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The role of "small alliances" in the foreign policy of Ukraine: the case of Lublin Triangle

1. Introduction

The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, as well as the hybrid war it launched against Ukraine from 2014 to 2022, prompted the latter to rethink its foreign policy doctrine and political and security cooperation with other international actors. The Russian invasion pointed to the fallacy of Ukraine's foreign policy of neutrality and non-adherence to military-political alliances, which made it extremely vulnerable in a crisis. In addition, the lack of legal and practical obligations on the part of other states to guarantee and ensure the security of Ukraine became one of the main reasons that prompted Russia to start a war against Ukraine. Even though Ukraine managed to sign an association agreement with the EU in 2014, it was obvious that it was impossible for Ukraine to join the EU or NATO in the near future. The reasons are the war started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine; slowness and passivity in carrying out reforms by Ukraine; opposition from part of the EU and NATO states, in particular Hungary and Germany, regarding the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, etc. The main reason for the impossibility of Ukraine joining NATO was the reluctance of the alliance states to worsen relations with the Russian Federation due to the economic and energy dependence of European members, as well as fears about the expansion of Russian armed aggression against NATO. These factors prompted Ukraine to search for alternative forms of security-political international cooperation to improve its own development against the background of growing aggression on the part of the Russian Federation.

In 2021, a new "Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine" was approved and published by the Ministry of Foreign Policy of Ukraine. Its basis was the continuation of the foreign policy course, which was approved in the Constitution of Ukraine in 2019, and its essence is the implementation of the strategy for the future accession of Ukraine to

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NATO and the EU. But it was in 2021 that a practical plan and steps for the implementation of this strategy were developed, the basis of which should be the implementation of the "small alliances" policy. This strategy is due to the realization of the complexities and obstacles of Euro-Atlantic integration, but the need to improve the security situation both within the state and in the region prompted Ukraine to initiate a number of interstate formations both with neighbours and regional states, forming a number of bilateral and tripartite cooperation formats.

As of 2023, Ukraine is participating in several political, security and economic interstate formats. These "small alliances" are considered to be the Associated Trio (Georgia – Moldova – Ukraine), the British – Polish – Ukrainian Trilateral Pact, the Quadriga (Turkey – Ukraine), the Moldova – Romania – Ukraine Triangle, the Lublin Triangle (Lithuania – Poland – Ukraine), as well as the international "Crimean Platform" format. The Lublin Triangle is of particular interest, as this format had previously laid the foundations in 2005 in the form of Interparliamentary Assembly of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland and the Sejm of the Republic of Lithuania the purpose of which is legislative interaction between the parliaments of these states, as well as providing assistance to Ukraine in reforming legislative processes to comply with EU norms and requirements. Also, in 2014 in a joint military brigade LITPOLUKRBRIG was formed, based in the city of Lublin in Poland. Of the forms of international cooperation listed above, it is Lublin Triangle that has a practical military and security component that is still developing. Also, this small alliance has a historical background and legacy in the form of the Union of Lublin approved in 1569, which resulted in the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which included the lands and population of the Ruthenians, the ancestors of today's Ukrainians. However, one of the main factors for the organization of this alliance was the understanding by its participants of security threats from the side of the Russian Federation and Belarus, not only for the region of Eastern Europe, but also for the European Community in general.

The open phase of Russian aggression in 2022 prompts an analysis of the effectiveness of Lithuania-Poland-Ukraine cooperation considering Ukraine's current foreign policy strategy, as well as an analysis of the role played by the Lublin Triangle in Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration intentions.

2. The purpose of the article

The aim of this study is to understand the role of the Lublin Triangle in the new foreign policy doctrine of Ukraine, considering the successes and failures in the performance of tasks by this "small alliance". In particular, the factors and reasons that encourage member states to cooperate in the Triangle format are of interest; strengths/weaknesses of this small alliance in the context of improving the security situation in the region; the future and prospects of the Lublin Triangle.

Accordingly, the goals of this article are: collection and processing of data and materials regarding the interaction of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine within the framework of the Lublin triangle; definition and formation of the main tasks and goals pursued by

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the participants of the Lublin Triangle; analysis of the results and effects of the activities of the Lublin Triangle within the framework of Ukraine's foreign policy initiative regarding "small alliances"; identification of the weak points of this cooperation, to understand further steps regarding the deterioration of the functionality of the Lublin Triangle; analysis of the political and security role of the Lublin triangle at the regional and continental levels; holding a forecast of the future activities of the Lublin Triangle. However, the main task of this article, in the context of a larger-scale study of new formats of Ukraine's foreign policy cooperation since 2014 after the Revolution of Dignity, is the analysis and follow-up of the role of the Lublin Triangle in the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine. Achieving the set goals will allow us to use the research results for the analysis of other cases of interstate interaction in terms of security and politics in other regions, for example, for Taiwan, Azerbaijan, etc. In particular, obtaining a result for this task makes it possible to confirm a certain hypothesis: considering the global security and political transformations in Europe and the international arena (in particular, the open phase of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the weakening of Germany's political position in NATO and the EU, increasing tension and pressure from the side of the PRC on Taiwan, etc.), Ukraine's participation in "small alliances" is not an alternative to NATO and the EU, but on the contrary – a step for further integration into these interstate entities since it is the large international security organizations that guarantee full-fledged security and military cooperation in the modern international system.

3. Theoretical background and state of discipline

This study is conducted within the framework of the science of international relations, accordingly, to increase objectivity, this issue is considered considering the views and positions of several schools of international relations theory: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. A problematic component of the study is the relative recentness of the growing interest in it on the part of scientists. The growth falls precisely in the period after the start of Russia's open invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In addition, this topic is popular mainly at the regional level among scientists of Central and Eastern Europe, which causes the need for further research to reach as many readers as possible. It is also important for expanding the number of interpretations of the topic of the security and political situation in this region. For example, among the articles and sources written in Spanish, the Russian view on this topic dominates. In this article, the author offers a counter-intuitive approach to the perception of Ukraine's foreign policy and strategy issues, especially after 2022.

The choice of the above-mentioned theoretical schools of international relations is determined by the expediency and developments made by them regarding the topic of "alliances" and "interstate cooperation". In particular, the school of realism makes it possible to consider the Lublin Triangle from the point of view of both Defensive Realism (Kenneth Waltz)[1]

[1] K. Waltz, Theory of International Politics. Addison-Wesley series in political science. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979, p. 191., access: 05 VI 2023.

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and Offensive realism (John Mearsheimer)[2]. This will be discussed in the main part of the article; however, this article is written considering the criticism of John Mearsheimer´s position regarding both the European integration processes of Ukraine and the reaction of the Russian Federation to it. In the same way, the position of the school of liberalism must be taken into account for the analysis, but also taking into account certain criticisms regarding placing great hopes on such global international organizations as the UN, which, as in the case of Russia, not only prevent a permanent member of the Security Council from invading another state, but also provide an organizational toolkit for the aggressor to justify his invasion to the international community. The ideas of constructivism are particularly important for this study to collect data and analyse the intangible aspects and factors of the Lublin Triangle's functionality, considering the mental, ideological, cultural, and historical reasons that prompted Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine to form the "Triangle" and guarantee its viability in future.

4. Research questions

Considering the tasks set in the introduction of the article, several research questions were formulated for this study.

- Could Ukraine's participation in the Lublin Triangle be considered successful, as a component of the foreign policy strategy of "small alliances"?
- Taking into account the difficulties that have arisen for Ukraine in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration (slowness in the implementation of reforms by Ukraine; opposition of a number of states in NATO and the EU; threat from the Russian Federation; the search by Ukrainian deputies for alternatives in the foreign policy vectors of interaction, in particular, China, at the end of 2021, etc.), should the Lublin Triangle be considered as an alternative to Ukraine's full accession to NATO or as preparation for Ukraine's future integration into Euro-Atlantic structures?
- What are the prospects for the further development of relations between Lithuania-Poland-Ukraine within the framework of the Lublin Triangle and does this alliance have opportunities for potential expansion with the involvement of new members?
- Considering the sharp aggravation of the security situation in the region of Eastern Europe (the artificial migration crisis provoked by Belarus in relation to Poland and Lithuania in 2021; the ongoing full-scale war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine; the increase in verbal threats from the side of the Russian Federation in relation to the Baltic states, etc.), as well as a certain reticence of key NATO members to provide an adequate response to growing threats, can the format of the Lublin Triangle be considered as a certain criticism of NATO's performance of its functions, or is the Lublin Triangle an ana-

[2] J. Mearsheimer, The tragedy of great power politics. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 16., access: 01 VI 2023.

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logue of the Weimar Triangle, the role of which is to strengthen the security situation on the eastern borders NATO?

The answer to these research questions will make it possible to assess the role and effectiveness of the Lublin Triangle objectively and comprehensively as one of the "small alliances" of Ukraine.

5. Methodology

The specificity of this study determines the focus on the use of qualitative methods. In particular, a content analysis of official documents of the member states of the Lublin Triangle from 2020, as well as public speeches and statements of officials, ministers and presidents of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine was used to obtain data on the goals, expectations and evaluation of the activities of the Lublin Triangle on the part of its members. It was also necessary to use factor analysis to determine the most important determinants of the reasons for the formation of the Lublin Triangle, the adequacy of the approach in assessing its effectiveness, as well as to determine the strengths and weaknesses of this interstate entity. No less important was the use of level analysis, for the most objective and real perception of the Lublin Triangle at the level of the leaders of the participating states, at the level of the population of these states, as well as from the point of view of the international community, in particular, other states that are not members of the Lublin Triangle.

6. Analysis of recent research and publications.

Due to the relative novelty of the presented intergovernmental entity, the source base on this topic is quite limited, therefore the basis of the literature base is general theoretical research, as well as developments and results of conferences and research of scientific centres.

First, to write presented article, it was necessary to analyse official documents regarding the foreign policy strategies of the member states of the Lublin Triangle. In the case of Ukraine, the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 448/2021 "On the Strategy of Foreign Policy Activities of Ukraine" was used, in which the draft "Grand Strategy of Small Alliances" was submitted[3]. The use of this document is fundamental for understanding the tasks set by Ukraine for "small alliances" and will also allow analysing the previous results of the activities of the Lublin Triangle. In the case of Lithuania, the official publication on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania dated July 28, 2020, regarding the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine regarding the creation of the Lublin Triangle was used. Also, the publications of the official website of the Seimas of the Republic of

[3] President of Ukraine, *On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated July 30, 2021 "On the Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine": Decree of the President of Ukraine of 2021, August 26, No. 448/2021*. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Official website, https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4482021-40017, access: 01 V 2023.

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Lithuania regarding the Lublin Triangle are important. These publications allow us to understand the perception of the creation of this interstate entity on the side of Lithuanian interests. In the case of Poland, the Declaration and Road Map published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland on Cooperation between the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Lithuania and Ukraine within the Lublin Triangle were used, which allows to analyse the interests and expectations of these three states from interaction within the framework of this "small alliance".

It is worth noting the developments and work done by the Council of Foreign Policy "Prism", which is in Kyiv, Ukraine. This analytical centre has existed since 2015 and focuses its activities on the analysis and release of scientific publications on the topic of Ukraine's foreign policy, considering various components of this topic. In its activities, "Prism" cooperates with such organizations as the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Eastern Europe Studies Centre (Lithuania), as well as the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (Slovakia). In this study, the results of public surveys and theses of conferences held on the subject of "small alliances" and the Lublin Triangle, in particular, were used. The publications of this research centre are particularly important, given its specialization and available access to survey tools in Ukraine.

One of the examples of theoretical literature used to write this article is the works of classical scientists in the field of international relations. In particular, the developed "system approach" to the perception and study of international relations, authored by Morton Kaplan (1957), is important[4]. The study "System and Process in International Politics" offers several systems that exist in the international arena, and after analysing them, it is possible to draw conclusions about systemic (the inability of the UN to ensure the security of states from aggression) and external causes (aggression of the Russian Federation and Belarus against Ukraine, as well as threats to Lithuania and Poland) which prompted Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine to cooperate within the framework of the Lublin Triangle. Kenneth Waltz in his book "Theory of International Politics" (1979)[5], considers the international environment as chaotic, in which to maintain order it is necessary to establish a balance of forces and establish a stable international order to ensure the security of states. It is the realist term "balance of power" that can be applied to the case of the Lublin Triangle, the purpose of which is to increase the security stability of the states of Eastern Europe against the background of the growing threat from the side of the Russian Federation and its allies. Therefore, this scientific work is also useful for writing this article.

Stephen Walt's book "The Origins of Alliance" (1987) is an important work in the field of interstate collaboration, as it analyses and provides a theoretical basis for various aspects of relations between states in alliances[6]. As an example, the author cites

[4] M. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics*. ECPR Press, 2005, p. 129., access: 30 V 2023.
[5] K. Waltz, Theory of International Politics. Addison-Wesley series in political science. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979, p. 27., access: 05 VI 2023.
[6] S. Walt, The Origins of Alliance. Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 221., access: 28 V 2023.

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the alliances created in the Middle East in the sixties and seventies of the 20th century during the confrontation between the Arab states and Israel. The conclusions made in this work can be used not only for the case of the Lublin Triangle, but also for other cases of alliances.

The article "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations" (1961) by J. David Singer is useful for research[7]. This work outlines the main approaches for conducting a successful level analysis of international systems, using the individual, group, state, and global levels, which allows analysing the Lublin Triangle from different perspectives.

In addition to the works listed above, interviews and articles of government officials as representatives of the member states of the Triangle, as well as the results of social surveys, were used for this study.

7. Analytical text

Euromaidan in 2014 became a catalyst for changes not only in the internal political situation in Ukraine, but also in the security and political situation both in Europe and in the international system. The events of the "Revolution of Dignity" pointed to the weakness of Russia's ideological structure in Eastern Europe, which became one of the reasons for Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the attempted hybrid takeover of South-eastern Ukraine in 2014. Ukraine found itself in a difficult situation, when the hybrid and armed aggression from the side of the Russian Federation found it in the status of a neutral state, which meant its absence from such a power bloc as NATO, as well as the absence of the opportunity to use the tools of "collective security". In addition, Russia's extensive information and propaganda network inside Ukraine, which used pro-Russian political parties and TV channels, worsened Ukraine's internal political stability and stability.

The very fact of Russia's violation of the international status quo and the annexation of the territories of other sovereign states indicated several weaknesses in the established international system. First, it demonstrated the inability of the UN and the UN Security Council to respond to violations of the international order adequately and practically on the part of one of the global powers, which is also one of the permanent members of the Security Council. Considering the limitations of the UN's peacekeeping tools and the declarative nature of this international organization, it can be argued that there is a certain fallacy in the intentions of representatives of the liberal school of international relations who relied on the role of the UN in preventing armed conflicts.

The fact of the invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, using elements of a hybrid war, also indicated that the concept of the "End of History" proposed by Francis Fukuyama was also wrong, in connection with the hopes that the stimulation of the democratization of Russia, its integration into the global community, as well as

[7] D. Singer, The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations. World Politics. The International System: Theoretical Essays, vol. 14, No. 1, October 1961, p. 84., access: 15 V 2023.

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active the process of establishing economic ties with Russia on the part of Western democracies will help make it a full-fledged member of the international community, which is assigned the role of a guarantor of stability and security[8]. However, disregarding the ideological foundations of the Russian state and society, as well as ignoring the mentality of Russians, became the reason that at the time of Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine from 2014 to the present time, the countries of the world allowed the penetration of propaganda and ideological tools into their information space. the spread of Russian influence allowed the European states to become highly dependent on Russian energy sources and pointed to the inability of such organizations as the UN, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE to oppose Russian aggressive intentions due to the introduction of the veto right and Russian penetration into the structures of these international entities. The response to the threat from the side of Russia, in particular, for European states, was the deepening of cooperation within the framework of NATO and the EU, the search for alternative ways of supplying energy carriers, the closer allocation of funds for the defence capability of states and countering propaganda, as well as cooperation with such powerful players on the international arena as, for example, the USA and the United Kingdom.

The Joint Declaration on the Creation of the Lublin Triangle was announced and signed in the city of Lublin, Poland on July 28, 2020. The signatories of the declaration were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Linas Linkevicius, Jacek Czaputowicz of Poland, and Dmytro Kuleba from Ukraine. The statement was of a general nature and outlined the activities and directions on which the Lublin Triangle will focus. In particular, they emphasized the benefits that Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine will receive in the spheres of political, security, cultural, economic and infrastructural cooperation. The need to intensify the interaction of these states among themselves was emphasized not only in the format of the Triangle, but also within the framework of the UN, the Council of Europe and NATO. Already existing forms of cooperation were not left without attention: the joint Parliamentary Assembly will continue to exist and include closer interaction between the parliaments, and the achievements of the joint military brigade of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine were highlighted and the growing role of military cooperation between the countries of the triangle was emphasized. Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, the annexation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, and the EU's energy dependence on Russia were criticized and condemned[9] (Joint Declaration, 2020).

This declaration raised an issue that requires additional analysis and consideration. At the beginning of the Joint Declaration, the centuries-old historical and cultural

[8] F. Fukuyama, C. Rose, *Interview with Francis Fukuyama. Charlie Rose Conversations,* November 11, 1995, https://charlierose.com/videos/19573, access. 30 V 2023

[9] *Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Lithuania and Ukraine on establishing Lublin Triangle*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, July 28, 2020, https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/joint-declaration-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-republic-of-poland-the-republic-of-lithuania-and-ukraine-on-establishing-lublin-triangle-, access: 04 V 2023.

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connection and heritage of the peoples of Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland were recognized. This moment confirms the expediency of the constructivist approach to the analysis of the Lublin Triangle. The very fact that the declaration was made in the city of Lublin, as well as the fact that this organization is named in honour of this city, has a historical and ideological basis. In 1569, an agreement was concluded on the unification of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a single state entity – the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For a long time, this state was the largest in Europe and was one of the key players in the region for nearly two centuries. The Commonwealth included not only Poles and Lithuanians, but also Ukrainians and Belarusians. This fact allows the modern Lublin Triangle to acquire a strong ideological and cultural foundation, which the member states use to resist encroachments from the side of the Russian Federation. In addition, the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth provides additional arguments for Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine for the potential implementation of the concept of a partnership union of states in the region of the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas, which was developed by the Polish prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, the head of the Polish Republic Józef Piłsudski, as well as the Ukrainian politician Vyacheslav Chornovil. This project is called "Intermarium" and aims not only to restore the concept of the Commonwealth of Nations, but also to attract new member states to it[10]. Such formation within the framework of NATO and the EU would be a logical goal of the Lublin Triangle in the future, which could improve the position of Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania in the confrontation with Russia.

The Road Map for Cooperation in the Lublin Triangle was signed on July 7, 2021, in Vilnius, Lithuania and announced the establishment of a political dialogue between states in the form of holding regular meetings at the level of Lublin Triangle coordinators, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of State, and, if necessary, separate meetings to discuss urgent issues[11] (MFA of Ukraine, 2023). The member states of the Triangle undertook to cooperate with each other within the framework of other international organizations, such as the UN, OSCE, and to stimulate the gradual integration of Ukraine into the Three Seas Initiative and the Bucharest Nine, of which Poland and Lithuania are members. The cooperation of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania regarding the energy security of the states, considering the threats from Nord Stream 2, from the risks of the Belarusian nuclear plant in the city of Ostrovets, as well as the gradual accession of Ukraine to the EU energy system, was separately detailed. In addition, the continued support and development of LITPOLUKRBRIG, considering its participation in EU and NATO military exercises and programs, as well as the initiation of consultations and

[10] R. Ištok, T. Koziak, *Międzymorze as a Polish Geopolitical Concept.* Prešov University, p. 89-97, 2009, https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/26616/9MI%C4%98DZYMORZE%20AS%20A%20POLISH%20GEOPOLITICAL%20CONCEPT.pdf., access: 30 V 2023.

[11] Road Map for Cooperation between Ukraine, the Republic of Lithuania, and the Republic of Poland within the Lublin Triangle. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, July 7, 2021, https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/road-map-cooperation-between-ukraine-republic-lithuania-and-republic-poland-within-lublin-triangle, access: 07 V 2023.

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communication between the military headquarters of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, was separately mentioned. Also, the Lublin Triangle will be used to develop and ensure the cyber and information security of member states against a hybrid threat from the Russian Federation and Belarus.

It is worth emphasizing that the President of Poland Andrzej Duda and the President of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda arrived in Kyiv on February 23, 2022, the day before the open phase of the Russian invasion, to sign a joint declaration, the essence of which was the condemned recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and Poland and Lithuania also announced their support for granting Ukraine the status of a candidate for EU membership[12].In addition, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine condemned Russia's use of Nord Stream 2 as a means of pressure and imposing energy and economic dependence on EU states. This meeting has more ideological and symbolic intentions, the essence of which is to demonstrate that the states of the Lublin Triangle are aware of the entire spectrum of threats to the security and economic stability of both the EU and Europe in general from the side of Russia and Belarus.

For a more detailed analysis of the essence of the Lublin Triangle, it is appropriate to refer to the discussion of researchers of the realist school of international relations, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer, regarding the reasons that encourage states to engage in alliances and defence alliances. From the point of view of Waltz's Defensive Realism, states unite in unions and alliances to ensure their own security and prevent threats from other states. According to Mearsheimer´s Offensive Realism, defensive alliances play the role of a tool for increasing the influence and power of its members in a certain region[13]. In the case of the Lublin Triangle, elements of both approaches can be traced, as its goal is to increase the defence capabilities of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine against the background of threats from Russia and Belarus, as well as the growth of the role of these states in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, considering the weakening of the influence of Germany. Regarding the anarchic component of the international environment, it is worth noting that Defensive Realism better describes the approach of the Lublin Triangle, which consists in combining the efforts and resources of states to punish Russia, which violates the established international order and system. Separately, it is worth noting John Mearsheimer 's mistaken opinion about the role of the army for the states: within the framework of the Lublin Triangle, a military unit was created whose task is to increase the security of the member states, and not intentions of aggression or domination over other states of the region. The main task of the Lublin Triangle is the issue of survival and strengthening the defence capabilities of states

[12] President of Ukraine, *Ukraine expects a joint decision of partners on the transfer of modern tanks – Volodymyr Zelenskyy.* President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Official website, January 11, 2023, https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ochikuye-na-spilne-rishennya-partneriv-shodo-pereda-80329, access: 02 V 2023.

[13] J. Mearsheimer, The tragedy of great power politics. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 18., access: 01 VI 2023.

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against the background of changes and transformations of the international system, and therefore each member state of the alliance pursues its own goals for preserving sovereignty and independence. However, the existence of the Lublin Triangle does not threaten the security and sovereignty of its neighbours or other states of the region. Therefore, in this aspect, Defensive Realism is right, unlike Offensive Realism. If we talk about the issue of mistrust between the participants of the Lublin Triangle, cooperation, and improvement of relations between Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, as well as the use of positive aspects of the common historical past, contribute to increasing trust between these states. Accordingly, in the case of the Lublin Triangle, mistrust is variable and does not affect the functioning of the alliance[14].

The Lublin Triangle as an alliance and a form of security-political interaction between its participants is appropriate and should be considered from the point of view of Waltz's Defensive Realism[15]. However, the views and ideas of Offensive Realism are also worth considering understanding what goals the Russian Federation pursues in relation to NATO, the EU, and, likewise, the Lublin Triangle. From the point of view of the Russian Federation, the Lublin Triangle poses a threat to the spread of influence and hegemony in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, since Ukraine is involved in this form of cooperation, which has no guarantee of collective security. Earlier, during the Bucharest Summit of NATO in 2008, it was declared that Ukraine and Georgia would become NATO members in the future, but due to pressure and threats from Russia, the passivity of the leading actors of the North Atlantic Alliance, in particular, Germany under Angela Merkel's chancellorship, as well as passivity and indecision of the Ukrainian government, no Road Map was provided for Ukraine's accession to NATO. This event became one of the reasons that pushed the Russian Federation to aggression towards Ukraine in 2014, as Ukraine's accession to NATO threatens the integrity of the Russian Federation's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and the strength of the ideology of the "Russian World". Offensive Realism to some extent justifies the actions of Russia's aggression, but it is Defensive Realism that makes it clear that Russia's actions are a violation of international law and order, therefore Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine have every reason to cooperate with each other to ensure their own security, since they are in direct geographical proximity[16].

Despite the critical nature of the Lublin Triangle in relation to the effectiveness of other international structures, one of the components of its functionality is close cooperation with the UN, OSCE, the Council of Europe and, obviously, the EU

[14] H. Alfarsi, *Comparison: Defensive Realism vs. Offensive Realism.* Profolus, October 23, 2017, https://www.profolus.com/topics/differences-between-defensive-realism-and-offensive-realism, access: 01 V 2023.

[15] K. Waltz, Theory of International Politics. Addison-Wesley series in political science. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979, p. 59., access: 05 VI 2023.

[16] H. Alfarsi, *Comparison: Defensive Realism vs. Offensive Realism.* Profolus, October 23, 2017, https://www.profolus.com/topics/differences-between-defensive-realism-and-offensive-realism, access: 01 V 2023.

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and NATO. This cooperation strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Lublin Triangle business, strengthening the positions of the above-mentioned large organizations in the region of Eastern and Southern Europe.

For Ukraine, the Lublin Triangle became an opportunity to demonstrate that the state is not a passive international actor that is in a state of waiting for the decision of other major power blocs regarding potential integration. On the contrary, Ukraine can be the initiator of political and, to some extent, security organizations at the regional level. A number of factors can be identified to explain Ukraine's activity in developing such a position. First, the newly elected President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, his government, and the ruling political party in the Parliament of Ukraine "Servant of the People" needed to find alternatives to the initiatives of the former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019) regarding ways of international cooperation and interaction to confront Russia. Previous initiatives to involve UN peacekeeping forces ended unsuccessfully, as did efforts to stop Russian aggression through such international platforms as the Normandy Format (France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine) and the Minsk Agreements, which, on the contrary, were used by the Russian Federation to legitimize its aggressive intentions. Secondly, the passivity and internal political difficulties, as well as the restraint of NATO members in the period 2014-2022 regarding the North Atlantic integration of Ukraine, prompted the search for alternative ways of international cooperation to improve stability and security in the region[17]. Thirdly, it was Poland and Lithuania that advocated and continue to lobby for Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO, as this will help push the danger from the side of the Russian Federation away from its own borders, as well as prevent Russia from re-planning its aggressive actions on other regions, for example, the Baltic states. In other words, Ukraine's cooperation in the format of the Lublin Triangle aims to prepare Ukraine for the structural, political, and cultural features of NATO, to prepare relevant personnel and intergovernmental structures, as well as to stimulate NATO member states in accelerating the adoption of a positive decision regarding Ukraine's accession to this bloc[18].

Participation in small international entities is not new for Poland. On the contrary, it is a normal practice for this country. In particular, Poland is a member of such formations as the Visegrad Four (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary), the Weimar Triangle (France, Germany, Poland), the Bucharest Nine (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia) and the Three Seas Initiative, that includes all members of Bucharest Nine with additions of Croatia, Austria, and Slovenia. A feature of the aforementioned alliances and forms of cooperation is cooperation in the social, economic, and political spheres. Separately, it is worth emphasizing the anti-

[17] L. Rzheutska, *Ukraine: Are Kyiv's anti-corruption efforts serious?* DW, February 4, 2023, https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-are-kyivs-anti-corruption-efforts-serious/a-64608249, access: 25 V 2023.

[18] MFA Press Office, *Declaration of the Lublin Triangle Foreign Ministers of joint European heritage and common values.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Poland, July 7, 2021, https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/declaration-of-the-lublin-triangle-foreign-ministers-of-joint-european-heritage-and-common-values, access: 05 V 2023.

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Russian aspect of these interstate entities against the background of the threat from the side of the Russian Federation after the annexation of Abkhazia, South Ossetia in Georgia, and Crimea in Ukraine. Poland considers participation in these organizations as an opportunity to consolidate its status as a regional leader and power in the region of Central-Eastern Europe and on NATO's eastern borders. This process is facilitated by the increase in the military budget and the increase in the number of troopers in the army of Poland.

In Poland, there are also domestic political reasons for intensifying its foreign policy activities within the framework of the Lublin Triangle. Andrzej Duda has been the president of Poland since 2015 and remains in office at the time of writing this article. He is a representative of the national-conservative right party "Law and Justice". The peculiarity of this political movement in matters of foreign policy is a certain Euroscepticism, especially regarding Germany's position, at the expense of the EU's position at the expense of Poland's domestic decisions in the spheres of same-sex marriage, family issues, etc. Since 2015, the main foreign partners of Poland have been the USA and the United Kingdom[19]. The improvement and development of relations between these states during the terms of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson, who are also representatives of right-wing conservative political movements, became especially noticeable. The feature of this interstate collaboration was criticism of the EU regarding the failure to stop the construction of the Russian-German gas project Nord Stream 2, passivity in the reaction to the growing threat from Russia, and opposition to the growing influence of Germany and France within the EU after Brexit. To some extent, the United Kingdom and the United States act as Poland's advocates in NATO, and before Brexit, the United Kingdom took similar positions with Poland and Lithuania regarding the internal and external affairs of the EU.

In matters of cooperation with Ukraine, the Polish government was favourable and advocated the growth of cooperation between the states. However, it is worth emphasizing a certain number of problems in relations between Poland and Ukraine, related to the conflicts that arose between them in the 17th and 18th centuries, in the interwar period in the 20th century, and especially during the Second World War. Questions regarding the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during this period, as well as the operation "Visula" carried out by Poland, continue to cause tension between Ukraine and Poland. However, the threat that has arisen in the form of the Russian Federation prompts these states to seek a compromise and find common features regarding the historical past and heritage[20].

[19] P. Buras, *East side story: Poland's new role in the European Union.* European Council on Foreign Relations, February 16, 2023, https://ecfr.eu/article/east-side-story-polands-new-role-in-the-european-union, access: 17 V 2023.

[20] J. Bornio, *Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine Inaugurate 'Lublin Triangle'*. The Jamestown Foundation. Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 17 Issue: 115, August 5, 2020, https://jamestown.org/program/lithuania-poland-and-ukraine-inaugurate-lublin-triangle, access: 03 V 2023.

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Separately, it should be emphasized that the potential accession of Ukraine to NATO, as well as its success in recapturing the regions of Ukraine captured by Russia in 2014 and 2022, will contribute to the growth of security and stability in Poland, since the threat from Russia will no longer be located directly near the eastern borders of Poland. But we should not forget about the existing threat to Poland from the side of Belarus, which is de facto and partly de jure a puppet state as it is under the influence and control of Russia, as well as the Russian enclave in the form of Kaliningrad Oblast, which just borders Poland and Lithuania, and on whose territory there are armed units of the Russian Federation that pose a threat to the region[21] (Özkan, 2023).

In the context of Poland's foreign policy intentions within the framework of the Lublin Triangle, parallels with the Weimar Triangle established in 1991 are appropriate. The purpose of this intergovernmental entity was to help Poland move away from the foundations of communism and gradually integrate into the EU and NATO[22]. After Poland's accession to these organizations, it continues to be a member of the Weimar Triangle, as the agreement between France, Germany and Poland provides for the maintenance of a joint military contingent of 1,700 people. The expediency of this structure increased against the background of the Arab Spring and Russia's occupation of Crimea, which prompted these states to increase cooperation among themselves in political and defence terms. The parallels between the Weimar and Lublin triangles are obvious: in both cases, the aim of the alliances is to facilitate the accession of one of its members to NATO and the EU; in both cases, joint military units with the participation of member states were abolished; both "Triangles" saw a threat from Russia. However, it is worth emphasizing the differences between them. First, in the case of the Weimar Triangle, the participating states were leading European and world actors such as France and Germany, which could largely contribute to Poland's accession to NATO and the EU. In the case of the Lublin Triangle, Poland and Lithuania are acting as Ukraine's advocates in the EU and NATO against a background of certain passivity and scepticism regarding Ukraine's potential accession to the EU and NATO. On the other hand, the Weimar Triangle has existed since 1991, and considering the tasks set at that chronological moment, success was achieved – Poland became a full member of both the EU and NATO, which protected it from potential encroachments from the side of the Russian Federation. But the experience gained by Poland during its participation in the Weimar Triangle allows it to successfully fulfil its role now as one of the leaders of the Lublin Triangle, ensuring its own defence capability and stability[23].

[21] C. Özkan, *The Role of the Lublin Triangle in the Russia-Ukraine War.* Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies, February 2023, https://www.ankasam.org/the-role-of-the-lublin-triangle-in-the-russia-ukraine-war/?lang=en, access: 01 V 2023.

[22] P. Obszrski, The Lublin Triangle: A Polish Look at the Establishment of the Initiative. Analytical Centre "Adastra", May 6, 2021, https://adastra.org.ua/blog/the-lublin-triangle-a-polish-look-at-the-establishment-of-the-initiative, access: 06 V 2023.

[23] S. Kovalchiuk, *Lublin triangle: what does the new format of tripartite cooperation entail?* Analytical Centre "Adastra", November 4, 2020, https://adastra.org.ua/blog/lyublinskij-trikutnik-sho-peredbachaye-novij-format-tristoronnoyi-spivpraci, access: 01 VI 2023.

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In addition, the members of the Triangle face a more difficult situation, since one of the alliance members was directly attacked by Russia, and Poland and Lithuania were subjected to pressure from the side of Belarus in the form of an artificially created migration crisis in 2021. Therefore, for a more complete comparison between the Weimar and Lublin triangles, the analysis must be carried out in the future when obtaining more results of the interaction of the members of the Lublin Triangle.

Lithuania, as the largest state in the Baltic region in terms of territory and population, plays a critical role for NATO as a state that borders both Belarus and the Russian Federation, and has access to the Baltic Sea[24]. The strategic importance increased after Finland's accession to NATO, making it, along with Poland, Latvia and Estonia, the eastern borders of NATO and the EU. During the presidencies of Dalia Grybauskaitė and Gitanas Nausėda, Lithuania began to pursue a very active and open foreign policy. The key features of Lithuania's foreign policy course are self-identified participation in NATO and the EU; rapprochement with the states of the region, such as Poland, Latvia, and Estonia; carrying out an anti-Russian policy to prevent the spread of Russian influence to Lithuania; condemnation of the position of the People's Republic of China regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Such an active and open position of Lithuania is ensured by the certainty of support from the side of NATO and the EU in case of a crisis situation; the necessity and uncompromising approach to ensuring one's own security, taking into account threats from Russia and Belarus, as examples of compromise or tolerance of Russian influence on the examples of Georgia, Moldova, or Ukraine, or passivity on the part of Germany became the reasons for the increase in the probability of aggressive actions on the part of Russia and its satellites in the region[25]. Lithuania's critical position on the EU's dependence on energy resources from Russia in the form of Russian pipeline Nord Stream 2, which found a common opinion together with Poland and Ukraine, deserves special attention. As of 2023, Lithuania is in a situation where a weakening of its position towards Russia and Belarus could potentially lead to future aggression on the part of Russia, so Ukraine's initiative to form the Lublin Triangle found a positive response in Lithuania, which also brought Lithuania even closer to Poland. and would help to take a stronger position in NATO together with Poland and the United Kingdom in response to threats from Russia, Belarus, and China to the existence of the current world order and system[26].

[24] J. Bornio, *Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine Inaugurate 'Lublin Triangle'*. The Jamestown Foundation. Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 17 Issue: 115, August 5, 2020, https://jamestown.org/program/lithuania-poland-and-ukraine-inaugurate-lublin-triangle, access: 03 V 2023.

[25] M. Kutkaitytė, *Speaker of the Seimas at the trilateral Assembly of Parliaments of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine: 'The Lublin Triangle is becoming very important today'*. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, July 12, 2022, https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=2&p_t=283248, access: 29 V 2023.

[26] P. Rough, P. Žygimantas, R. Fogiel, O. Merezhko, *Impressions from the Lublin Triangle: An Update on the War in Ukraine.* Hudson Institute, February 7, 2023, https://www.hudson.org/events/impressions-lublin-triangle-update-war-ukraine, access: 04 V 2023.

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However, it is important to clarify whether such small alliances as the Lublin Triangle can exist without the support of other powerful states. The strength of this association is the fact that both Lithuania and Poland are EU and NATO member states, which gives them greater confidence in carrying out their own foreign policy and security initiatives[27]. The external actor that most promotes and supports the Lublin Triangle initiative is the United Kingdom. A manifestation of this is the permanent presence of a British military contingent on the territory of Lithuania; a quick response to the migration crisis provoked by Belarus in 2021, which was manifested in the sending of the military of the UK to help equip and strengthen the border between Poland and Belarus. One of the most striking manifestations of Great Britain's interest in the growth of security and stability in the region of Eastern Europe is participation in the British-Polish-Ukrainian Trilateral Pact, as well as active participation in the training of the Ukrainian military on the territory of the United Kingdom and the supply of lethal and non-lethal military aid to Ukraine starting in 2022 year. Also, the assistance from the United Kingdom can be explained by the desire of the British government to fill a certain vacuum of influence that was formed in Europe after Brexit, since Great Britain was an advocate and a powerful partner of Poland during its participation in the European Union. Understanding the threats from the side of Russia, as well as the weakening of the political influence of Germany in the region, will encourage the United Kingdom to continue supporting the activities of the Lublin Triangle and similar initiatives. Therefore, it can be argued that the existence of the Lublin Triangle is possible on an independent basis, but it is the support from the side of a larger power bloc and separate assistance from the side of the United Kingdom that guarantees an increase in the effectiveness of the activities of this "small alliance".

It is worth considering the question of whether a potential expansion of the member states of the Lublin Triangle is possible[28]. Considering the common historical past of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the possibility of cooperation with Belarus, which was also a component of this state entity, logically arose. In January 2021 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, expressed the opinion that the Lublin Triangle is "a little incomplete" without Belarus[29]. It is worth emphasizing that this statement was made against the background of social unrest in Belarus due to undemocratic and fabricated elections, as well as the persecution of the political opposition on the side of Alexander Lukashenko's regime. In particular, the government of Ukraine had high hopes for the democratization of Belarus

[27] O. Blyzniak, *"Lublin Triangle" – a New Trend in Regional Integration Processes.* National University of Ostroh, Ukraine. Political Problems of International Systems and Global Development, 2023, https://jpl.donnu.edu.ua/index.php/pl/article/view/13561/13466, access: 07 V 2023.

[28] S. Zhelikhovsky, The Lublin format: from the trilateral relations to the four-fold model. Institute of Democratization and Development, December 28, 2020, https://institutedd.org/blog/posts/the-lublin-format-from-the-trilateralrelations-to-the-four-fold-model, access: 15 V 2023.

[29] *Dmytro Kuleba considers the "Lublin Triangle" to be "a little incomplete" without Belarus.* (January 29, 2021). Radio Liberty, January 29, 2021, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-lublinskyi-trykutnyk-bilorus/31076313.html, access: 05 V 2023.

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and the success of the protesters. In August-September 2020, during the meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the countries of the Lublin Triangle with their protégé from Belarus Volodymyr Makei, hope was expressed regarding the creation of the "Lublin Square" in the future. Further discussion of the idea of future cooperation with Belarus took place in March 2021, when Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, president of the Coordination Council of Belarus, also expressed hope for this initiative already after the overthrow of the Lukashenko regime. However, it later became clear during the migration crisis in 2021 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 that Belarus not only cannot be a potential member of the Lublin Triangle, but it is one of the main threats to the security of the states of the Lublin Triangle and in the medium term this state will remain a threat.

To fully understand the essence of the Lublin Triangle, it is necessary to consider the position and mood of not only the political establishment, but also society. This will allow us to find out the level of subjectivity of the Lublin Triangle, as well as the future of this intergovernmental entity. To fully understand the Lublin Triangle, it is necessary to consider the position and mood of not only the political establishment, but also society. This will allow us to find out the level of subjectivity of the Lublin Triangle, as well as the future of this intergovernmental entity. According to a survey conducted by the research firm Info Sapiens on behalf of the "New Europe" Centre in December 2022, the level of trust of Ukrainians in the Lublin Triangle is 65.5%. In comparison, the EU enjoys 83.8% of the trust of Ukrainian citizens, NATO – 76%, G7 – 71%, and the UN – 56.7%[30]. The lack of trust in the Lublin Triangle can be explained by the lower level of awareness of Ukrainians about this international organization, compared to NATO and the EU, as well as the lack of direct collective security mechanisms compared to NATO. However, according to the same study, in the rating of foreign leaders and politicians trusted by Ukrainians, the first place in 2022 is occupied by Andrzej Duda – 86.8%, which indicates a very positive perception by Ukrainians of the foreign policy course chosen by the government of Poland.

According to a poll of Ukrainian citizens conducted in October 2022, organized by the Ukrainian Prism Foreign Policy Council in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 91% of Ukrainians support Ukraine's accession to the EU, and 90% – to NATO. In the same way, about 60% of the respondents spoke about how quickly Ukraine should join NATO and the EU within one year. These results can confirm that the population supports the course of rapprochement with NATO and the EU chosen by the government of Ukraine using the "Small Alliances" strategy[31].

The most objective assessment of the level of aid received by Ukraine from the member states of the Lublin Triangle during a full-scale war with Russia is possible using data published by the Kiel Institute For The World Economy, for the period from January 24,

[30] *Wartime Diplomacy. What do Ukrainians think about Ukraine's move towards EU membership and beyond.* The results of the survey commissioned by the Centre "New Europe", 2023, http://neweurope.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Eurointegration_wartime_ukr.pdf, access: 08 V 2023.

[31] S. Gerasymchuk, M. Drapak, *Grand Strategy of Small Alliances of Ukraine: Use of Potential Against Global Challenges.* Council of Foreign Policy "Prism", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, January 2023, https://prismua.org/29876543490-2, access: 05 V 2023.

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2022 to April 4, 2023[32]. Regarding government financial support of Ukraine, Poland takes 8th place, and Lithuania – 18th. However, if we consider the financial assistance of these states in relation to the GDP of the states, Lithuania ranks 3rd, allocating 0.9% of its GDP to Ukraine, and Poland – 4th, allocating 0.6% of its GDP. In terms of direct military aid: Poland ranks 4th with 2.4 billion euros in military aid, and Lithuania ranks 14th (0.8 billion euros). Separately, government expenses for supporting refugees were allocated: Poland, as the state that accepted the largest number of refugees from Ukraine, allocates 2.2% of GDP and ranks first, and Lithuania – 0.9% of GDP and ranks 6th. Considering these data and percentage indicators, we can conclude that Poland is one of the leading partners of Ukraine in the confrontation with Russia. Lithuania is also actively helping Ukraine, considering the provision of its own defence capabilities and resources that Lithuania can share.

8. Conclusions

The Lublin Triangle is the most successful achievement of Ukraine's foreign policy initiative regarding the "small alliances" strategy. This study affirms the strategic importance of the Lublin Triangle within Ukraine's foreign policy, particularly in the context of "small alliances." It is possible to identify clear and measurable outcomes of this cooperation, focusing on its role in advancing Ukraine's geopolitical interests and regional security cooperation.

The findings show that the Lublin Triangle has garnered substantial political backing within Ukraine, as well as among its citizens. Survey data and interviews with key stakeholders indicate widespread approval of the alliance, particularly in light of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This political support has been crucial in facilitating Ukraine's diplomatic engagements within the alliance, particularly concerning its integration into NATO and the EU. However, it is worth emphasizing that for a more successful implementation of the new foreign policy strategy, Ukraine should take into account the formation of a larger number of such mini-lateral associations, in order to avoid dependence on only one format.

The research highlights the material contributions of Poland and Lithuania in terms of military aid and financial support to Ukraine. Both countries have played an instrumental role in training Ukrainian forces and providing military equipment, despite their own resource constraints. A notable result is the regular deployment of joint military exercises and the operationalization of LITPOLUKRBRIG, which has significantly improved interoperability and readiness among the three member states' armed forces. These achievements are concrete indicators of the alliance's effectiveness in the defense sector. However, given that neither Poland nor Lithuania can take a direct part in hostilities against Russia, this brigade for Ukraine plays the role of a certain «training» and learning from the experience of NATO member states, with the potential involvement of more troops and the expansion of the program in the post-war period.

[32] S. Gerasymchuk, M. Drapak, *Grand Strategy of Small Alliances of Ukraine: Use of Potential Against Global Challenges.* Council of Foreign Policy "Prism", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, January 2023, https://prismua.org/29876543490-2, access: 05 V 2023.

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The Lublin Triangle's success is also in acting as a diplomatic advocate for Ukraine on the international stage, a role that is not as pronounced in other formats of international cooperation like the EU's CSDP or OSCE. Poland and Lithuania, both staunch defenders of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, have actively promoted Ukraine's interests in key forums, including NATO and the EU. Specific outcomes include the acceleration of Ukraine's EU candidate status and the amplification of international military and financial support during critical moments of the war with Russia. This diplomatic engagement is one of the most significant and measurable results of the alliance.

While the Lublin Triangle has demonstrated significant successes, the study acknowledges its limitations, particularly in terms of resource capacity. The alliance cannot fully replace Ukraine's aspirations for NATO membership, as it lacks the collective defense guarantees that come with full NATO integration. However, the Lublin Triangle has positioned itself as a vital stepping stone toward broader Euro-Atlantic integration, especially in the military and security sectors. Also, its smaller size allows for faster decision-making and more agile diplomatic and military responses than larger multinational organizations.

The Lublin Triangle should be considered preparation for Ukraine's future integration into NATO and the EU rather than an alternative to full membership. Also, it shouldn´t be considered as a certain criticism of NATO's performance. While NATO remains the cornerstone of European security, the Lublin Triangle helps address certain gaps and enhances regional security cooperation in a way that NATO's broader membership structure may not easily allow. Despite the lack of resources, it strengthens Ukraine's security and diplomatic posture without offering the full benefits of NATO membership, such as collective military responses to an invasion. Given the slow progress of Euro-Atlantic integration and the reluctance of some NATO members to admit Ukraine due to fears of provoking Russia, the Lublin Triangle serves as an intermediate step, ensuring Ukraine remains on the path to eventual membership in NATO and the EU.

Regarding the future of the Lublin Triangle, it can be predicted that this intergovernmental entity will continue its successful activities with the potential expansion of activities into new spheres of intergovernmental cooperation. With the war in Ukraine intensifying, there is likely to be further development in joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and cyber defense strategies. The joint brigade, LITPOLUKRBRIG, could be expanded or further operationalized in response to growing regional threats. But the potential for the Lublin Triangle to expand its scope of cooperation beyond security and defense. Specific areas of expansion identified include educational exchanges, joint programs in cybersecurity, and further integration in economic and energy sectors. These future activities, while contingent on the geopolitical environment, suggest a robust trajectory for the alliance in strengthening regional ties and advancing Ukraine's long-term strategic goals. However, it is still too early to talk about the possibility of attracting new members. From the point of view of the historical past, a logical candidate could be Belarus, as a constituent part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but in the long term and exclusively only after the democratization of this state.

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In conclusion, this research substantiates the Lublin Triangle's role as a key instrument in Ukraine's foreign policy. The specific military, diplomatic, and political outcomes outlined in this study demonstrate the alliance's concrete achievements. It is worth noting that the Lublin Triangle, despite a certain orientation more towards NATO than towards the EU, cannot be considered an alternative to interaction within the framework of these two large organizations. On the contrary, like the Weimar Triangle, the Lublin Triangle is a continuation and expansion of the influence of NATO and the EU to the east, to facilitate the potential full-fledged Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine. As Ukraine continues to navigate its path toward full NATO and EU membership, the Lublin Triangle will remain a crucial platform for building and improving regional cooperation and security.

Abstract: This study focuses on the analysis of the functionality of the Lublin Triangle as a component of the strategy of conducting "small alliances" in the foreign policy vision of Ukraine. The article is devoted to the study of the reasons, goals, results of the activities of the Lublin Triangle since 2020 until present days and conducting forecast for the future of this international entity. To conduct the research, it was appropriate to use factor analysis to determine the main determinants that drive the functionality of the Lublin Triangle, content analysis of existing documents and interviews of officials and researchers, as well as a level of analysis that contributes to a deeper understanding of this topic at the domestic, regional, and global levels. The preliminary results of the study indicate that the cooperation of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine within the framework of the Lublin Triangle was the most effective and practical in comparison with other international organizations in which Ukraine participates as part of the "small alliances" policy. The high activity of the participants of the Triangle is also explained by the common historical past and the similarity in their visions of political and security stability in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the existing threat from the Russian Federation and Belarus to the participants of this alliance, as well as the growing tension between the United States and the People's Republic of China, will only increase the importance of cooperation in this format. Considering the open phase of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, as well as a long-term prospect of Ukraine's integration into NATO, this interstate entity will maintain and increase its relevance, which allows for further and deeper research on this issue.
Keywords: Lublin Triangle; Ukraine; Poland; Lithuania; small alliances; foreign policy of Ukraine.

Rola „małych sojuszy" w polityce zagranicznej Ukrainy: przypadek Trójkąta Lubelskiego

Streszczenie: Niniejsze opracowanie koncentruje się na analizie funkcjonalności Trójkąta Lubelskiego jako elementu strategii prowadzenia „małych sojuszy" w wizji polityki zagranicznej Ukrainy. Artykuł poświęcony jest badaniu przyczyn, celów, wyników działalności Trójkąta Lubelskiego od 2020 roku do chwili obecnej oraz przeprowadzeniu prognozy na przyszłość tego międzynarodowego podmiotu. Aby przeprowadzić badania, należało zastosować analizę czynnikową w celu określenia głównych determinantów, które napędzają funkcjonalność Trójkąta Lubelskiego, analizę treści istniejących dokumentów oraz wywiady z urzędnikami i badaczami, a także poziom analizy, który przyczynia się do głębszego zrozumienia tego tematu na

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poziomie krajowym, regionalnym i globalnym. Wstępne wyniki badania wskazują, że współpraca Litwy, Polski i Ukrainy w ramach Trójkąta Lubelskiego była najbardziej efektywna i praktyczna w porównaniu z innymi organizacjami międzynarodowymi, w których Ukraina uczestniczy w ramach polityki „małych sojuszy". Wysoką aktywność uczestników Trójkąta można również wytłumaczyć wspólną przeszłością historyczną i podobieństwem ich wizji stabilności politycznej i bezpieczeństwa w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Ponadto istniejące zagrożenie ze strony Federacji Rosyjskiej i Białorusi dla uczestników tego sojuszu, a także rosnące napięcie między Stanami Zjednoczonymi a Chińską Republiką Ludową, tylko zwiększy znaczenie współpracy w tym formacie. Biorąc pod uwagę otwartą fazę inwazji Federacji Rosyjskiej na Ukrainę w lutym 2022 r., a także długoterminową perspektywę integracji Ukrainy z NATO, ten międzypaństwowy podmiot utrzyma i zwiększy swoje znaczenie, co pozwala na dalsze i głębsze badania nad tym zagadnieniem.
Słowa kluczowe: Trójkąt Lubelski; Ukraina; Polska; Litwa; małe sojusze; polityka zagraniczna Ukrainy.

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