integration, the development of research competencies, and the growth of professional networks. On a national scale, the number of international graduate students is relatively small, yet it holds strategic importance for the internationalization of science and the establishment of academic ties.

In this context, it is noteworthy that as of 2026, approximately 50 international graduate students, primarily from the People's Republic of China, are enrolled in the graduate program at the Ushynsky University under the educational and research program "Art Pedagogy in Higher Education." This figure is significant for a humanities and pedagogical institution and indicates the established academic interest of Chinese students in Ukrainian research schools in the field of arts education.

At the same time, the university continues to strengthen its collaboration with Chinese partners through joint educational initiatives,

including online courses, international academic lectures, and research projects. The combination of these formats with a gradual return to in-person learning forms a hybrid model of academic interaction, within which digital tools complement traditional forms of cooperation.

The most sensitive and strategically significant area of Ukrainian-Chinese relations remains high-tech and scientific research cooperation, which combines the potential for innovative development with heightened risks in the areas of security and technology transfer. This is particularly true for dual-use sectors, specifically aerospace engineering, aircraft manufacturing, and materials science.

Since 2022, Ukraine's state policy in this area has undergone significant changes and is gradually shifting toward the principles of "de-risking" and reorientation toward the European Research Area. In the strategic documents and reforms being developed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, key priorities include integration into the EU, the development of domestic research infrastructure, and strengthened oversight of international scientific and technical cooperation. This effectively means revising cooperation formats with countries where there are heightened risks of uncontrolled technology transfer, particularly with China.

A telling example is the restriction on cooperation with Chinese technical universities, particularly the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT), which is part of the so-called "Seven Sons of National Defense" group and plays a key role in the development of China's missile and space technologies. This university was added to the U. S. Entity List in 2020, which means strict restrictions on technology exports and scientific cooperation with it. The basis for these restrictions was suspicion of involvement in military modernization programs and the use of scientific developments in the defense sector.

In a broader context, this aligns with the global trend of tightening export controls and sanctions policies targeting Chinese scientific and technological institutions. In particular, in 2024–2025, the U. S. expanded the Entity List to include dozens of Chinese research centers and universities whose activities, according to U. S. authorities, "contradict national security interests." Such restrictions require special licenses or a complete ban on the transfer of technology, equipment, and research results.

At the same time, in response to tightening restrictions in high-tech sectors, Ukrainian-Chinese scientific cooperation is shifting toward the social sciences, humanities, and applied non-military sciences, which are considered less sensitive in terms of security and the transfer of critical technologies. This transformation is a manifestation of the “selective internationalization” model, under which international interaction does not cease but is reoriented toward areas with lower regulatory risks.

A telling example in this context is the experience of the South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky (Ushynsky University), which is implementing cooperation with Chinese partners primarily in the humanities and management fields. Specifically, this refers to the international scientific and educational project “Global Governance and European Integration,” aimed at researching the transformation of governance systems, international relations, and integration processes. The implementation of such initiatives involves joint research, academic exchanges, conferences, and the preparation of scientific publications, which contributes to the development of intercultural academic dialogue.

Similar trends can be observed in other sectors, where cooperation with China continues thanks to a shift toward applied and civilian fields. In particular, Sumy National Agrarian University serves as an example of stable collaboration in the fields of agricultural sciences, biotechnology, and food safety. In these sectors, Sino-Ukrainian cooperation retains practical significance and is less dependent on restrictions related to dual-use technologies. Joint research in agricultural production, sustainable development, and bioresources addresses both food security needs and global development goals, making it a relatively stable area of international scientific cooperation.

Thus, the current structure of Ukrainian-Chinese scientific cooperation is taking on a functionally differentiated character: high-risk sectors (aerospace, shipbuilding, engine manufacturing) are gradually withdrawing from active cooperation or are subject to strict control, while the humanities, social sciences, and applied civil sciences (management, education, agricultural research) remain the primary channels of international cooperation. This transformation indicates the emergence of a new model of international scientific cooperation, in which academic ties are maintained but operate under conditions of heightened politicization and regulatory constraints.

Despite political complexities and increasing regulatory restrictions, cultural and educational cooperation remains an important and relatively stable element of Ukrainian-Chinese relations. Leading Ukrainian universities remain active in areas such as Chinese language instruction, the implementation of educational programs on intercultural communication, and the organization of academic and cultural events aimed at fostering humanitarian dialogue.

Confucius Institutes play a special role in this context, and their status in Ukraine as of 2026 remains a subject of professional and political debate. Unlike many countries in the European Union and the United States, where there is a trend toward closing or radically restricting such institutions, Ukraine has opted for a “strict monitoring” model, which entails their preservation under conditions of heightened oversight by the state and universities. This approach is driven by pragmatic considerations: the need to maintain a channel of communication with China while simultaneously ensuring the training of Ukrainian-speaking specialists in the Chinese language, who will be of strategic importance for future economic cooperation.

In this context, a key example is the Ushynsky University, which plays a significant role in the framework of Ukrainian-Chinese educational ties. As the home of one of the most active Confucius Institutes in the Black Sea region, the university serves as a hub of academic continuity, ensuring the sustainability of language education and intercultural exchange even amid the geopolitical transformations of 2024–2026.

In contrast to the more politicized perception of Confucius Institutes in Western academic discourse, the Institute’s activities at Ushynsky University are pragmatic and depoliticized. Its main areas of focus include professionalizing Chinese language instruction, preparing students for the HSK international certification, and developing teaching methodologies. This focus aligns with the needs of the region, particularly the Odesa region, where there is a steady demand for specialists in foreign trade and logistics.

Ukrainian-Chinese cooperation in the fields of education and science has undergone a significant transformation since 2022, as evidenced by the shift from an open model of interaction to a selective and regulated system of cooperation. Influenced by the military context, as well as global processes of the securitization of science, cooperation has

narrowed in high-tech sectors such as aerospace, engineering, and shipbuilding. Key cases, particularly the situation surrounding Motor Sich and restrictions on interaction with Chinese technical universities, indicate a reorientation of Ukraine's state policy toward protecting technological sovereignty and controlling knowledge transfer.

At the same time, cooperation is not ceasing but is being redirected toward less sensitive areas, primarily the humanities, social sciences, and applied civil sciences. Educational and scientific initiatives at universities such as the Ushynsky University or the Sumy National Agrarian University demonstrate an ability to adapt through the development of intercultural communication, management studies, and agricultural science. At the same time, a transformation of academic mobility is taking place: following a phase of mass digitization, there has been a partial return to in-person learning, driven by China's policy of limited recognition of online degrees.

The cultural and educational dimension plays a special role in maintaining bilateral ties, particularly the activities of the Confucius Institutes, which have not been shut down in Ukraine but are operating under enhanced monitoring. The reduction in their number after 2022 is accompanied by a shift in their functional role—from a “soft power” tool to a “diplomacy of necessity” format focused on training language specialists and maintaining a basic level of academic dialogue. Overall, Ukrainian-Chinese relations in the field of education and science are taking on the characteristics of a hybrid, politically sensitive, and adaptive model, in which cooperation is maintained but carried out under conditions of heightened state control and strategic balancing.

South Korea: A “Master” Model for National Revival

In relations with Ukraine, this approach has become particularly relevant since 2022, when educational and scientific diplomacy became a key component of the post-war reconstruction process. The institutional framework for cooperation is provided by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), and global educational initiatives. The signing of a framework agreement between Ukraine and the Republic of Korea in 2024, which provides for up to \$2.1 billion in funding, integrates educational diplomacy into economic recovery policy (Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, 2024). According to research findings, KOICA programs “significantly contribute to the enhancement of human resource

development and institutional capacity” (Khan et al., 2024, p. 4), confirming their strategic role.

One of the key elements of the Korean model is the priority given to vocational education and training (VET), which historically drove the country’s industrialization. Lim (2015) emphasizes that “VET played a crucial role in supplying skilled workers necessary for Korea’s industrialization” (p. 3), and empirical studies show that “vocational training programs have strong positive effects on wages and employment probability” (Lee et al., 2019, p. 102).

Another key area is the digital transformation of public administration. In 2025, the “Strengthening Digital Governance” project was launched, aimed at improving government efficiency and accountability through digital tools. This initiative involves not only the implementation of technologies but also the training of civil servants, in line with the concept of institutional development through education. Concurrently, an energy transformation program is being implemented, which includes training for approximately 1,800 specialists and the implementation of solutions to strengthen energy resilience. In this way, Korea’s educational diplomacy is integrated into key areas of Ukraine’s public policy.

A distinctive feature of the Korean model is the combination of educational and economic tools. In 2025, the creation of training centers for construction equipment operators began, where students are trained using modern curricula and Korean equipment. This demonstrates the integration of education with the real sector of the economy and reflects the “train → build → operate” model.

Inter-university partnerships play an important role in higher education. Ukrainian universities, including National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”, collaborate with Korean institutions such as Inha University and Korea Lift College to implement joint educational and engineering programs. In 2025, Hanyang University hosted a roundtable with the participation of Ukrainian universities, dedicated to issues of post-war reconstruction and scientific cooperation. At the same time, partnerships with Sahmyook University are developing, involving academic exchanges and the modernization of the educational environment.

An important but often underestimated dimension of Korean-Ukrainian educational cooperation is the role of the Korean Wave

(Hallyu) as a social backdrop that prepares the ground for academic contacts. Heo and Song (2026) empirically demonstrate that the popularity of Korean cultural products in the recipient country directly correlates with increased interest in learning the Korean language, a rise in the number of students, and a broader interest in the country: specifically, in the United States, enrollment in Korean language courses at institutions of higher education increased by 78% between 2009 and 2016, while demand for all other foreign languages remained stable or declined (Ahn, 2022, as cited in Heo & Song, 2026, p. 49).

In Ukraine, a similar trend can be observed through the growing demand for Korean language programs—particularly at the Ushynsky University, where the training of Korean language specialists is combined with academic mobility programs and intercultural initiatives in collaboration with Gyeongin National University of Education. Thus, fan communities, online culture, and K-pop serve as functional precursors to academic partnerships, fostering cultural affinity even before university agreements are signed (Heo & Song, 2026, pp. 11–12).

A telling example is the case of the Ushynsky University (Odessa), where students are trained in the “Korean language” program. The university cooperates with a number of Korean partners, including Gyeongin National University of Education, and supports academic exchanges and joint educational programs. Students have the opportunity to study for one or two semesters as part of mobility programs. In 2025, students majoring in “Korean Language” participated in the international “Multicultural Education Mentoring Program” in collaboration with Gyeongin National University of Education, aimed at developing intercultural competencies.

Similar processes are also common in other regions of Ukraine. In particular, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv operates a Center for Korean Language and Literature, where several Ukrainian students have the opportunity to participate in language internships in Korea each semester. Scholarship programs complement this system: the Global Korea Scholarship aims to cultivate global talent and establish international networks, and according to Snow (2021), such programs are an important tool of public diplomacy because they foster long-term international ties (p. 5).

Thus, the Republic of Korea’s experience in relations with Ukraine is unique among Asian partners precisely because it offers not only

resources for reconstruction but also a replicable model of development. Heo and Song (2026) emphasize that Korea is the only country in the world that purposefully positions itself as a leading exporter of cultural products and systematically combines this strategy with state support for the education and science sectors (p. 24). It is this integration—between cultural diplomacy, professional education, digital transformation, and institutional development—that constitutes the essence of the “master model”: not technology transfer or financial aid per se, but the transfer of the logic of state-oriented development through educational interaction. The Taiwanese case, studied in detail by Heo and Song (2026, p. 53–58), is structurally illustrative: a country that experienced a sharp cooling of relations with Korea and restored them precisely through cultural and educational rapprochement, demonstrates that soft power is capable of changing official policy even in the absence of hard pressure. For Ukraine, which is in the process of strategic reorientation of its external relations, the Korean model offers a precedent for how educational cooperation can act as a system-forming instrument of international interaction.

India: “Non-Western” Educational Diplomacy Amid Global Turbulence

Among Ukraine’s Asian partners, India occupies a special analytical position—not because of the scale of bilateral educational cooperation, which remains smaller than that with Japan or South Korea, but because of the unique theoretical position this country holds in the contemporary architecture of international relations. India is the world’s largest democracy, a nuclear power, and the third-largest economy, which consciously rejects rigid bloc commitments and positions itself as the voice of the “Global South”—a group of states that identify neither with the West nor with the authoritarian East. As noted by Jaggi et al. (2024), education as a tool of international cooperation and diplomacy is a key element of India’s foreign policy identity, rooted in the civilizational principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—“the whole world is one family”—which became the official motto of India’s G20 presidency in 2023 and reflects its aspiration to serve as a mediator of global development (Kapur & Behl, 2024).

In theory, the Indian model of educational diplomacy represents an inversion of the classic “soft power” framework described by Nye (2004):

while for Japan or South Korea, soft power serves as a complement to an already established strong economic and technological image, India uses its educational presence as a primary tool for image-building and expanding its influence at a time when its hard power has not yet reached a global scale comparable to that of the United States or China. This makes India conceptually similar to the mechanism described by Heo and Song (2026) for analyzing the Korean case: cultural and educational appeal functions as an independent resource that does not require reinforcement by superpower status. In a broader discourse, this corresponds to the concept of “South-South education diplomacy,” within which a state builds soft influence by sharing its experience in overcoming inequality, rather than by demonstrating the prosperity it has already achieved (Jaggi et al., 2024).

The institutional framework of Indian educational diplomacy is shaped by three complementary mechanisms. The first is the ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) program, launched in 1964 and currently covering 161 countries, including Ukraine. Through ITEC, approximately 10,000 fully funded study places are offered annually in over 400 courses at more than 100 leading Indian universities and centers of excellence in the fields of public administration, IT, agrobiotechnology, renewable energy, and healthcare (Embassy of India in Ukraine, n.d.). The second mechanism consists of scholarship programs offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which cover bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels and are implemented through a network of cultural centers. The third is the Joint Ukrainian-Indian Working Group on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (JWG on Scientific and Technological Cooperation), whose eighth meeting took place in June 2024 and identified priority areas for joint research in the fields of ICT, artificial intelligence, cloud services, biotechnology, and “green” energy (India–Ukraine Joint Statement, 2024).

The key geopolitical event that defined a new dimension in Indo-Ukrainian educational relations was the first-ever visit to Kyiv by an Indian prime minister—Narendra Modi’s visit on August 23, 2024. The leaders of the two countries expressed their mutual intention to elevate their relationship from a “comprehensive partnership” to a strategic one. During the meeting, they signed a Cultural Cooperation Program for 2024–2028 and a memorandum on humanitarian grant assistance from

India, which included an educational component for reconstruction. The parties highlighted the successful implementation of the agreement on scientific and technical cooperation and the functioning of the Joint Working Group, calling for regular exchanges in the fields of ICT, AI, machine learning, cloud services, biotechnology, new materials, and “green” energy (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2024). In September 2024, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Modi continued discussions on the implementation of the agreements, particularly in the fields of education and science (President of Ukraine, 2024).

The pre-war context of academic mobility is of particular analytical significance. Before the full-scale invasion began, about 18,000 of the approximately 20,000 Indian citizens in Ukraine were students, primarily studying medicine and engineering; they constituted the largest group among the 76,000 international students in the country – about 24% of the total (The Federal, 2022). This scale indicates that the academic flow is systemic rather than situational, having developed over three decades and driven by a combination of affordable tuition, high-quality education at medical universities, and the absence of overly difficult entrance exams. The evacuation of Indian students in February-March 2022 (Operation “Ganga”) became one of India’s largest consular operations in the country’s entire history as an independent nation.

Particularly telling is the issue of the KROK qualifying exams, which has become one of the most pressing practical challenges in Ukrainian-Indian educational cooperation and, at the same time, has turned into a unique precedent for the diplomatic resolution of a purely academic issue at the intergovernmental level. KROK is a mandatory licensing requirement for obtaining a medical degree in Ukraine and consists of a theoretical stage (KROK-1, after the third year) and a clinical stage (KROK-2, in the final year). Following the start of the invasion in March 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health canceled the KROK for graduating students and postponed it for third-year students, creating legal uncertainty for thousands of Indian students who had returned home (Careers360, 2022). At the same time, India’s National Medical Commission (NMC) faced a systemic issue: according to current regulations, the entire course of study, clinical rotations, and internship must be completed exclusively at a single overseas institution. As a result,

students found themselves caught in a legal conflict between two national regulatory systems, neither of which initially had the tools to address this unprecedented situation.

This issue was resolved in April 2023 during an official visit to New Delhi by Ukraine's First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emine Dzhaparova: the Ukrainian side announced that international students, including those from India, would be allowed to take the Unified State Qualification Exam (USYA)—including the KROK, an objective structured clinical examination, and an English language exam—at testing centers in their country of residence (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2023). This decision directly affected more than 20,000 Indian medical students who were evacuated after February 24, 2022 (The Tribune India, 2023). The fact that the issue of student exams was included on the priority agenda of the first official visit by Ukraine's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to India since the start of the full-scale war eloquently demonstrates the importance of academic mobility in the framework of bilateral relations.

This case is analytically significant in several respects. First, it demonstrates that educational diplomacy can function as a mechanism for the rapid resolution of specific humanitarian problems, rather than merely as a tool for long-term positioning. Second, it is structurally opposite to the Chinese case: while China tightened regulatory controls in 2023 and refused to recognize degrees earned through distance learning, Ukraine deliberately relaxed its examination requirements to maintain academic ties with its largest group of international students. In both cases, the issue of recognizing educational qualifications has become a matter of interstate diplomacy—but with opposing regulatory responses: China moved toward restriction, while Ukraine moved toward adaptation.

A fundamentally important aspect of India's educational diplomacy toward Ukraine is its neutral stance. Unlike Japan or South Korea, which clearly support Ukraine as part of a broader geopolitical choice, India adheres to the principle of "strategic autonomy": it refrained from condemning Russia in the UN Security Council, but at the same time supported Ukraine's sovereignty, attended the Bürgenstock Peace Summit, and ultimately sent its prime minister to Kyiv. For Ukraine, this arrangement means that educational cooperation with India is developing outside the framework of bloc commitments and serves as a tool for

diversifying international ties in the literal sense—that is, by engaging a partner that does not fit into any of the existing geopolitical coalitions. The resumption of educational cooperation is evidenced by Ukraine’s participation in the Global Education Conclave in Punjab in April 2025, where specific joint projects with the Chandigarh Group of Colleges in the fields of medical and engineering education were discussed (Embassy of Ukraine in India, 2025).

Ukraine’s diplomatic engagement with India in 2024–2025 took on a systematic character, which qualitatively distinguishes this track from most other Asian partnerships. While ministerial visits between the two countries had been few and far between until 2022, following the start of the full-scale invasion, there was a steady intensification of high-level contacts: In March 2024, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba visited India—the first such visit in a decade—and in August 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Kyiv. A logical next step was the visit to India by Ukraine’s new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andriy Sybiga, on March 17–19, 2025. During these three days, he participated in the Raisina Dialogue 2025—Asia’s largest security forum—and the business forum “Ukraine–India: From Comprehensive to Strategic Partnership” in Mumbai, attended by over 130 Indian companies, and the opening of the Consulate General of Ukraine in Mumbai—India’s financial capital (United24 Media, 2025). The fact that Ukraine is opening a new diplomatic mission amid active hostilities is eloquent testimony to the strategic priority of its relationship with India: the consulate will directly support business contacts and facilitate the resumption of academic mobility. At the same time, from March 29 to 31, 2025, the Embassy of Ukraine in India participated in the Global Education Conclave in Punjab—an international educational event where Minister-Counselor Artem Nosko emphasized the educational dimension of the humanitarian aid agreement signed during Modi’s visit to Kyiv, and promoted Ukraine as a “reliable and promising partner in the field of education” (Embassy of Ukraine in India, 2025).

The structural configuration taking shape around the India–EU–Ukraine triad in the fields of science and education deserves separate analysis. On January 27, 2026, at the 16th EU–India Summit in New Delhi, leaders signed the “Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda toward 2030,” in which research and innovation became, for the first time,

a central—rather than peripheral—dimension of the partnership. A key practical outcome in the field of science and education was the official launch of negotiations on India’s association with the Horizon Europe program (European Commission, 2026). Association with Horizon Europe is the most comprehensive form of international scientific and technical partnership with the EU: it provides universities and research organizations in third countries with the opportunity to participate fully in joint research consortia on an equal footing with member states—just as South Korea, Israel, and Norway already do (European Commission, 2026). For Ukraine, this development is of immediate significance: Ukraine is already an associated member of Horizon Europe—a status confirmed after the start of the full-scale invasion and maintained as part of support for EU integration. If India concludes negotiations and becomes an associate member, for the first time in history both countries will find themselves within the same institutional research space, which will radically reduce transaction costs for joint projects: instead of separate bilateral agreements, Ukrainian and Indian universities will be able to form consortia directly within the framework of joint Horizon calls for proposals. Thus, Ukraine’s path toward European integration and the global expansion of Horizon Europe create a structural “track effect” that could transform the current Ukrainian-Indian scientific and educational cooperation—which is diplomatically active but institutionally weak—into stable, network-based collaboration.

Thus, India, as Ukraine’s partner in the field of educational diplomacy, is a unique case of “asymmetric complementarity” that is taking on new dimensions. First, it is a case of unconditional partnership: the world’s largest democracy maintains educational ties with Ukraine without demanding geopolitical loyalty, a fact that holds strategic value precisely because of its neutrality. Second, this is a case of diplomatic engagement: the systematic intensification of ministerial contacts in 2024–2025—from Kuleba to Sibiga, from Dzhaparova to Nosko—demonstrates that the educational dimension is not a mere afterthought to the bilateral agenda, but one of the actual operational priorities. Third, this is a case of structural opportunity: if negotiations on India’s association with Horizon Europe are successful, this will, for the first time, provide a common institutional platform for Ukrainian-Indian scientific cooperation—one that is independent of bilateral agreements and open to systematic networking.

At the same time, structural constraints in India's educational diplomacy—insufficient funding, a lack of coordination among relevant institutions, and an unclear mandate for the ICCR (Parliamentary Standing Committee, 2022)—are currently holding back the implementation of these stated intentions. Nevertheless, the combination of the diplomatic momentum of 2024–2025 and the structural opportunities opened up by Horizon Europe provides grounds for considering the Ukraine-India partnership as one of the most promising in the medium term among all of Ukraine's Asian partnerships.

ACEAH Countries: Between Neutrality, Pragmatism, and Educational Openness

The Regional Dimension: ACEAH as a Space for a New Kind of Educational Diplomacy. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ACEAH) is a unique regional organization comprising ten member states – Brunei, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, – whose combined population exceeds 690 million people, and whose combined GDP as of 2024 reaches \$3.9 trillion (CFR, 2025). In 2025, Timor-Leste joined the bloc as a full member. ACEAH is not a monolithic community with a unified foreign policy: the region's states differ significantly in terms of economic development, political systems, and positions on key geopolitical issues. It is precisely this heterogeneity that defines the specific nature of Ukraine's educational diplomacy in the region – it cannot be structured as a unified strategy but requires a differentiated approach to each country.

Ukraine's relations with ACEAH took on a new institutional dimension following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. In November 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine ratified the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC)—one of ACEAH's founding documents—which laid the legal foundation for deeper institutional engagement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2024). On February 29, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine released the Concept Paper "Ukraine – ACEAH: A Vision for Cooperation," which was presented at a hybrid event attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps and the ACEAH Secretariat. The document identifies priority areas for cooperation: food security, digital transformation, trade, energy, emergency management, demining, as well as social and cultural cooperation—which includes education (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2024).

At the same time, Ukraine is actively seeking the status of an ACEAH Sectoral Dialogue Partner (SDP). In February 2026, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sibiga confirmed this intention during a meeting with the ACEAH Secretary-General, emphasizing that «ACEAH is an important partner for Ukraine in the current international architecture» (AA, 2026). In January 2026, Ukraine's Ambassador to the Philippines, Yulia Fediv, clarified that Kyiv aims to obtain this status as early as 2026—during the Philippines' chairmanship of ACEAH (ACEAH HUB, 2026). Thus, the educational dimension is structurally embedded in a broader institutional strategy, rather than merely a stated intention.

In the geopolitical context, ACEAH has adopted a position of “strategic neutrality” regarding the conflict in Ukraine. The region's states refrained from directly condemning Russia in the UN Security Council, although they did support UN General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Singapore's position is the clearest, as it has imposed unilateral sanctions against Russia (Military.com, 2022). This neutral yet pragmatic stance shapes the framework of educational diplomacy: it is driven not by values or security commitments, but by the logic of mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, digital competencies, and academic mobility. This is precisely why ACEAH is conceptually aligned with the notion of “south-south education diplomacy,” where cooperation is built among partners with similar development experiences, rather than between a donor and a recipient (Jaggi et al., 2024).

The region's educational architecture is characterized by the dynamic development of its own mechanisms for internationalization. In particular, Singapore is implementing the ACEAH Integration Initiative (IAI) program, under which a network of Singapore Cooperation Centers has been established in Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. In total, more than 43,000 professionals from these countries have received training in management, trade, food security, and digital technologies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, n.d.). This indicates that ACEAH is shaping its own regional model of educational diplomacy, in which leading states act as active donors of knowledge to less developed partners. In this context, Ukraine is engaging with a region where its own educational diplomacy traditions are already established and functioning.

The State of Ukrainian Academic Discourse on ACEAH and Educational Diplomacy: Identifying a Gap. An analysis of available

Ukrainian-language academic sources reveals a distinctive asymmetry: relations between Ukraine and ACEAH are studied primarily through the prism of security and economics, while the educational dimension remains virtually overlooked in scholarly discourse. Krupenia (2022), in the Bulletin of the National Technical University of Ukraine “KPI,” focuses on the geopolitical stance of ACEAH countries regarding Russian aggression and an analysis of the region’s media landscape, without addressing issues of academic cooperation. A more comprehensive article by Krupenia and Sokyrskya (2024) in the journal “Acta de Historia & Politica: Saeculum XXI”, is the first to outline promising areas of cooperation between Ukraine and ACEAH – including the sociocultural dimension and the promotion of the Ukrainian language – though education remains merely one of seven equally weighted points without a separate analytical discussion. Pripik (2022), in an analytical note from the Institute of World History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, analyzes the economic consequences of the aggression for countries in the region, while omitting the educational dimension. As for maritime education as a specific niche of educational-diplomatic interaction, no specialized Ukrainian-language research could be found, despite the fact that Ukraine’s loss of market share in training maritime personnel for ACEAH countries is a documented industry fact.

This dual gap – the absence of both general studies on Ukraine’s educational diplomacy toward ACEAH and sector-specific research on maritime education – confirms the originality and relevance of the approach implemented in this study and defines its contribution to the formation of a new thematic direction in Ukrainian international relations scholarship.

Vietnam: A Model of “Equal-Partner Pragmatism” in the Bilateral Dimension

Among ACEAH member states, Vietnam holds a special analytical position in the context of Ukrainian-Asian educational cooperation. This country is the region’s most dynamic economy – with GDP growth exceeding 7% in 2025 (Modern Diplomacy, 2025) – and at the same time demonstrates a model of foreign policy behavior that can be described as “equal-partner pragmatism”: Vietnam maintains strategic partnerships simultaneously with Russia, the United States, Japan, China, and other major powers, avoiding bloc commitments and positioning itself as an

independent actor in the Global South. In 2025, Vietnam set a record by signing approximately 350 cooperation agreements—2.5 times more than in 2024 (Vietnam.vn, 2026).

The educational dimension of bilateral relations between Ukraine and Vietnam is developing within the framework of a regulatory framework that includes intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the fields of education and science. The Embassy of Ukraine in Vietnam coordinates educational cooperation, including informing Vietnamese prospective students about opportunities to study in Ukraine (Embassy of Ukraine in Vietnam, n.d.). An important contextual factor is that Vietnam is simultaneously building its own model of an educational hub: as of the end of 2024, there were approximately 22,000 international students studying in the country, of whom about 4,000 were enrolled under government scholarship programs (Vietnam VNA, 2025). In March 2025, VinUni and Nanyang Technological University (NTU, Singapore) signed a strategic partnership agreement aimed at helping Vietnam rank among the world's top 100 universities.

For Ukraine, this development is of strategic importance: Vietnam is not only a potential source of students but also a partner in building joint educational platforms. The concept of “internationalization at home,” which is being actively implemented under martial law, finds its counterpart in Vietnamese practice: both countries are utilizing blended and digital learning formats as a tool to expand international reach without physical mobility (Knight, 2012). Accordingly, the potential for cooperation between Ukraine and Vietnam extends beyond traditional academic exchange and includes the joint development of digital educational platforms, mutual recognition of qualifications, and participation in trilateral consortia within the framework of Horizon Europe. It is worth noting separately that bilateral academic cooperation between Odessa National Maritime University (ONMU) and Vietnam Maritime University predates the current diplomatic rapprochement: ONMU has maintained ties with Vietnam since the 1950s, and this institutional memory serves as a resource for renewal.

Thailand: Cultural Diplomacy as a Harbinger of Academic Partnership

Thailand is one of the ACEAH member states most consistently engaged in bilateral cooperation with Ukraine beyond the purely

security dimension. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1992, and 2024 marked their 32nd anniversary (Nation Thailand, 2025). Unlike Singapore, which has responded primarily through sanctions and humanitarian considerations, or Vietnam, where cooperation remains largely limited to bilateral trade and academic exchanges, Thailand has developed a unique model in which cultural diplomacy serves as the primary channel for support and dialogue amid active hostilities.

In December 2024, Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt held talks with Viktor Semenov, the Chargé d’Affaires of Ukraine, regarding bilateral municipal cooperation between Kyiv and Bangkok in the areas of urban development, education, healthcare, and cultural programs (Nation Thailand, 2024). It is important to note that these talks took place at the municipal rather than the intergovernmental level – an example of “paradiplomacy,” in which local governments act as independent actors in educational cooperation. In September 2023, the Embassy of Ukraine in Thailand, in collaboration with the Yamaha Music Academy, held a charity concert titled “Melody for Ukraine,” which was joined by students from Mahidol and Rangsit Universities (Embassy of Ukraine in Thailand, n.d.). Such events serve to “lay the groundwork” for academic partnerships, much like how K-pop and Hallyu in Korean-Ukrainian relations precede the signing of university agreements (Heo & Song, 2026). The potential for deeper academic cooperation is underscored by a mutual interest in technical education and innovative exchanges, given Thailand’s programs to develop its own technology and space sectors (Nation Thailand, 2025).

The Philippines: From Geopolitical Solidarity to Academic Pragmatism

Relations between Ukraine and the Philippines took on a whole new dimension after June 2024, when the President of Ukraine made his first-ever visit to Manila. The two countries are united by a shared experience of confronting challenges to their sovereignty and territorial integrity: the Philippines is also defending its rights in the South China Sea, relying on the principles of international law and the decision of the arbitral tribunal (Stratbase Institute, 2025). This structural similarity in their security situations fosters a special level of mutual understanding between the two states, which distinguishes Philippine-Ukrainian relations from most other bilateral relationships in the ACEAH region.

However, the educational dimension of bilateral relations remains in its formative stages. The Ukrainian Embassy in the Philippines opened only in December 2024, and the volume of bilateral trade as of the end of 2025 amounted to just \$60 million (Inquirer Business, 2026). Nevertheless, in September 2025, the forum “Strengthening Strategic Ties: Deepening Cooperation Between the Philippines and Ukraine” was held, organized by the Stratbase Institute and the Embassy of Ukraine, with the participation of representatives from Ukraine’s parliament and think tanks (Stratbase Institute, 2025). A key factor determining the prospects for educational cooperation is Ukraine’s active pursuit of the status of ACEAH Sectoral Partner during the Philippines’ Chairmanship in 2026: Ambassador Yulia Fediv emphasized that Kyiv seeks to “have a greater presence in this part of the world” and to use the Philippine Chairmanship to institutionalize educational and cultural cooperation (ASEAN HUB, 2026). Thus, the Philippines serves not only as a bilateral partner but also as a key diplomatic “springboard” for Ukraine to advance to the level of an official partnership with ACEAH.

Singapore: A Model of Digital Education as a Strategic Benchmark for Ukraine

Singapore occupies a unique position among ACEAH countries in terms of its relations with Ukraine – primarily due to its combination of the clearest geopolitical stance of support, a well-developed model of educational diplomacy, and its status as the region’s leading financial and technological hub. As of July 2024, Singapore had provided Ukraine with humanitarian aid totaling more than \$11.5 million, including support for the Okhmatdyt Children’s Hospital and the Ukrainian Association of the Deaf (Dnipropetrovsk Investment Agency, 2025). By imposing unilateral sanctions against Russia, Singapore has taken the clearest stance among all ACEAH member states.

Singapore’s educational model is of particular analytical interest to Ukraine: this city-state ranks among the top five most effective education systems in the world according to PISA and demonstrates a model that combines meritocracy with targeted support and large-scale investments in innovation (Intelpoint, 2025). At the Singapore Fintech Festival 2024 in November, the Embassy of Ukraine, in collaboration with SoftServe, held a thematic event aimed at expanding the presence of Ukrainian IT and AI companies in the region (Dnipropetrovsk Investment Agency,

2025). Educational diplomacy in relations with Singapore is two-pronged: Ukraine is both a recipient of Singapore's experience in digital education and a potential contributor of its own expertise in the digitization of public services – specifically, the experience gained from the “Diya” app and the “Trembita” system, – which could contribute to joint educational and technological initiatives with ACEAH (Nechytaylo, 2024).

Maritime Education as a Lost Niche: Shifts in the Workforce Training Market and Challenges for Ukraine's Educational Diplomacy

Among all forms of educational cooperation between Ukraine and ASEAN countries, maritime education holds a special place – a specific field in which Ukraine has maintained a strong position in the global training market for several decades, while Southeast Asian countries have been active consumers of Ukrainian educational services. This case study is analytically unique because it allows us to examine educational diplomacy not through the lens of humanitarian aid or institutional partnerships, but through the prism of market competition in the global labor and educational services markets, where a full-scale war has acted as a catalyst for an irreversible structural realignment.

Ukraine's pre-war position in the global maritime education market. Prior to the full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine was among the top five global suppliers of maritime personnel, alongside the Philippines, China, Indonesia, and Russia (Maritime Executive, 2017). According to some estimates, Ukrainian seafarers accounted for about 10% of the total number of foreign-flag officers with qualifications recognized by EU member states; Ukraine ranked as the second most important non-European country in terms of the number of maritime officers whose certificates are recognized by EU member states (Ukrainian Seafarers, n.d.). The total number of Ukrainian seafarers organized in labor unions exceeded 47,000 (MTWTU, n.d.).

The Odessa National Maritime University (ONMU), founded in 1930, served as the key institutional center for training foreign maritime personnel in Ukraine. Since 1950, ONMU has been purposefully training specialists for the maritime sectors of foreign countries: over the course of seventy years, more than 2,000 specialists from 73 countries have graduated from the university (ONMU, n.d.). Among the first foreign students in the 1950s were representatives from Korea and China, and

in 1978, the university was awarded the Vietnamese “Friendship” Medal for training specialists for Vietnam (ONMU, n.d.). Concurrently, the university has hosted the Research Center for Social Development of “Belt and Road” Countries since 2017, and since 2018, the CASS-ONMU Center for Chinese Studies (in partnership with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), which attests to the systematic nature of the maritime educational partnership with Asia. The structural framework for training foreign seafarers was defined by the training system’s compliance with the requirements of the International STCW Convention: Ukrainian certificates were recognized by more than 50 countries worldwide (Ukrainian Seafarers, n.d.).

Transformation after 2022 Russia’s full-scale invasion dealt a direct blow to Ukraine’s maritime educational infrastructure. Odesa – the city where most maritime educational institutions are concentrated – has become a frontline port that is logistically isolated; the Kherson State Maritime Academy now finds itself in an occupied city. Amid active hostilities, the blockade of the Black Sea, and power outages, maritime institutions have switched to remote learning formats – which is particularly problematic for an industry where practical training on simulators and training devices is a mandatory requirement for STCW certification. This has resulted in a sharp decline in the number of international students: while the overall decline in the international student population in Ukraine from 2022 to 2025 amounted to nearly 68% – from 84,136 to 27,226 students (EAIE, 2025) – in maritime education, this exodus has become particularly acute due to security risks and the inability to conduct full-scale shipboard training.

Global Shifts in the Maritime Training Market: Structural Realignment. Ukraine’s loss of market share in maritime education is taking place against the backdrop of a broader structural realignment. As industry analysts note, “many companies that have relied on seafarer pools from Ukraine and Russia over the past two decades have shifted their operations and crew recruitment to the Philippine market” (Safety4Sea, 2023). This transformation is confirmed by official statements: The Deputy Executive Director of MARINA (Philippines) explicitly stated that “demand has increased due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine” (GMA Network, 2022), and the relevant EU authority confirmed growing interest in Filipino seafarers, including

for senior officer positions (Maritime Fairtrade, 2022; Maritime Executive, 2023).

The educational and workforce vacuum created by Ukraine's inaccessibility and sanctions against Russia has translated into structural advantages for the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar. The Philippines has significantly strengthened its position at the officer level; Indonesia and Myanmar are identified as "emerging countries" in the maritime labor market (IDE-JETRO, 2023). This dynamic is a sign of a structural shift, as manning agencies and shipping companies, having established new labor supply chains, are unlikely to return to their previous suppliers even after the active phase of the conflict has ended. It is noteworthy that this very dynamic reveals a paradoxical dimension in bilateral relations: the countries with which Ukraine seeks to deepen educational cooperation as an element of public diplomacy, – the Philippines and Indonesia – are simultaneously the main beneficiaries of the market realignment caused by Ukraine's loss of its position in the global maritime education market. This situation corresponds to the model of "unintended competition," in which structural shifts occur not as a result of a deliberate strategy on the part of the parties, but as a consequence of an exogenous shock – a full-scale war.

Prospects for Recovery. Despite structural challenges, there are also opportunities to rethink the role of maritime education in the context of diplomacy with ASEAN. First, the experience with distance and hybrid training can be transformed into joint online certification programs involving ONMU and the Vietnam Maritime University or the Philippine Maritime Academy for Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), with which ONMU has maintained partnerships (Gdynia Maritime University, n.d.). Second, Ukraine's unique experience in ensuring safe navigation amid mine threats could serve as the basis for joint training programs on maritime safety, which are in high demand given the growing tensions in the South China Sea. The Ukrainian government has already taken steps toward the digitalization of the industry by adopting, in December 2022, a new system for the training and certification of seafarers via the "Diya" app (MARAD, 2023) – which represents a potential contribution to joint educational and technological initiatives with ASEAN. Thus, maritime education is a "lost niche" with the potential for revival – but only if an active strategic approach is adopted, one that involves not merely

a return to pre-war models, but the offering of an updated educational and diplomatic product.

Typology of Ukraine's Educational Ties with ASEAN Countries: An Analytical Overview

An analysis of Ukraine's educational cooperation with ASEAN countries reveals a fundamental difference between this regional case and the Asian partnerships discussed earlier. Unlike Japan, where educational diplomacy has taken on the character of “infrastructural solidarity,” or South Korea, where it functions as a “master model,” Ukraine's interaction with ASEAN in 2022–2026 is taking place under conditions of “asymmetry in institutional framework”: While actual bilateral contacts, cultural interactions, and individual academic exchanges exist, a systematic institutional framework is still in the process of being established. The ratification of the DAS (2022), the presentation of the “Ukraine – ASEAN” Concept Paper (2024), and the active promotion of Sectoral Partner status (2026) are sequential steps toward overcoming this asymmetry.

From an analytical perspective, Ukraine's relations with ACEAH countries take the form of four functionally distinct types of educational-diplomatic interaction: the “recipient-donor model” (Singapore), the “pragmatic partnership model” (Vietnam), the “cultural-diplomatic model” (Thailand), and the “geopolitically driven model” (the Philippines). A fifth, analytically more complex type – the “lost niche model” – is realized through maritime education, where Ukraine is not an active diplomatic actor but rather a party losing ground in a structured global market. It is precisely this type that most clearly demonstrates that educational diplomacy is not only a deliberate instrument of foreign policy but also the result of spontaneous market forces, to which the state can either respond strategically or passively cede ground.

At the same time, a common structural context for all ACEAH states is the development of a regional educational space with EU support. The SCOPE-HE program aims to promote academic mobility, strengthen university networks, and foster research collaboration with a focus on the green transition, digital transformation, and the blue economy (EU-ASEAN, 2024). Between 2021 and 2024, Horizon Europe awarded 90 grants to 109 organizations from ASEAN countries, totaling 10.6 million euros (EEAS, 2025). Since Ukraine has been an associate

member of Horizon Europe since 2022, this development creates a structural opportunity for EU – Ukraine – ASEAN trilateral consortia without the need for separate bilateral agreements.

Thus, Ukraine's educational diplomacy with ASEAN countries in 2022–2026 is at a turning point: moving from ad hoc bilateral contacts to the formation of a systematic regional framework. Achieving the status of an ASEAN Sectoral Partner, if it occurs in 2026, will be a landmark event that will open new institutional channels for educational cooperation, including participation in regional educational forums, access to SCOPE-HE programs, and joint research initiatives. In this context, education is not a peripheral but a central element of relations, for, as the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs aptly put it, “academic and cultural exchange is yet another bridge between our societies” (Bangkok Post, 2025).

Digitalization, Constraints, and Prospects: A Final Analysis of Ukraine's Educational Diplomacy in Asia

The full-scale invasion of 2022 posed an unprecedented challenge to Ukraine's higher education system: to ensure the continuity of international educational cooperation amid the physical inaccessibility of a significant portion of the country's territory, the mass displacement of academic staff and students, the destruction of infrastructure, and disruptions in communications. The response to this challenge was the accelerated digitalization of internationalization – a shift from traditional forms of physical academic mobility to flexible hybrid and distance learning models that enable participation in the global educational space without the physical movement of participants.

In relations with Asian partners, this transition has taken on particular significance, as traditional academic mobility between Ukraine and Asian countries was already limited by 2022 due to great geographical distances and logistical costs. The COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) model has emerged as a full-fledged alternative to physical mobility – a format of collaborative online learning in which faculty members from different countries jointly develop and deliver courses for mixed international groups of students. Researchers define COIL as “an inclusive, environmentally oriented teaching method used to internationalize the curriculum, in which educators from different institutions in different countries jointly develop and lead collaborative

online assignments” (Hackett et al., 2024, n.p.). The key advantage of this approach is that it allows for the development of intercultural competencies and academic partnerships without traveling abroad – which, given the state of martial law and travel restrictions for men of draft age, is of fundamental importance.

Practical evidence of this trend at the level of a specific university is provided by the experience of Ushynsky University, which is implementing the COIL project “The Eurasian Community: Ukraine as a Crossroads Between Europe and Asia” with the participation of students and faculty from Japan, China, Poland, Turkey, and the Republic of Korea. The model involves integrating joint courses into curricula with ECTS credit awards, which aligns with the concept of “internationalization at home” (Knight, 2012) and transforms each participating student into a direct participant in international educational exchange even without physically crossing a border. On a nationwide scale, the broader higher education system has responded similarly: by 2025, within the framework of the Erasmus+ program for Ukraine, nine “Virtual Exchange” projects, 119 “Cooperation Partnerships” projects, and over 11,000 student and faculty mobility opportunities had been implemented (EAIE, 2025).

In the Asian context, digitalization served as a “substitute bridge” where a physical bridge had been severed or had never existed. Chinese students forced to leave Ukraine after February 24, 2022, continued their studies remotely, maintaining formal academic ties with their universities. The COIL “Eurasian Community” program maintained contact with Japanese and Korean partners when in-person visits became impossible. In Vietnam and Thailand, digital collaboration formats have opened up opportunities for new educational initiatives without the need to navigate the logistics of intercontinental travel. At the same time, with EU support, the “Digital University – Open Ukrainian Initiative” (DigiUni) launched in October 2023 as part of the Erasmus+ program, aimed at creating a fully-fledged digital educational ecosystem capable of functioning under martial law and serving as a platform for attracting international students and fostering international ties (EEAS, 2023).

At the same time, digitalization has also revealed its structural limitations in the context of Asian cooperation. As experience with Chinese students has shown, distance learning degrees may not meet the

requirements for recognition in the country of origin (CSCSE, 2023). For maritime education, the distance learning format is fundamentally inadequate, as the STCW Convention requires mandatory practical training on ships and simulators. For JICA's Japanese civil service training programs, physical presence in Japan is an indispensable condition for the transfer of institutional expertise. Thus, digitalization is a necessary but not sufficient condition: it preserves and expands certain forms of international interaction, but cannot fully replace in-person formats where a practical or immersive component is essential to the quality of education.

It is telling that Asian countries, in particular, have shown the clearest demand for a return to in-person formats: Chinese students have been gradually returning to Ukraine since 2023, Indian medical students are pushing for the restoration of access to clinical practice, and the Japanese KCCP and JDS programs are focused exclusively on in-person participation. This indicates that digital internationalization is a crisis-response measure rather than a long-term substitute. Its role is to maintain academic ties and preserve partnership networks at a time when traditional formats are unavailable—so that once the security situation stabilizes, these ties can be transformed into full-fledged institutional cooperation.

Key Challenges and Limitations in the Development of Ukraine's Educational Diplomacy in Asia

An analysis of case studies on Ukraine's Asian partnerships allows us to systematize the key challenges and constraints that hinder the full-fledged development of educational diplomacy in this region. These challenges are of various natures -structural, regulatory, resource-related, and geopolitical – and operate simultaneously, creating a complex set of interrelated obstacles.

First, restrictions on physical mobility under martial law are the most obvious, yet at the same time the most systemic, restrictions. Ukraine's martial law prohibits men aged 25–60 (18–60 at the start of the invasion) from traveling abroad, which significantly limits the ability of a large portion of academic staff and students to participate in physical mobility programs (ErasMag, 2026). It was not until April 2024 that a regulation came into effect allowing male undergraduate students (aged 18–22) from public institutions to participate in semester-long exchange

programs – however, master’s students, doctoral candidates, and academic staff remain excluded from this exemption (EAIE, 2025). For Asian destinations, where programs such as JICA, KCCP, JDS, and other initiatives require physical presence in the partner country, this restriction effectively prevents or drastically limits the participation of the majority of potential participants.

Second, regulatory and qualification asymmetries between Ukraine and its Asian partners constitute a hidden but systemically important obstacle. This is most evident in relations with China: the PRC’s ban on the recognition of foreign distance-learning degrees (CSCSE, 2023), introduced in 2023, directly contradicted the existing 1998 Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Educational Documents. A similar problem arose in relations with India regarding the KROK qualification exams for medical students after 2022. In both cases, a purely educational issue concerning the recognition of diplomas was elevated to the level of intergovernmental diplomacy. Resolving these issues requires not only bilateral negotiations but also systematic work to update the regulatory framework – and Ukraine is forced to prove the equivalence of its distance learning programs to traditional education under conditions where international standards for educational quality did not anticipate wartime scenarios.

Third, the issue of “brain drain” is becoming particularly acute in the context of Asian educational diplomacy. Studies show that a significant proportion of Ukrainian students and researchers who left the country after 2022 are not returning or have uncertain plans regarding their return (Springer, 2025). Academic mobility, which in peacetime serves as a resource for internationalization, carries the risk of an irreversible outflow of talent in wartime. For the Asian region, this means that academic exchange programs with Japanese, Korean, or Indian universities, launched under martial law, may not ensure the “return” of expertise to Ukraine if participants decide to remain abroad or choose different career paths.

Fourth, the institutional and diplomatic asymmetry between Ukraine and its Asian partners creates unequal starting conditions. Japan, South Korea, China, and India have well-developed, well-funded, and institutionally structured mechanisms for educational diplomacy – JICA, KOICA, Confucius Institutes, ICCR, and ITEC – while Ukraine is largely

a recipient of these programs rather than their architect. This strategic asymmetry is further reinforced by disparities in diplomatic presence: Ukraine's embassy in the Philippines opened only in December 2024, and there is no long-standing tradition of regular ministerial contacts with India. Accordingly, establishing equal partnerships with Asian countries requires significant investment in diplomatic infrastructure, which is underfunded in wartime.

Fifth, the gap between strategic declarations and institutional implementation remains one of the most persistent systemic flaws. Ukraine's Public Diplomacy Strategy for 2021–2025 and the Higher Education Development Strategy for 2022–2032 declare internationalization and the development of ties with Asia as priorities. However, at the level of implementation mechanisms, these declarations remain insufficiently operationalized: there is no dedicated educational diplomacy program for the Asian region, no single coordinating body between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, and universities, and funding for Asian initiatives depends primarily on foreign donors (JICA, KOICA, Horizon Europe) rather than on Ukraine's own grant system. As researchers note, “the transformation of higher education in wartime requires not only regulatory adaptation but also effective implementation mechanisms” (Martynets et al., 2024).

Sixth, geopolitical uncertainty complicates the establishment of long-term educational partnerships. Most ASEAN countries adhere to “strategic neutrality,” China is deepening its strategic partnership with Russia, and India maintains “strategic autonomy.” For potential Asian partners, educational cooperation with Ukraine carries reputational risks linked to the unpredictability of the security situation. Universities and Manning agencies, when assessing the duration and consequences of the conflict, tend to gravitate toward more stable partners. This geopolitical uncertainty is external to Ukraine and cannot be eliminated by purely educational or diplomatic means; however, it sets the “ceiling” on opportunities for developing partnerships during the period under study.

Prospects and Strategic Directions for Deepening Ukraine's Educational Cooperation with Asian Countries in the Postwar Period

Despite the set of limitations listed above, an analysis of case studies on Ukraine's partnerships with Asian countries allows us to outline realistic strategic directions for the development of educational

diplomacy in the medium term. These directions are based not on optimistic declarations, but on existing structures and documented trends that provide grounds for a well-founded forecast.

The *first area* is institutionalization through Horizon Europe as a common platform with Asia. Ukraine's association with Horizon Europe starting in 2022, Japan's association (December 2025), and the start of negotiations with India (January 2026) create an unprecedented structural opportunity: for the first time, Ukraine and leading Asian partners can form joint research consortia within the framework of Horizon Europe calls for proposals without the need for separate bilateral agreements. The ASEAN–EU Joint Funding Scheme (10 calls for proposals as of December 2025) already includes both ASEAN countries and states associated with Horizon Europe (EC, 2025). The practical goal for the coming years is to form trilateral Japan–Ukraine–EU or ASEAN–Ukraine–EU consortia, in which Ukraine acts not as a recipient of aid but as a full-fledged scientific partner. This model aligns with the concept that “education is not only a sphere of social development but also an instrument of international policy” (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 34).

The *second area* of focus is the development of COIL as a permanent, rather than a crisis-driven, form of collaboration. The experience of the “Eurasian Community” project at the PNU and the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange programs has demonstrated the practical effectiveness of COIL models in supporting academic ties when physical mobility is not possible. Once the active phase of the conflict has ended, these formats should not be abandoned but, on the contrary, should be systematized. Research confirms that COIL fosters “global competencies and intercultural understanding” (Hackett et al., 2023) and can be no less effective than physical mobility in terms of developing intercultural competencies. The strategic objective is to transform COIL formats – which emerged in response to the military crisis – into a permanent component of educational programs with ECTS credit awards, in partnership with Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Indian universities.

The *third area* is capitalizing on the “neutral partnership” with India and ASEAN. The unique position of India and most ASEAN states – supporting Ukraine's sovereignty without strict bloc commitments – gives Ukraine access to partners that do not fit into any of the existing geopolitical coalitions. In the medium term, these relationships may

become the most important in terms of diversifying international ties: they are developing not in spite of the partners' geopolitical neutrality, but because of it. Ukraine's attainment of ASEAN Sectoral Partner status in 2026 will open access to regional educational mechanisms, in particular the SCOPE-HE program (with a budget of 9.3 million euros through 2028), and will allow Ukraine to participate in shaping the agenda of regional educational forums as a full-fledged participant, rather than as an invited guest.

The *fourth area* is rethinking maritime education as a new competitive product. Ukraine's loss of ground in the maritime training market is a documented fact, but it is not irreversible. Ukraine's unique experience in ensuring navigation amid mine threats, the Black Sea blockade, and underwater operations in a closed maritime theater provides potentially sought-after training content for maritime security programs – especially given the growing tensions in the South China Sea, which are particularly relevant to the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The digitization of the industry through the “Diya” system (MARAD, 2023) signals technological modernization that is well understood by Asian manning agencies and universities. Once the security situation stabilizes, Odesa will retain its strategic potential as an educational hub for the maritime sector thanks to its geographic location, the institutional memory of the Odesa National Maritime University, and its real-world experience in training under conditions of a maritime crisis – a unique asset that cannot be replicated by competitors.

The *fifth area* is the systematic adaptation of the regulatory framework to the conditions of “regulated digital mobility.” The case involving the recognition of Chinese online degrees and Indian medical qualifications has demonstrated that the legal framework for academic mobility requires active negotiation and updating, rather than passive waiting. The strategic objective is to initiate the revision or amendment of bilateral agreements on the mutual recognition of qualifications with key Asian partners (China, India, and Korea), incorporating provisions on hybrid and blended learning formats, procedures for verifying the practical component, and procedures for taking exams remotely. The precedent set by the resolution of the KROK issue through intergovernmental negotiations in 2023 demonstrates that such a settlement is both possible and effective if it is a priority for both parties.

In summary, it can be stated that Ukraine's educational diplomacy in Asia during 2022–2026 has evolved from a reactive response to a crisis to the gradual formation of strategic foundations for post-war cooperation. None of the Asian partnerships is without challenges: the Japanese model requires a transition from donor-led aid to an equal partnership; the Chinese model requires striking a balance between pragmatically maintaining ties and safeguarding technological sovereignty; the Korean model requires deeper institutionalization beyond cultural diplomacy; the Indian model requires the conversion of diplomatic momentum into sustainable structural mechanisms; and the ASEAN track requires obtaining formal status and overcoming the “asymmetry of institutional framework.” However, what all these cases have in common is that educational cooperation proved to be more resilient to geopolitical upheavals than other forms of international interaction: even amid active hostilities, sanctions, regulatory restrictions, and the geopolitical neutrality of partners, academic ties were maintained, transformed, and in some cases even expanded. This confirms the thesis that education is not only a “foreign policy tool” but also an independent stabilizer of international relations – a space where interaction continues even when other channels are closed.

Conclusions

The analysis of Ukraine's educational diplomacy toward Asia in 2022–2026 allows us to draw a number of general conclusions regarding both the nature of the transformations that have taken place in relations between Ukraine and Asian countries and the prospects for their further development.

First, the full-scale invasion of 2022 served as a catalyst for a qualitative change in the status of education within the framework of Ukrainian-Asian relations. Prior to 2022, educational cooperation with Asian countries was largely technical and bilateral in nature – involving academic mobility, individual university agreements, and cultural exchanges. After 2022, education transformed into a strategic resource and a foreign policy tool, fulfilling humanitarian, communicative, and geopolitical functions simultaneously. Cooperation with Japan took on the character of “infrastructural solidarity,” with Korea – a “master model” for reconstruction; with India – “partnership without preconditions”; with China – “crisis pragmatism”; and with ASEAN countries – gradual

institutionalization through the ASEAN-Ukraine Cooperation Council and a push for Sectoral Partner status. In each of these cases, education proved to be a more resilient link than other forms of international cooperation: academic contacts persisted even when diplomatic and economic channels narrowed or came under pressure from geopolitical constraints.

Second, the study identified five typologically distinct models of Ukraine's educational diplomacy in Asia, each of which reflects the specific nature of bilateral relations and the partner's geopolitical positioning. Japan's "infrastructure solidarity model" focuses on providing the physical conditions necessary for education to function in areas of armed conflict and on training personnel for reconstruction. The Korean "master model" offers not merely resources, but a replicable model of state-oriented development through the integration of cultural diplomacy, vocational education, and digital innovations. The Indian "model of asymmetric complementarity" is a unique example of a partnership outside the logic of blocs, where the educational dimension remains a priority regardless of a state's geopolitical position on the conflict. China's "hybrid and adaptive model" demonstrates how academic interdependence can be maintained amid geopolitical polarization by shifting focus to less sensitive sectors. Finally, the ASEAN model of "asymmetry in institutional formalization" reflects a situation where actual bilateral ties precede their formal institutionalization – and are gradually evolving into a systematic regional framework.

Third, the digitization of internationalization became a key practical response to wartime conditions. COIL models, distance learning courses, hybrid programs, and digital educational platforms ensured that academic ties with Asian partners were maintained despite the inability to travel in person. At the same time, the analysis showed that digitalization is a crisis-response measure rather than a full-fledged replacement for traditional formats: China's qualification requirements for the recognition of diplomas, the STCW standards for maritime education, and the physical presence requirements of Japan's JICA programs – all of these confirm that certain forms of educational interaction cannot be fully transferred to the digital space. Accordingly, the strategic task is not to choose between digital and in-person formats, but to develop a hybrid

architecture in which digital tools complement and facilitate in-person mobility, rather than replace it.

Fourth, the study highlights a fundamentally important phenomenon – “educational diplomacy as a regulatory platform.” Issues regarding the recognition of diplomas, qualifying exams, and the format of academic programs – which under peacetime conditions remain purely technical – have, in the context of war, risen to the level of intergovernmental negotiations and been included on the agenda of ministerial visits. Negotiations on the conditions for Indian medical students to take the KROK exams (April 2023), the dispute over the recognition of online degrees in relations with the People’s Republic of China, and the diplomatic resolution of the issue of nostrification for maritime students – all of this demonstrates that education is transforming from a sphere of “functional cooperation” into a full-fledged dimension of international relations, where regulatory asymmetry becomes a subject of diplomacy no less than trade or security disputes.

Fifth, the analysis revealed the structural role of Ukraine’s European integration trajectory as a factor in the transformation of its Asian educational partnerships. Ukraine’s association with Horizon Europe (2022), Japan’s association (December 2025), and the start of negotiations with India (January 2026) regarding participation in this program create an unprecedented situation: for the first time, Ukraine and its key Asian partners are simultaneously part of a single institutional research space, which allows for the formation of joint consortia without the need for bilateral agreements. Thus, Ukraine’s European integration serves not only as a domestic reform process but also as a catalyst for internationalization toward Asia, reducing transaction costs and opening up new mechanisms for trilateral scientific and educational cooperation among the EU, Ukraine, and Asia.

Sixth, the study confirms that universities act as independent actors in educational diplomacy, rather than merely as implementers of intergovernmental agreements. The experience of Ushynsky University demonstrates how a regional teacher-training institution can simultaneously maintain partnerships with Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea, implementing three qualitatively different models of educational diplomacy within a single institutional context. This example shows that institutional flexibility and the ability to adopt a differentiated approach are key

competitive advantages in a context where a single, unified strategy cannot be effective due to the heterogeneity of the Asian region.

Regarding the prospects for the further development of Ukraine's educational diplomacy with Asian countries, the study identifies several defining trends. In the short term (2026–2028), the priority will remain the preservation and formalization of existing ties: obtaining the status of an ASEAN Sectoral Partner, concluding negotiations on updating bilateral agreements on the recognition of qualifications, institutionalizing COIL programs with the awarding of ECTS academic credits, and developing trilateral consortia within the framework of Horizon Europe. At this stage, the key task is to transition from a reactive to a proactive approach to educational diplomacy – from adapting to challenges to anticipating them.

In the medium term (2028–2032), which is roughly tied to the end of the active phase of the conflict and the start of large-scale reconstruction, educational diplomacy will take on the character of an engagement tool: attracting Asian investment in the reconstruction of educational infrastructure (following the Japanese JRC model), attracting technological expertise (following the Korean VET and digital governance models), and attracting students from ASEAN countries and India to the restored educational programs. Maritime education, which suffered the most significant losses during the period under study, will have the potential for recovery by offering a unique learning experience in maritime safety under crisis conditions – a product in high demand in the South China Sea region.

In the long-term perspective of postwar development (after 2032), Ukraine's educational diplomacy toward Asia may transform from “recipient diplomacy” to “participant diplomacy”: a state that not only accepts aid and partners but also forms regional educational networks, initiates joint programs, and positions itself as a hub between the Euro-Atlantic and Asian educational spaces. Ukraine's geographical location – the “crossroads between Europe and Asia,” which serves as the conceptual foundation of the “Eurasian Community” project – could evolve from a metaphor into a real structural role in the global architecture of knowledge.

Thus, Ukraine's educational diplomacy in Asia for 2022–2026 represents not only a response to the crisis but also a new dimension

of Ukraine's international agency. Despite the complexity of the geopolitical context – the neutrality of most partners, regulatory asymmetry, restrictions imposed by martial law, and competition in the educational services market – Ukraine has demonstrated its ability to maintain and develop educational ties with fundamentally different Asian partners, adapting the form of interaction to the specific characteristics of each. This is confirmed by the conceptual conclusion that the future of Ukrainian educational diplomacy in Asia lies in moving away from a passive presence toward the active formation of regional intellectual networks. This study demonstrates that the foundation for implementing this strategy has already been laid – in the form of differentiated partnership models, functioning digital platforms, initial experience participating in trilateral consortia, and an emerging institutional presence in the ASEAN region.

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