

ПОЛІТИЧНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ МІЖНАРОДНИХ СИСТЕМ ТА ГЛОБАЛЬНОГО РОЗВИТКУ

DOI 10.31558/2519-2949.2023.1.7

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«LUBLIN TRIANGLE» – A NEW TREND IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES

The article attempts to investigate the regional association of the «Lublin Triangle». It has been proven that the «Lublin Triangle» is an example of a new trend in modern regional cooperation when interested neighbouring countries demonstrate the will to integrate for joint coordination of actions in priority areas of domestic and foreign policy. The formation of a tripartite format of cooperation between Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania was traced. Common challenges and threats are emphasised, especially taking into account the ongoing russian aggression in Ukraine.

The main tasks and goals of the «Lublin Triangle» were analysed, including the coordination of the actions of the three states to effectively counter current challenges and threats to common security. It was noted that the priority task in cooperation is joint counteraction to hybrid threats from russia, primarily in the fight against disinformation, helping Ukraine to approach EU and NATO standards with the aim of faster Euro-Atlantic integration. It was noted that the parties expressed their intention to actively develop trade and investments, ensure better access to regional infrastructure and improve its quality by activating ambitious projects that promote cohesion in the region.

The institutional basis of the «Lublin Triangle» was analyzed and it was determined that cooperation within this association was established at the level of presidents, heads of government, foreign ministers and national coordinators. The primary documents that the parties adopted within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» and joint tripartite projects were studied. It was noted that with the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the cooperation between Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine significantly intensified, primarily in the military-technical, humanitarian, diplomatic, and political spheres. Warsaw and Vilnius have shown themselves to be true friends of Ukraine and have demonstrated their friendship, support, concern and loyalty through their actions. The multifaceted assistance provided to official Kyiv by Poland and Lithuania was analyzed. It is noted that Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania play a significant role in the processes of forming modern political, cultural and social realities in the region of Central Europe and are aware of the benefits of further strengthening political, economic, infrastructural, security, defence and cultural ties between their countries in the modern world. It has been established that the «Lublin triangle» is an ambitious tripartite format for cooperation that demonstrates unity, a common vision of prospects, threats and ways of developing a qualitatively new regional integration.

Keywords: *«Lublin Triangle», tripartite cooperation, regional integration, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania.*

Formulation of the problem. The russian-Ukrainian war brought to the surface a lot of problems regarding the effectiveness of some respectable international organizations and integration associations, and in some places, it proved their complete amorphousness and incapacity. It forced a new look at the practical significance of such subjects as international relations and pushed for a review of the existing «integration traditions». It has become obvious that it is increasingly difficult for major alliances to maintain international peace and security as a result of russia's aggressive actions. Instead, new opportunities have opened up for young, ambitious participants in regional interactions who know «their» problems and band together to solve them together. Considering this, flexible regional formats, such as the Lublin triangle, which is a vivid example of a new trend in international policy to create regional alliances and reveal the potential of three countries, will help bring Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania against the background of growing challenges in the region.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Various aspects of Ukraine's bilateral cooperation with neighboring states, multilateral formats of cooperation with unions of states, and international and regional organizations have repeatedly become the subject of scientific interest for a wide range of domestic and foreign researchers. However, not too much attention has been paid to the functioning of such a regional entity as the «Lublin Triangle». Given this, the author faced a scientific task: to investigate the essence, main goals, institutional basis, and main achievements of the tripartite format of the «Lublin Triangle».

Presenting the main material. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, Jacek Czaputowicz of Poland, and Linas Linkevicius of Lithuania signed a joint declaration on the establishment of the «Lublin Triangle» on July 28, 2020, in Lublin, in the presence of guests of honor. About the importance of this tripartite format of cooperation, the head of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, D. Kuleba, noted that this is not just an association that Ukraine sought to join; it is an organization in which our state is a co-founder. «Ukraine demonstrated the ability not only to follow someone but also to lead, and this is fundamental...» [15; 4].

In the joint declaration, which the parties adopted during the inaugural meeting, it is noted that Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania are playing an increasingly important role in the processes of forming modern political, cultural, and social realities in the Central European region and are aware of the benefits of further strengthening political, economic, infrastructural, security, defense, and cultural ties between their countries in the modern world [16]. The ministers emphasized common challenges and threats for their countries, especially taking into account the ongoing russian aggression in Ukraine. The words of Vasyl Bodnar, national coordinator of the «Lublin Triangle», testify to the importance of joint efforts to counter common threats and challenges: «we are united not only by common values and interests but also by a common responsibility for the future of our countries and the region in which we live, which in recent years has been at the center of events in global politics» [10; 11; 14]. Therefore, the ministers expressed their readiness to coordinate their activities to ensure compliance with international law, both at the level of tripartite cooperation and within the framework of international organizations (NATO, the European Union, UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE) [16].

The text of the joint declaration clearly shows the position of the Republics of Poland and Lithuania regarding the russian-Ukrainian war. The ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders, strongly condemned russia's actions in Ukraine, and called on the russian federation to stop aggression and withdraw its troops from those parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions where they are illegally stationed [16]. The parties confirmed their strong support for Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, welcomed its European choice, and supported the effective implementation of political and economic reforms in Ukraine. Polish and Lithuanian diplomats emphasized that the experience of their states, as well as the best practices of implementing reforms that were developed in cooperation with other European countries, would be extremely relevant and useful for Ukraine.

The ministers welcomed Ukraine's status as NATO's enhanced partner, supported Ukraine's aspirations for membership in this organization, and emphasized that providing Kyiv with the Action Plan would be an important step in this direction. Among other things, the parties undertook to strengthen people-to-people contacts and cooperation between civil societies, in particular among scientific and expert circles, and confirmed their unwavering commitment to the development of the Eastern Partnership by expanding and deepening cooperation and defining its ambitious and strategic long-term goals. The ministers expressed their willingness to take active actions to develop trade and investments, ensure better access to regional infrastructure, and improve its quality by activating ambitious projects that promote cohesion in the region [16].

It was decided that the parties would hold regular meetings at the level of foreign ministers in the fields of multilateral activities and with the participation of selected partners. In the institutional context, the parties agreed that they would organize consultations at the level of the leadership of the foreign ministries of their countries and create in the ministries of foreign affairs the positions of representatives on issues of cooperation within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» [16]. The Deputy Heads of Foreign Policy Departments, Vasyl Bodnar (Ukraine), Marcin Przydacz (Poland), and Dalyus Cekuolis (Lithuania), were appointed National Coordinators.

The first meeting in the format of the «Lublin Triangle» had to be held in the format of a video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was held by the national coordinators of the «Lublin Triangle» on September 17, 2020. The parties discussed the preparation of the next meeting at the level of heads

of foreign affairs, which was to be held in Kyiv at the initiative of D. Kuleba. The national coordinators identified the main areas of activity of the «Lublin Triangle» and agreed to ensure sustainable interaction of the format at various working levels. During the meeting, the main principles of the regional association's activities were agreed upon, and plans for cooperation were soon outlined [11]. In particular, the parties agreed that one of the main tasks of the «Lublin Triangle» should be the coordination of the actions of the three states to effectively counter current challenges and threats to common security, including countering hybrid threats from russia, primarily in the fight against disinformation.

The first meeting of the «Lublin Triangle» at the level of MFA ministers was held online on January 29, 2021, and it was rather a platform for discussions on many political issues because no formal documents were adopted as a result of these negotiations. At the event, in addition to the ministers of foreign affairs from the founding countries, the leader of the Belarusian opposition, Svitlana Tykhanovska, was present and was invited to jointly discuss the situation in Belarus. Ukraine initiated such an invitation in order to hear and understand the position of the Belarusian opposition [2]. At the briefing, D. Kuleba noted that without Belarus, the Lublin triangle «is a little incomplete» and «we would like democratic Belarus to join and turn the Lublin triangle into a Lublin square. But the time for this has not yet come» [23; 9]. The joint position of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine on the openness and readiness of the tripartite format for cooperation with pro-russian action is that «from the very beginning of the crisis in Belarus, the Lublin triangle offered its services of voluntary assistance to the settled regime. No one is closed to anyone» [23].

The Road Map of Cooperation between Ukraine, the Republic of Lithuania, and the Republic of Poland within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» was signed on July 7, 2021, in Vilnius. According to this document, nine priority areas of cooperation were identified:

- Development of dialogue within international organizations and with partners;
- Cooperation in the field of security and defence;
- Cooperation on energy security issues;
- Cooperation in the field of cyber security;
- Cooperation on countering the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Cultural and humanitarian cooperation;
- Cooperation in the field of economy and infrastructure;
- Cooperation in the field of strategic communication and countering hybrid threats [6].

Each branch of cooperation involves the implementation of some detailed, concrete steps that will fully ensure the ambition of the «Lublin Triangle» format. It is worth emphasizing that the Roadmap took into account and refined those points that were not reflected in the joint declaration at the time of the initiative's launch and caused a lot of criticism in the expert environment [8].

An important step in the development of cooperation within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» was the initiation of the Youth Lublin Triangle, as a union of youth councils in Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, representatives of the national youth councils of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, and the Ukrainian Public Diplomacy Platform signed the Memorandum of Cooperation and institutionally launched the Lublin Youth Triangle on October 27, 2021. Thus, the three national youth councils united a total of 264 youth public organizations and 11,000 young Ukrainians, Poles, and Lithuanians. The creation of such a format fully corresponded to today's demands and needs, since new generations of Ukrainians, Poles, and Lithuanians want and will live together in a single European space [5].

The first talks between the presidents of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» took place on December 20, 2021. The meeting took place in Ukraine at the state residence of «Syniohor» in Huta, Ivano-Frankivsk region. The result of the negotiations was the signing of a joint statement in which V. Zelenskiy, A. Duda, and G. Nauseda confirmed their commitment to the further development of the strategic partnership between Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland based on common values and interests and demonstrated a clear commitment to the further expansion of cooperation between the three countries on a wide range of issues, such as defense, economy, energy, and others, including within the framework of the Lublin triangle. For their part, Lithuania and Poland confirmed their full support for Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO and their commitment to its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders, including territorial waters [21]. On this occasion, A. Duda noted that «we must take a strong position and not accept blackmail» [7].

During the meeting, the participants discussed the topic of strengthening European energy security and, in this regard, expressed deep concern about the Nord Stream 2 project, which is a challenge for the security of the European region. The parties expressed their readiness to work together to counter the monopolization of the European gas market by russia, which uses energy as a geopolitical tool.

The presidents discussed the migration problem on the Lithuanian and Polish borders from the side of Belarus, which was artificially created and organized by Minsk and is part of the great hybrid war of the Russian Federation [20]. The parties called on the international community to strengthen sanctions against the Russian Federation due to its aggression against Ukraine and once again appealed to the Kremlin to stop escalating the situation and move toward de-escalation by withdrawing its troops from the borders of Ukraine and from its temporarily occupied territories [21; 18].

The common problematic issues of the three countries within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» were the subject of discussions during the meetings of the national coordinators, which took place on November 17 (online) and December 11, 2021 (Lutsk, Ukraine) [21]. D. Kuleba, the head of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, noted that in just one year, nine meetings were held in the Lublin triangle: three meetings of foreign ministers, one meeting of national coordinators of the Lublin triangle, two meetings of heads of national security departments, and three meetings of parliamentarians. He reported that during the year, the ministers of the Lublin Triangle signed four documents: the Lublin Declaration, the Road Map of Cooperation, the Joint Plan to Combat Disinformation, and the Declaration on Common European Heritage and Values [3].

A day before the tragic day for Ukraine, when the Russian Federation cynically launched the so-called military special operation, the presidents of Poland and Lithuania arrived in Kyiv and met with V. Zelenskiy on February 23, 2022. The presidents discussed the consequences of the actions of the Russian Federation for European and regional security and coordinated efforts to counter Russian aggression. V. Zelenskiy stated that the personal presence of true friends of Ukraine, A. Duda and H. Nauseda in Kyiv at this difficult time is very important and valuable [24]. For his part, the President of Poland stated «that today, before our eyes, the security architecture in Europe, which guaranteed peace in recent decades, is collapsing. Current events are a test of the unity of the EU and NATO, so it is necessary to demonstrate unity in order to ensure peace and security. A. Duda also called on the leadership of Russia to refrain from armed aggression against Ukraine [24].

The President of Lithuania, G. Nauseda added that Lithuania does not recognize any attempt to undermine the territorial integrity of Ukraine. He welcomed the reaction of the EU and other states regarding Russia's actions related to the recognition of the ORDLO. We cannot allow military force or threat to become the deciding factor [24].

Cooperation between Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine intensified primarily in the military-technical, humanitarian, diplomatic, and political spheres with the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine [11; 12; 13; 22]. Warsaw and Vilnius showed their genuine, true essence and proved their friendship, support, concern, and loyalty with clear actions.

Following the meeting of the heads of government of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, the countries participating in the Lublin Triangle adopted a joint declaration condemning Russia's unprecedented, brutal, and unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine and demanding the cessation of all hostilities and the liberation of the territory of Ukraine from troops and military equipment on March 14, 2022. In a joint declaration, the prime ministers paid tribute to all victims of the war, recognized the extraordinary efforts and achievements of the Ukrainian military and people, condemned the indiscriminate use of Russian military force against the civilian population and civilian infrastructure, and denounced the reckless and extremely dangerous attacks by Russian troops on nuclear power plants and nuclear facilities in Ukraine. According to the participants of the event, such attacks are unprecedented in world history and put the world on the brink of a nuclear catastrophe.

The parties condemned Belarus involvement in aggression against Ukraine and called on Minsk to adhere to its international obligations. Separately, the participants of the meeting appealed to the Russian and Belarusian people to speak out decisively and demand from their governments to stop gross military aggression against the neighboring state [17].

The heads of governments of the countries participating in the «Lublin Triangle» called on international organizations, in particular the IAEA and the UN, to respond to Ukraine's demands and ensure the safety of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, as well as the protection of humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of the civilian population. The parties emphasized the urgent need for the EU's independence from energy resources imported from the Russian Federation as soon as possible. Warsaw and Vilnius emphasized that Ukraine should immediately receive the status of a candidate country in the EU and become a member of the EU under an accelerated procedure. Among other things, government officials expressed their readiness to continue providing support to Ukraine, its government, and its people in this existential struggle in all possible ways, including economically, and by providing military equipment and humanitarian aid [17].

The meeting at the level of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, timed to the second anniversary of the establishment of the «Lublin Triangle», was held on July 28, 2022. The joint statement clearly shows the important role of the «Lublin Triangle» as a regional format of cooperation in Central Europe and the firm intention to further expand cooperation in the fields of security, defense, energy, infrastructure, scientific, cultural, and youth cooperation [19].

The parties welcomed the high intensity of military-technical cooperation and expressed the desire to expand cooperation between the armed forces of the three states, both on a bilateral and trilateral level, which will include, among other things, conducting exercises in training centers in Poland and Lithuania and treating and rehabilitating servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The statement clearly states the confirmation of the firm intention to work on the further implementation of restrictive measures against Russia until the full restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity [19].

The partners called on the international community to implement a full oil and gas embargo, expand individual restrictions against Russian elites and state-owned enterprises, and completely disconnect Russia from the Western banking system. In addition, the parties emphasized the importance of countering attempts by the Russian side to circumvent sanctions, introducing restrictive measures against countries that help it in this, and called for the transfer of frozen assets from the Russian side abroad to Ukraine.

The ministers emphasized the unanimity of the position of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania regarding the need to hold Russia accountable for committing crimes of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide on the territory of Ukraine [19]. They also expressed their desire to continue successful and constructive cooperation within the framework of the «Lublin Triangle» in countering disinformation and preventing the influence of Russian propaganda abroad. The ministers also welcomed the decision to grant Ukraine the status of a candidate country in the EU, adopted by the European Council on June 23, 2022, and agreed to coordinate efforts to ensure Ukraine's full membership in the EU [19].

In Brussels, three non-governmental organizations from Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, namely the Citizen Resilience Initiative (CRI), the Kosciuszko Institute, and the Media Detector, presented a comprehensive joint report on December 6, 2022, during the EU-Ukraine Anti-Disinformation Forum, highlighting the challenges related to Russian disinformation and propaganda activities in the countries of the Lublin Triangle. The report contains a list of the targets of Russian propaganda and disinformation in the countries of the Lublin Triangle and presents a number of recommendations addressed to all interested parties, including international organizations and donors, representatives of civil society, and the media [1]. Such reports, which are preceded by complex analytical work, are extremely important in the context of countering the hybrid wars of the Russian Federation, a part of which are information wars.

The presidents of the countries of the «Lublin triangle» met within the framework of the second summit of heads of state in Lviv on January 11, 2023. The summit once again confirmed the readiness of Poland and Lithuania to be together with Ukraine in the extremely difficult times of war and, as long as there is a need for this, to further strengthen defense capabilities, continuing to provide powerful military, defense, political, diplomatic, economic, logistical, and humanitarian assistance. The parties agreed to promote strong political, practical, and material support from NATO and the EU for Ukraine to enhance the ability of the Ukrainian state to effectively defend its territories on land, at sea, and in the air.

The presidents confirmed the need for a transparent process of post-war reconstruction and reconstruction of Ukraine and recognized the crucial role of Poland as a hub for sending the aid necessary for this reconstruction, with the involvement of Polish and Lithuanian investments. The participants of the summit confirmed their intention to interact at the tripartite, European, and international levels regarding the issue of the de-occupation of the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia, in particular using the mechanism of the Crimean platform. In addition, the presidents highly appreciated Ukraine's contribution to strengthening global food security and emphasized the importance of expanding the Black Sea Grain Initiative to other seaports in Ukraine [16].

The issue of Ukraine's future membership in the EU and the provision of heavy weapons, in particular Leopard tanks, received a prominent place in the regular meeting. The parties emphasized the exceptional priority given to the status of a candidate for EU membership and confirmed their full commitment to support Ukraine in opening accession negotiations as soon as conditions permit. In no way was such a prospect outlined in the joint final declaration, in the context of the provision of tanks. Instead, immediately after the summit, Poland intensified its efforts to speed up the transfer of necessary military equipment to Ukraine. In particular, Poland has officially submitted a request to Germany for permission to provide Leopard tanks, and official Berlin, which has been hesitating for so long on this matter, has stated that it will provide an answer with the necessary urgency on January 24, 2023. Germany made such a fateful decision

for Ukrainians already on January 25, 2023, and this in turn created opportunities for twelve countries to transfer about one hundred Leopard tanks [11].

Conclusions. The establishment of the «Lublin Triangle» was the beginning of a truly new trend in the integration processes of the 21st century, when preference is given to small, flexible regional associations based on deep friendly relations between participants. The prerequisites for the unification of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania are long-standing, strong, good-neighbourly relations based on a strategic partnership, which has not only common historical, cultural, and economic factors but also common challenges, primarily security.

The functioning of the «Lublin Triangle» demonstrates its importance and effectiveness. During its entire two-year existence within the framework of this tripartite format, many really effective meetings were held at the level of presidents, heads of government, heads of foreign affairs, and national coordinators, and a number of important documents of various levels were developed. The parties managed to speak with a common voice on many important issues, especially in the context of Russian aggression. Poland and Lithuania have become those countries that, from the first days of the war, actively, sincerely, and very effectively helped Ukraine in the fight against the aggressor and called on other countries, primarily at the level of the EU and NATO, to do the same and convince those participants in international relations who hesitated to act and refrain from supporting Ukraine. All this inspires great hope that this format has good prospects in the future, because only true friendship, which has passed the test of time and difficulties, has a chance to flourish.

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Близняк О. А. «Люблінський трикутник» – новий тренд у регіональних інтеграційних процесах

У статті зроблено спробу комплексно дослідити регіональне об'єднання «Люблінський трикутник». Доведено, що «Люблінський трикутник» є прикладом нового тренду у сучасній регіональній співпраці коли інтеграційну волю демонструють зацікавлені країни-сусіди задля спільної координації дій у пріоритетних сферах внутрішньої та зовнішньої політики.

Простежено становлення тристороннього формату співпраці між Україною, Польщею та Литвою. Наголошено на спільних викликах та загрозах, особливо беручи до уваги російську агресію, що триває в Україні.

Проаналізовано основні завдання та цілі «Люблінського трикутника», серед яких координація дій трьох держав з ефективної протидії актуальним викликам і загрозам спільній безпеці.

Зазначено, що пріоритетним завданням у співпраці є спільна протидія гібридним загрозам з боку Росії передусім у боротьбі з дезінформацією, допомога Україні в наближенні до стандартів ЄС та НАТО з метою швидшої євроатлантичної інтеграції. Зазначено, що сторони висловили намір здійснювати активні дії з розвитку торгівлі та інвестицій, забезпечення кращого доступу до регіональної інфраструктури та підвищення її якості шляхом активізації амбітних проєктів, що сприяють згуртованості в регіоні.

Проаналізовано інституційну основу «Люблінського трикутника» та визначено, що співпрацю у рамках цього об'єднання налагоджено на рівні президентів, очільників урядів, міністрів МЗС та національних координаторів. Вивчено основні документи, які були прийняті сторонами у рамках «Люблінського трикутника» та спільні тристоронні проєкти. Зазначено, що з початком повномасштабної війни в Україні співпраця Польщі, Литви та України суттєво активізувалась передусім у військово-технічній, гуманітарній, дипломатичній, політичній площині. Варшава та Вільнюс показали себе справжніми друзями України та чіткими діями довели свою дружбу, підтримку, стурбованість та відданість. Проаналізовано різнопланову допомогу, що було надано офіційному Києву з боку Польщі та Литви. Зазначено, що Україна, Польща та Литва відіграють суттєву роль у процесах формування сучасних політичних, культурних та соціальних реалій у регіоні Центральної Європи та усвідомлюють переваги подальшого посилення політичних, економічних, інфраструктурних, безпекових, оборонних та культурних зв'язків між своїми країнами у сучасному світі. Встановлено, що «Люблінський трикутник» є амбітним тристороннім форматом для співпраці, що демонструє єдність, спільне бачення перспектив, загроз і шляхів розвитку якісно нової регіональної інтеграції.

Ключові слова: «Люблінський трикутник», тристороння співпраця, регіональна інтеграція, Україна, Польща, Литва.