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New Formats of International Cooperation of Ukraine: British-Polish-Ukrainian Trilateral Pact

The events of the Euromaidan and Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine became catalysts for fundamental changes not only in Europe, but also at the global level, which prompts Ukraine to activate new types of geopolitical cooperation. The purpose of the study is to identify and assess the features and prospects of the new format of international cooperation between the United Kingdom, Poland, and Ukraine – the Trilateral Pact – considering the threat posed by Russia to the region and the international security system. The tasks of the research are the analysis of the reasons for the formation of this alliance; identification of the goals imposed on it by the member states; search for strengths and weaknesses of this alliance; forecasting the prospects of the Trilateral Pact. In this research were used such research methods as: level analysis, assessment of factors at the domestic, individual, bilateral, and international levels; content analysis of documents, surveys, interviews; and factor analysis to identify determinants affecting the functionality of the Trilateral Pact.

The hypothesis of this study is the statement that the United Kingdom, Poland and Ukraine will intensify cooperation within the framework of the Trilateral Pact in the future, which is facilitated by the growth of threats from the side of the Russian Federation in Europe and the international system in general, as well as the need to increase the defense capabilities of these states and the need to encourage the EU and NATO to review their positions on international security and stability. The formed hypothesis was partially confirmed, considering the fact that the functionality and effectiveness of the Triangle is influenced by the internal political and social situation in the member states of the Pact; the absence of a “road map” and a clearly formed institutional structure of the Triangle; the course of events in the Ukrainian-Russian war, as well as the level of support from the side of the USA and NATO. The deepening of geopolitical rapprochement between Poland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom will continue in the future, but with different dynamics.

Keywords: Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Poland, international cooperation, international security, geopolitics, British-Polish-Ukrainian Trilateral Pact, small alliance.

Нові формати міжнародної кооперації України: Тристоронній пакт Великої Британії, Польщі та України

Події Євромайдану та агресивних дій Росії щодо України стали каталізаторами фундаментальних змін не лише в Європі, а й на глобальному рівні, що спонукає Україну до активізації нових видів геополітичного співробітництва. Метою дослідження є виявлення та оцінка особливостей і перспектив нового формату міжнародної співпраці Об'єднаного Королівства, Польщі та України – Тристороннього Пакту – враховуючи загрозу з боку Росії для регіону та міжнародної системи безпеки. Завданнями дослідження є аналіз причин утворення даного альянсу; виявлення цілей які покладають на нього держави-члени; пошук сильних та слабких сторін даного альянсу; проведення прогнозу щодо майбутніх перспектив Тристороннього Пакту. В даному дослідженні використані такі методи дослідження як: рівневий аналіз, оцінювання факторів на внутрішньому, індивідуальному, двосторонньому та міжнародному рівнях; контент-аналіз документів, опитувань, інтерв'ю; та факторний аналіз, для визначення детермінант, що впливають на функціональність Тристороннього Пакту.

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Гіпотезою даного дослідження є твердження, що Об'єднане Королівство, Польща та Україна проводитимуть інтенсифікацію співпраці в рамках Тристороннього Пакту у майбутньому, чому сприяє зростання загроз з боку Російської Федерації у Європі та міжнародній системі загалом, а також потреба збільшення обороноздатності даних держав та необхідність спонукати ЄС і НАТО до перегляду їх позиції щодо міжнародної безпеки та стабільності. Сформовану гіпотезу було підтверджено частково, враховуючи те, що на функціональність та ефективність Тристороннього Пакту впливають внутрішньополітична та суспільна ситуація в державах-членах Пакту; відсутність “дорожньої карти” та чітко сформованої інституційної структури Тристороннього Пакту; перебіг подій на російсько-українській війні, а також рівень підтримки з боку США та НАТО. Поглиблення геополітичного зближення Польщі, України та Об'єданого Королівства продовжуватиметься і надалі проте із різною динамікою.

Ключові слова: Україна, Об'єднане Королівство, Польща, міжнародна співпраця, міжнародна безпека, геополітика, Тристоронній пакт Великої Британії, Польщі та України, малі альянси.

The problem formulation: The Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 became the reason and pretext for Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Due to the lack of real security guarantees from power blocs or international actors, it is currently impossible for Ukraine to join such a power and political structure as NATO. Because of the discrediting and subordination of the CIS states to Russia, it became necessary for Ukraine to search for new and appropriate foreign policy forms of cooperation that would increase its stability in the confrontation with Russia and that would help to carry out the transformations necessary for participation in such organizations as the EU and NATO. Therefore, since 2014, Ukraine began active cooperation with several both regional and global actors, replicating the so-called “small alliances”, the purpose of which would be to improve defense capabilities, political stability, and economic cooperation during tectonic geopolitical shifts.

As of 2023, Ukraine cooperates with several security and political formations. Particularly noteworthy are the Lublin Triangle (Poland – Lithuania – Ukraine), the Associated Trio (Georgia – Moldova – Ukraine). However, the British-Polish-Ukrainian tripartite pact is of particular interest, due to its formation shortly before the start of the full-scale phase of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, involvement of two members of NATO and participation of a member of G7. Such types of cooperation have become especially relevant not only for Ukraine, but also for the states of the region.

Analysis of recent research and publications: Since the study focuses on an international form of cooperation that has emerged recently (a little over a year at the time of writing), there is not a large scientific source base. First, materials related to the analysis and review of the foreign policy doctrines of the “triangle” members are of interest. In the case of the United Kingdom, were used several sources: first, Integrated Review Refresh 2023², published by HM Government in March 2023, and, secondly, the reports of the private organization British Foreign Policy Group are used, which provides the latest information on the goals and achievements of the Great Britain in the international arena³. In the case of Poland, it is necessary to monitor the official publications of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and analyze the document published Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland “Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021”⁴. Also, for this article were used publications from scientific publications and magazines, for example “Foreign Policy”⁵. In the case of Ukraine, official publications of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine are used, as well as research by “think tanks”, for example, the Ukrainian “Razumkov Center”, which regularly publishes materials on the domestic and foreign policy of Ukraine, as well as the general international situation. Analysis of the speeches and

² Integrated Review Refresh 2023. Responding to a more contested and volatile world (March 2023). *HM Government*. E-Number: E02876763, 60 p. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1145586/11857435_NS_IR_Refresh_2023_Supply_AllPages_Revision_7_WEB_PDF.pdf [10 March 2023].

³ The UK Integrated Review of Foreign Policy: One Year On (March 2022), *British Foreign Policy Group*. Available from: <https://bfpgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BFPG-The-UK-Integrated-Review-of-Foreign-Policy-One-Year-On-March-2022.pdf> [6 March 2023].

⁴ Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Poland*. Available from: <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/what-we-do> [6 March 2023].

⁵ Gaston S. (July 4, 2022), The Case for an Ambitious British Role in Ukraine's Reconstruction. *British Foreign Policy Club*. Available from: <https://bfpgrp.co.uk/2022/07/uk-role-ukraine-reconstruction> [4 March 2023].

conferences of the leaders of the “triangle” states, political leaders, opponents of the presented idea, as well as the results of internal sociological surveys is also vital for the future research on this topic.

As for the general theoretical literature, the focus is on the authors of the classical school of international relations. First, works related to the theory of international systems are useful, namely the works of Morton Kaplan (Kaplan, 1957)⁶ and Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, 1979)⁷, which are even more relevant given the increasing polarization of the world with the beginning of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. J. Singer’s work “The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations” (1961)⁸ is used for level analysis. It perfectly reveals the interdependence and mutual influence of the process of formation of foreign policy interactions and preferences at the individual, state, international, as well as group levels. In fact, this study is the cornerstone for this study as it forms its framework.

Works related to forecasting the foreign policy of states and processes on the international arena are also important. In the old and modern literature, there are various approaches to making forecasts, in particular, the work of G. Schneider, Gerald, N. Gleditsch, and S. Carey (2011)⁹ is appropriate, which offers several approaches to the analysis of future events in the international arena. Of the classic works, the work of Nazli Choucri and Thomas W. Robinson “Forecasting in International Relations: Theory, Methods, Problems, Prospects” (1979)¹⁰ is of great interest, which provides a broad theoretical foundation for a deeper understanding of correct forecasting, which will be useful for analyzing the prospects of the “triangle”.

The work of Stephen Walt “The Origins of Alliance” (1987)¹¹ is of particular interest, as it reveals the circumstances under which states integrate, unite against the background of external challenges and how they choose their friends, which is relevant in the study of the essence of the Trilateral Pact.

Due to the relative novelty of the idea of deep cooperation between Ukraine, Poland, and the United Kingdom within the framework of the triangle, it is worth noting the small number of materials on this topic, which encourages a more independent and innovative nature of research.

The purpose of the article: The aim of the study is to analyze reasons, functioning and forecast the future state of the geopolitical triangle of the United Kingdom-Poland-Ukraine, as a part of a new foreign policy vector of Ukraine after 2014. The objectives are: collection and processing of empirical materials on relations between Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Poland; definition of the essence and specifics of the “triangle”; analysis of the circumstances leading to the existence of this format of cooperation at the level within the states and the international environment; try to determine how the “triangle” shapes and influences the actions of each of these states in their foreign policy; determination of the advantages and difficulties of functioning of this cooperation; prospects of this geopolitical entity and its role in the modern international system. In addition, the purpose of the article is to test the following hypothesis: considering the current geopolitical challenges both in Europe and in the world (Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; the weakening of Germany’s position in Europe; the focus of the US on the Pacific-Asian region; the threat to the security of the Baltic states and Poland considering Russia’s threats, etc.), prospects and relevance of the functioning of the “triangle” of the United Kingdom-Poland-Ukraine will not only not decrease, but will also intensify, regardless of the internal political mood of the population of the members of the Pact, economic difficulties in connection with the energy and fuel crises. Also, strengthening the cooperation of the “triangle” could contribute to the acceleration of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, which, in turn, will not weaken the EU and NATO, but will strengthen them considering modern geopolitical transformations.

Main results of the research: Changes in the international system in the twenty-first century show even more the shortcomings of the formed concept of the “End of History” by Francis Fukuyama¹².

⁶ Kaplan M. (2005), *System and Process in International Politics*. ECPR Press, 260 p.

⁷ Waltz K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*. Addison-Wesley series in political science. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 251 p.

⁸ Singer D. (October 1961), The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations. *World Politics*, vol. 14, No. 1, The International System: Theoretical Essays, pp. 77-92

⁹ Schneider G., Gleditsch N., Carey S. (2011), Forecasting in International Relations: One Quest, Three Approaches. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. Vol. 28 (I), pp. 5-14.

¹⁰ Choucri N., Robinson T. (1979), *Forecasting in International Relations: Theory, Methods*. San Francisco: W.H Freeman and Co., pp. XII-468.

¹¹ Walt S. (1987), *The Origins of Alliance*. Cornell University Press, 336 p.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Arab Spring, the escalation between Serbia and Kosovo in the August of 2022, the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, and other developments indicate the inability of several international organizations, primarily the United Nations, to use the available tools to ensure world order, which prompts international actors to seek more profitable and effective options for cooperation and alliances.

The world formed after the events of 9/11 gradually moved from unipolarity to a multipolar model of functioning with the main poles: from the one hand – the USA and the West; from another hand – China, Russia, Iran. But such many powerful geopolitical associations and functional features of the UN performed for the implementation of tasks after the Second World War, should have sooner or later caused one of the geopolitical actors to break the status quo and desire aggressive and expansionist actions. Such a state has become Russia, which, using the right of veto in the UN Security Council and ignoring international law, openly calls for a new world order and the implementation of the “balance of power” policy¹³. The inability of the UN to influence the situation with Russia pushes such states Poland and the United Kingdom to cooperate more actively within NATO, rely on the support of the United States and strengthen cooperation with states that can restrain Russia on the eastern flanks of NATO and the EU. Such a state is Ukraine, which acts as a certain “buffer” between Poland and Russia, and which, with the intensive help of Western states and the allies, restrains Russia's military offensive by carrying out counteroffensive operations, such as in the Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions. For its part, Ukraine considers such cooperation as an opportunity to accelerate Euro-Atlantic integration and search for allies and partners with whom Ukraine could effectively collaborate during integration processes¹⁴.

Changes in the international system are prompted by actors' use of energy resources as a tool of influence and the mistaken decision of Western democracies to gradually disarm after the end of the Cold War and rely on the support of the democratization of Russia in the post-soviet period. These factors effectively leveled the political position, in particular, of Germany, both in the EU and NATO. Consent to the construction of the Nord Stream 2, as well as the decision of the German authorities, in particular Chancellor Angela Merkel¹⁵, to reduce the armed forces despite a high defense budget, which, due to Russian aggression in Ukraine, causes concern among Germany's allies (primarily Poland and the United Kingdom) and encourages the search for more practical and alternative options for cooperation in the field of security and energy.

A week before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, on February 17, 2022, British Foreign Minister Liz Truss, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, and, remotely, Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau announced the memorandum of Trilateral Cooperation, in particular, in the areas of trade, energy and cyber security, but primarily this cooperation was aimed at strengthening material and political support and improving communications between these states considering the deployment of Russian troops near the eastern borders of Ukraine, as well as in Belarus¹⁶. Because the changing political preferences within the states, this entity can both strengthen and weaken its activity, however, rapid changes in the structure of the international system, ideas and advantages of the Pact cause special interest and contribute to the growing relevance of such cooperation, which is of particular interest from the research and scientific point of view.

In the context of this topic, it would be useful to separately consider the general theoretical and scientific approaches and implement them in the case of the Trilateral Pact. Presented research is considered from the point of view of the realist school of international relations. This is due to the operation and research of such phenomena as ‘international system’, ‘levels of analysis’, ‘geopolitical

¹² Fukuyama F., Rose C. (November 11, 1995), Interview with Francis Fukuyama. *Charlie Rose Conversations*. Available from: <https://charlierose.com/videos/19573> [8 March 2023].

¹³ Russia blocks Security Council action on Ukraine. (February 26, 2022), *Peace and Security, UN News, Global perspective Human stories*, Available from: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112802> [3 March 2023].

¹⁴ Biskup B., Rogers J., Shelest A. (February 2023), The trilateral initiative: Rekindling relations between Britain, Poland and Ukraine. *Council on Geostrategy. Primer. Geopolitics Programme*. No. GPP02., p. 4.

¹⁵ Riley A. (June 1, 2018), The Damage that will flow from Nord Stream 2. *Understanding the Potential Consequences. Atlantic Council*, p. 5. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26778> [4 March 2023].

¹⁶ Tilles D. (February 17, 2022), Ukraine, UK and Poland launch trilateral agreement “in face of Russian aggression”. *Tales from Poland*. Available from: <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/02/17/ukraine-uk-and-poland-launch-trilateral-agreement-in-face-of-russian-aggression> [9 March 2023].

environment', 'security provision', 'international alliances', and due to the interest to them by realists. In addition, it is important to adequately handle and use such terms as 'power' and 'balance' in connection with manipulations on the part of Russian propaganda, which use them to justify their own aggressive and neo-imperial intentions.

One of the theoretical goals of the study is to support the position of Kenneth Waltz in the dispute with John Mearsheimer regarding Defensive and Offensive Realism¹⁷. In the case of the "triangle" states, their cooperation is considered as a defensive reaction to Russia's violation of the foundations of the international order and system¹⁸. As a result of the imperfection and obsolescence of the UN security system, as well as a certain slow response to threats from Russia by some members of the Western states, Ukraine and other European states are forced to look for additional measures to increase security and coordination, which is not related to the search for hegemonic ambitions in the region.

Although Mearsheimer also emphasizes the slow reaction of the West to the growing international threat from Russia since 2008, he is wrong in some judgments. It is worth expanding his statement regarding the fallacy of NATO's statements after the Bucharest summit in 2008 regarding the potential accession of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO. It was a natural reaction of these states to the growing threat of aggression and occupation from the side of Russia, which eventually happened during the occupation of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea, and the South-Eastern regions of Ukraine. If Ukraine remained on a pro-Russian course of development after 2013, it would directly, in the form of a pro-Russian government (like Georgia under the government of Irakli Garibashvili), or in the form of a puppet (like Belarus) become a de facto part of the geopolitical space of the Russian Federation. It should be noted that Mearsheimer has very reasonable and correct conclusions about the extent to which Ukraine should be integrated into the West, considering all real and potential negative factors. Having already being in a confrontation with Russia, it will be very problematic for the West to stop or turn back, which, given the facts of Russia's growing cooperation with other autocracies, may lead to an open invasion of the PRC into Taiwan against the background of a weakening of the positions of the United States, in particular, considering the withdrawal of the military contingent from Afghanistan¹⁹. Therefore, despite the current obstacles of joining NATO or the EU, Ukraine has sought, is seeking and will continue to seek forms of international cooperation that will improve its security situation and the course towards greater integration with the West, for which the Tripartite Pact is perfectly suited as a representator of Defensive Realism.

To some extent, this study could also be considered as a criticism of liberal approach for international security as well as the functionality of the UN system of international organizations, which is reflected in the manipulation of its tools by aggressive international actors (for example, the right of veto in the UN Security Council), the inability to influence strong world actors, the lack of functionality in a crisis period, etc. However, it is worth considering this opinion in more detail: the visions of the liberal and neo-liberal schools of international relations regarding the rapprochement of states and minimization of international conflicts due to increased commercial interactions, economic cooperation and democratization of states have collapsed not only since the beginning of full-scale Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2022, but even earlier during the occupation of Crimea and creation of the so called DPR and LPR in 2014. Russia dared to take such a step despite its economic ties and energy market with the EU.

¹⁷ Steinsson S. (March 4, 2014), John Mearsheimer's Theory of Offensive Realism and the Rise of China. *E-International Relations*. Available from: <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/06/john-mearsheimers-theory-of-offensive-realism-and-the-rise-of-china> [2 March 2023].

¹⁸ The Alliance of Poland, Ukraine, and the UK from the Perspective of Warsaw (February 8, 2022), *The Foreign Policy Council*. Available from: <https://foreignpolicycouncil.com/2022/02/08/the-alliance-of-poland-ukraine-and-the-uk-from-the-perspective-of-warsaw> [4 March 2023].

¹⁹ Parry M. (June 2021), The emerging contours of President Biden's foreign policy. *ERPS European Parliamentary Research Service*. Available from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690650/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)690650_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690650/EPRS_BRI(2021)690650_EN.pdf) [6 March 2023].

Due to the obvious slowness and sometimes sabotage in the implementation of reforms²⁰, as well as considering the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is impossible for Ukraine to join NATO in the near and medium term, which has created a difficult geopolitical situation for Ukraine: when the most powerful Western power bloc does not can guarantee the security of Ukraine, just as it is impossible to conduct a UN peacekeeping mission due to the aggression of a powerful world player, an alternative has appeared for Ukraine in the form of participation in small trilateral or bilateral pacts. The most appropriate term to describe this format of cooperation is ‘small alliances’. Although it is not scientifically standardized and has a journalistic nature, it successfully describes Ukraine's foreign policy activities since 2014. This type of cooperation is somewhat reminiscent of the interstate pacts and alliances of the 18th and 19th centuries, but with a focus on systematic security and economic cooperation with the removal of overt militaristic aspects. Ukraine has already concluded such agreements with Poland, Lithuania (Lublin Triangle), Turkey (Quadriga) and now, with Great Britain and Poland within the framework of the Trilateral Pact. Of particular interest is the fact that Ukraine is in these so-called “small alliances” together with NATO member states, which explains why there are no clauses on direct military intervention in case of need in their founding documents. Their interaction is more technical and sophisticated, which does not diminish their significance²¹.

It is worth noting separately that Ukraine's participation in such forms of cooperation should be considered from two sides: on the one hand, it is an alternative to Ukraine's full membership in NATO, and on the other, Ukraine's participation, in particular, in the Tripartite Pact with the United Kingdom and Poland, is one of the steps for future integration into NATO, which explains separate cooperation with member states. But Ukraine's accession to NATO will not take place until the war with Russia ends and the direct threat of repeated aggression decreases, as well as until fundamental reforms are carried out by Ukraine. However, considering the position of a number of NATO member states, in particular Hungary²², one can be skeptical about Ukraine's future membership in NATO, even in the long term.

The issue of the cooperation of such different states as Poland, the United Kingdom and Ukraine indicates the certain spread of anarchism in the system of international relations, which also forces us to approach the question using the works of realists, but not only them. It is also appropriate to use the ideas of constructivism, which helps to consider the essence of the “triangle” not only from a materialistic and pragmatic point of view, but also from an ideological and ideological point of view. From the point of view of the United Kingdom, this cooperation is very risky, but from the moral and ideological point of view of the spread of democracy and freedom – it is justified. In addition, the factor of the imperial past plays a role, which psychologically hardened the kingdom to carry out active direct political activities far beyond the borders of Great Britain, in our case – in Central-Eastern Europe²³. From the point of view of Poland and Ukraine, it is possible to consider their desire for closer cooperation as a potential new, more decentralized option, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or the theoretical *Międzymorze*²⁴, which, considering the partnership with the United Kingdom and the prospects of attracting new members, can become a super-powerful political and social entity in Europe, in addition to the EU, but with a clear anti-Russian orientation. Therefore, the vision and ideas of constructivism are crucial during analysis of the Trilateral Pact.

²⁰ Berger M., Parker C., Westfall S. (May 12, 2022), What is NATO, and why isn't Ukraine a member? *The Washington Post*. Available from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/01/what-is-nato-treaty-article-five-russia-ukraine/> [11 March 2023].

²¹ The Alliance of Poland, Ukraine, and the UK from the Perspective of Warsaw (February 8, 2022), *The Foreign Policy Council*. Available from: <https://foreignpolicycouncil.com/2022/02/08/the-alliance-of-poland-ukraine-and-the-uk-from-the-perspective-of-warsaw/> [4 March 2023].

²² Kraemer R., Janda J. (2021), Orban's Hungary. A Russia and China proxy weakening Europe. *Report. European Values Center for Security Policy*, p. 10. Available from: https://europeanvalues.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ORBANS_HUNGARY_A_RUSSIA_AND_CHINA_PROXY_WEAKENING_EUROPE.pdf [4 March 2023].

²³ Brotman A. (March 7, 2022), Global Britain and the UK's Enhanced Role in Ukraine. *E-International Relations*. Available from: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/95900> [6 March 2023].

²⁴ Ištók, R., Koziak T. (2009), Międzymorze as a Polish Geopolitical Concept. *Prešov University*, pp. 90-91. Available from: <https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/26616/9MI%C4%98DZYMORZE%20AS%20A%20POLISH%20GEOPOLITICAL%20CONCEPT.pdf> [4 March 2023].

Each of the states of the 'triangle' has certain geopolitical intentions and strategies that push for stronger cooperation within the alliance. Despite the presence of classic interests in its former colonies, for the United Kingdom, Brexit opened several opportunities in the field of foreign relations, which could cause a different position of EU member states. Confronting Russia's aggressive appetites in Europe returns the United Kingdom to the pre-war period before the Second World War, putting the British Government before a choice: to appease the aggressor at the expense of the sovereignty of several European states, or to offer both open and indirect resistance to the aggressor. Having studied the mistakes of Neville Chamberlain's policy and being an author of "The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History" (2014), Boris Johnson and UK government made a choice in favor of confronting the Russian aggressor even though Russian oligarchs kept their funds in Great Britain, which provided them with a significant economic toolkit²⁵. Although the military power of the United Kingdom is currently much smaller compared to the first half of the 20th century, it has a wide range of tools available in the form of economic sanctions, investment opportunities, military exercises, and supplies, transfer of experience in the field of reforming the administrative system, etc. Therefore, considering the complex situation, Poland and Ukraine are almost ideal partners for the United Kingdom.

The key prerequisites for the formation of the idea of this geopolitical "triangle" were the events and transformations within the states themselves. In the case of Poland, there was a long history of supporting Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, as well as the election of Andrzej Duda, a representative of the conservative "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość" party, as president of Poland in 2015²⁶. Given the anti-Russian position of this political power, its focus on Atlantic cooperation and Euroscepticism, the United Kingdom and Ukraine appear to be logical partners in the European space for strengthening cooperation, despite the complex historical background of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the middle of the seventeenth century and during the Second World War. Poles and Ukrainians have many common mental and cultural traits, as well as common existence as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth²⁷. In this case, external challenges and threats require the states of the "triangle" to cooperate and strengthen defense capabilities to avoid previous historical mistakes and conflicts.

Internal reasons in the United Kingdom are, of course, the Brexit in 2016, which led to ambiguous consequences within the state and in relations with EU partners (in particular, the vacuum of influence created after the exit of the kingdom from the EU was filled by Germany and France, which to some extent in a way that worried such traditional "friends" of Great Britain as the Baltic states and Poland)²⁸, but from the point of view of geopolitics, leaving the EU gave the United Kingdom more weight on the international arena, from the point of view of the realist school of international relations. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson's activities from 2019 to 2022 can be considered an excellent example of individual influence on the "triangle". He is a famous researcher of the biography of Winston Churchill, so it was often possible to see in Johnson's foreign policy decisions similarities with the object of his research; it is also worth noting that Boris Johnson's decision to provide military aid to Ukraine and support the adoption of the tripartite memorandum can be considered almost the most important positive factor in promoting the activities of the "triangle". Of course, Johnson's personal behavior, several controversial decisions regarding internal administration and scandals, as well as a certain populism in his rhetoric pushed Boris Johnson to resign²⁹. With changes in the political climate and the economic situation in the United Kingdom, its desire, and capacities for closer cooperation with Poland and Ukraine may change, but the support of Great Britain's status in the transforming international system will push it to the newest forms of geopolitical cooperation in

²⁵ Tisdall S. (May 15, 2022), Boris Johnson is using Ukraine crisis to launch a British comeback in Europe. *The Guardian*. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/15/boris-johnson-ukraine-crisis-british-comeback-europe> [10 March 2023].

²⁶ Szczerbiak A. (June 3, 2022), How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine affected the Polish government's EU strategy? *Notes from Poland. Politics*. Available from: <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/06/03/how-has-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-affected-the-polish-governments-eu-strategy> [1 March 2023].

²⁷ Starchenko N. (2021), Ukrainian Worlds of Rzeczpospolita. *The Stories about History*. Kyiv: Laurus, p. 340.

²⁸ Kawczyński D. (October 29, 2022), The Importance of Future British-Polish Relations. *The Warsaw Institute Review*. Available from: <https://warsawinstitute.org/importance-future-british-polish-relations> [10 March 2023].

²⁹ Tisdall S. (May 15, 2022), op. cit.

combination with classic activities within NATO, which was demonstrated under the short-lived premiership of Liz Truss and, as of early 2023, under the government of Rishi Sunak.³⁰

The Euromaidan in 2013-2014 became an event at the domestic level that exposed Russia's neo-imperial aggressive intentions to the world community. Pro-Russian policy of the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, caused national indignation and the process of overthrowing the pro-Russian regime, which was replaced by a new pro-European parliament and the supporter of Euro-Atlanticism, Petro Poroshenko, was elected. To maintain influence over Ukraine, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, which became a fundamental shift in the established international system and order. In addition, Russia launched the largest war in Europe since the Second World War, which indicated a critical error in the West's attitude towards Russia after the collapse of the USSR, which was manifested in the belief in democratic transformations in Russia, as well as the catastrophic decision regarding the EU's energy dependence on Russia³¹. Therefore, Ukraine's internal aspirations to ensure its security, as well as the prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration, are contributing to the search for additional types of cooperation that will be able to the growth of the region's defense capabilities and the reduction of Russia's political and propaganda influence in Europe. Therefore, cooperation in the Trilateral Pact is considered by Ukraine as one of the forms of confrontation with Russia, rapprochement with Poland and strategic cooperation with the United Kingdom, in its intentions to expand its presence in Central and Eastern Europe, and to restrain aggressive intentions of Russia.

Ukraine, after receiving the status of a candidate member of the EU on June 23, 2022, most probably, will become a member of the EU in the future³². This is welcomed by both Poland, which is the eastern frontier of the organization, and the United Kingdom, which is interested in the democratization of Ukraine, as well as in the further containment of Russia. Regarding Ukraine's accession to NATO, there are a number of obstacles in the form of a negative perception of this event in a number of NATO states (Hungary, Germany), considering fears about "provoking Russia to even greater aggression"³³, and there was also an unclear position of the ruling political party of Ukraine (as of the first half of 2022) "Servant of the People", and also numerous corruption schemes in Ukraine that hinder Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration³⁴. However, Poland's experience in conducting reforms, as well as the support and geopolitical interests of the United Kingdom after Brexit, will allow Ukraine not to stop on the way to joining NATO.

In a way, Euromaidan destroyed the entrenched geopolitical status quo regarding the "buffer zone" between NATO, the EU and Russia with its CSTO. Therefore, supporting Ukraine in this case is quite a challenge for the Western states, which will require stability and readiness for a long-term confrontation with the CIS and the CSTO.

However, this "triangle" should not be considered as one of the forms of "Euroscepticism". On the contrary, deepening the cooperation of these states will contribute to the development and modernization of both the EU and NATO against the background of modern challenges, which will strengthen their positions on the geopolitical map of the world. Since the nineties, Poland has acted as Ukraine's "advocate" in the process of its Euro-Atlantic integration, which makes Poland one of the key players in Central and Eastern Europe. Also, the fact that Poland is the main restraining factor of the EU during the artificial migration crisis caused by Belarus and Russia in the fall of 2021 and

³⁰ Gray N. (January 10, 2023), Where does Sunak stand on Ukraine? *New Eastern European. Articles and Commentary*. Available from: <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/01/10/where-does-sunak-stand-on-ukraine> [10 March 2023].

³¹ Evans A. (January 2011), The Failure of Democratization in Russia: A Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2 (1), pp. 45-50.

³² The EU will stand with Ukraine until its victory, and Ukraine will be in the EU - President after the European Council meeting in Brussels (February 9, 2023). *President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Official website*. Available from: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/yevropejskij-soyuz-bude-z-ukrayinoyu-do-yiyi-peremogi-ukrayi-80897> [1 March 2023].

³³ Dalos G. (October 29, 2022). Orbán says Hungary is 'exempt' from the conflict: tell that to his friend in Moscow. *The Guardian*. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/29/viktor-orban-hungary-conflict-moscow-war-in-ukraine> [1 March 2023].

³⁴ Rzheutska L. (February 4, 2023). Ukraine: Are Kyiv's anti-corruption efforts serious? *DW*. Available from: <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-are-kyivs-anti-corruption-efforts-serious/a-64608249> [8 March 2023].

during the flow of refugees from Ukraine during 2022. Accordingly, it strengthens the prestige and political position of Poland in the EU, despite of worsening relations between Warsaw and Brussels during the “Prawo i Sprawiedliwość” period³⁵.

Another favorable factor for the formation of the “triangle” is the close and mutually beneficial bilateral relations of these states with the USA. The level of these interactions directly depends on the internal political mood and situation in the USA, the geopolitical situation, as well as the benefit from the relationship of the Americans with the “triangle”. Under the administration of US President Donald Trump, interaction and relations with Poland and the United Kingdom have increased, due to the tenure of conservative President Andrzej Duda, together with “Prawo i Sprawiedliwość”, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson, together with the Conservative Party of Great Britain. However, President Trump and the Ukrainian authorities were in rather tense and negative relations both during the term of office of President Petro Poroshenko (who previously bet on the victory of Hillary Clinton in the US presidential elections in 2016), and during the term of President Volodymyr Zelensky, against the background of the telephone scandal, related to Trump's election campaign in 2020, and to the issue of supplying Ukraine with equipment and non-lethal weapons³⁶.

Initially, with the election of US President Joe Biden, the degree of bilateral relations between the US, Poland and the United Kingdom decreased due to the new administration's focus on strengthening relations with European states through NATO and the EU, as well as the formation of a new US foreign policy doctrine, which is focused on East Asia with a focus on the threat in the form of the People's Republic of China³⁷. It is this fact that pushes the states of Europe and the eastern flank of NATO to increase cooperation among themselves and conduct joint measures to increase defense capabilities. One such example is the increase in the contingent of the Royal Forces in Poland and the Baltics against the background of the migration crisis from Belarus and the aggressive actions of Russia³⁸; plans to increase the number of Polish ground forces, which will make it the largest army among the EU states³⁹, etc. Russia's invasion of Ukraine forces the US to confront both Russia and China at the same time, so any cooperation and increase in the defense capabilities of its European allies and partners will only be welcomed. For example, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken positively welcomed the adoption of the memorandum of the “triangle” states in February 2022⁴⁰. The USA is one of the external actors that influences the future activity of the “triangle”, which makes further research of the relations of these states with other geopolitical actors relevant.

It is possible to briefly form the general strategy pursued by the states of the “triangle” from cooperation with each other. The United Kingdom is looking for new platforms for the implementation of a more independent foreign policy outside the EU, and it is the activation of the British presence in Eastern Europe to support its partners from the Baltics, Poland and Ukraine, against the background of Russian aggression, that brings opportunities for the United Kingdom to

³⁵ Tilles D. (August 8, 2022), “We have no reason to fulfil our obligations towards the EU,” says Polish leader Kaczyński. *Notes from Poland. Law, Politics*. Available from: <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/08/08/we-have-no-reason-to-fulfil-our-obligations-towards-the-eu-says-polish-leader-kaczynski> [7 March 2023].

³⁶ Duigan B. (March 3, 2023). Ukraine Scandal: United States political scandal. *Britannica. Politics, Law & Government*. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Ukraine-scandal> [7 March 2023].

³⁷ Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World (February 4, 2021), *White House*. Available from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world> [3 March 2023].

³⁸ Łubiński P. (2022), Hybrid Warfare or Hybrid Threat – The Weaponization of Migration as an Example of the Use of Lawfare – Case Study of Poland. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, vol. 51, p. 7.

³⁹ Harper J. (January 30, 2023), Military spending boost to give Poland largest army in EU. *Anadolu Agency*. Available from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/military-spending-boost-to-give-poland-largest-army-in-eu/2801841> [4 March 2023].

⁴⁰ Radziszewski E. (September 9, 2022), Poland has taken on an unprecedented leadership role over the EU's foreign policy during the Ukraine crisis. *LSE*. Available from: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/09/09/poland-has-taken-on-an-unprecedented-leadership-role-over-the-eus-foreign-policy-during-the-ukraine-crisis> [6 March 2023].

increase its own prestige and role on the international arena, and to conduct an active policy of “protecting democracy”⁴¹.

For Poland, this policy carries certain risks in relations with the EU, however, the strategy of maximally pushing back and preventing the appearance of Russian troops on the southeastern borders of Poland will push for a more decisive strategy to increase defense capabilities and cooperation with states that can have the greatest positive impact on Poland's security: USA, United Kingdom, South Korea, etc. We should also not forget about the danger from the side of Belarus, which already poses a direct threat to the Poles, and the seriousness of which is clearly understood by the United Kingdom, which was one of the first to provide practical assistance during the migration crisis in the autumn of 2021⁴².

For Ukraine, the strategy of cooperation within the “triangle” is primarily of an existential nature since it is incredibly difficult for it to resist Russia on its own. Therefore, the fallacy of delaying and postponing the necessary reforms, in particular judicial reforms, observance of freedom of speech, which are fundamental for Ukraine to become a member of both the EU and NATO, becomes obvious. In addition, Ukraine is a useful partner for Poland and the United Kingdom, due to the already existing experience in the formation of armed resistance against Russian Armed Forces, as well as the economic prospects that Ukraine carries after the reconstruction after the end of the war with Russia.

The prospects of this geopolitical “triangle” can be considered from the long-term results, considering several risks. The existence of this alliance will depend on the factor of Ukraine's resistance to Russian aggression, as well as on whether it will succeed in pushing back the aggressor from the occupied territories. Secondly, the prolongation of the hostilities in Ukraine, with accompanying moral fatigue and economic losses among the population in the members of the Pact, can lead to an internal political crisis with the search for the earliest possible conclusion of the war, which can cause a priority and political defeat of the states in the geopolitical struggle against authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe. Thirdly, the vitality of the “triangle” will depend on the dominance of certain political forces and preferences that may have a negative attitude towards community politics. However, despite the risks, the geopolitical triangle of Poland-Ukraine-the United Kingdom has prospects, first, for strengthening the defense capability of the region (which will reduce the risks of a new military invasion of one of the European states). In the future, this entity may attract the attention of new members, for example, Lithuania, which is logical against the background of common threats, common historical roots with Poland and Ukraine, and an important geographical position in the region⁴³.

Also, in the case of Ukraine's accession to NATO, the “triangle” will become one of the most fortified regions of the Alliance, which will affect not only security, but also democratization and acceleration of reforms in such states as Georgia and Moldova. In the context of NATO and the EU, an example of such cooperation can lead to an increase in the level of defense capabilities of other members of the organization, in particular, Germany, which cannot help but have a positive effect on the situation in Europe. In geopolitical and symbolic terms, the powerful cooperation of Ukraine, Poland and the United Kingdom will become a serious threat for spreading the ideas of the “Russian World” to the West, making it a certain “European gateway” between Western democracies and authoritarian Russia and China. Therefore, this topic arouses special interest, which became the basis for the current and future research.

Conclusions. The Trilateral Pact of the United Kingdom-Poland-Ukraine is a quite new and innovative entity on the international arena, which has not yet had time to show itself in full force due to the rapid change in the international situation and internal social, political disagreements and fluctuations within the member states of the Pact. However, the logic of its formation is clearly traced as one of the forms of a protective mechanism against the growth of international tension and danger, provoked by the PRC and Russian Federation, which is also explained as practical, political, and cultural-ideological reasons.

⁴¹ Vucetic S. (February 10, 2022), What drives British foreign policy? Interview by Isabel Muttreja. *Chatham House*. Available from: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/02/what-drives-british-foreign-policy> [12 March 2023].

⁴² Kawczyński D. (October 29, 2022), The Importance of Future British-Polish Relations. *The Warsaw Institute Review*. Available from: <https://warsawinstitute.org/importance-future-british-polish-relations> [10 March 2023].

⁴³ Ištók, R., Koziak T. (2009), Op. cit., pp. 95-96.

The formed hypothesis regarding the future growth of the expediency and relevance of the role of the Trilateral Pact as a component of Ukraine's foreign policy initiative in the form of “small alliances” is partially confirmed, because there are variables that will affect the level of intensity of interactions among the members of the Pact in the future. It should be mentioned what elements are in favor and against proposed hypothesis. First, by applying the components of Kenneth Waltz's Defensive Realism approach, it can be argued that this alliance is focused on the intentions of the member states to improve the level of cooperation among themselves in the spheres of security and political dialogue against the background of external threats in the region, in the form of the Russian Federation and Belarus. The United Kingdom, Poland, and Ukraine, according to official statements and published documents, do not aim to carry out aggressive actions against other international actors. On the contrary, its goal is to improve the security situation in Central and Eastern Europe. One of the methods for achieving this goal is conducting training by Poland and the United Kingdom of soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which is an important element of their contribution to reducing the factor of Russian aggression on NATO's eastern borders.

Applying the factor analysis approach, the elements that also contribute in favor of the formulated hypothesis and the further growth of cooperation between the United Kingdom, Poland and Ukraine are: the ideological factor, considering constructivist approach, which consists in understanding the complex external threats to the security of the member states and rallying around the idea of confronting Russia and undermining NATO's positions; the security factor – the militarization and aggressive rhetoric of the Russian Federation will activate all new types of interstate interactions in the security sector among Western democracies, taking into account a certain opposition within NATO on the part of such states as Hungary, which inhibits an adequate response to the threats posed. In addition, an important factor is the realization by the governments of Poland and the United Kingdom of the importance of Ukraine's active resistance to aggression from the side of the Russian Federation to ensure its own security.

However, it is necessary to indicate the factors that inhibit the functional capabilities of the Trilateral Pact and work against the proclaimed hypothesis. First, and most importantly, is the absence of an institutional structure of the Pact, which explains the long absence of new information regarding the reports of the work done within the framework of the Pact. Secondly, the functionality of this alliance will strongly depend on the domestic political situation among the member states, as well as public opinion. Factors such as Russian propaganda, economic exhaustion, “war fatigue” can increase the pressure within states to find compromises with the Russian Federation. The third factor is the level of support from other states and international structures. A special feature of this Pact is its support from the side of the USA and most of the NATO members. However, the change in the situation in the Ukrainian-Russian war, changes in the political establishment and resource depletion may also contribute to a decrease in the support of the Triangle from the side of its allies and partners.

It can be said that this cooperation is not as fruitful from the point of view of defense capability for Ukraine as, for example, regular meetings in the Ramstein format or the Lublin Triangle, given the absence of news or official declarations about the Trilateral Pact. However, has a particular usefulness in the form of regular and large-scale training of the Ukrainian military both in Great Britain and Poland, as well as in the political and ideological rapprochement of these states. Considering the materials and reflections presented above, it can be predicted that the Trilateral Pact will continue its operation, but it critically needs establishment of consistent administrative and institutional structure. The success of Pact's activities will depend on the domestic situation of the states, support, and interaction with other partners such as the USA, the Baltic states and, for example, Korea, as well as on the level of exhaustion from the policy regarding deterrence and sanctions imposed on Russia. But this formation is undoubtedly an additional strengthening and improvement of the positions of the West states and the democracies in the confrontation with threats to international security, in particular by Russia.

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