

# PROSPECTIVE DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE UKRAINE-UK-POLAND FORMAT, WITH REGARD TO NATIONAL INTERESTS AND DECLARED FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF UKRAINE

## Group of authors:

Alyona Getmanchuk, Sergiy Solodkyy

## SUMMARY

*Unlike Ukraine, Poland and the United Kingdom lack the demand for the development of a Ukrainian-Polish-British “alliance”, not to mention the fact that the very definition of “alliance” is perceived rather controversially in the two capitals. Neither London nor Warsaw is yet ready to answer the question of what the three countries can do within the triangular framework that they could not do in the bilateral format. There is a consensus view that at present these relations should be viewed solely as another format for assistance to Ukraine, primarily in the military sphere. But this format is also more likely to be seen in the coordination of short-term efforts than in the development of long-term joint initiatives. Even for those tracks, which could be developed in a triangle format—such as the basic training of the Ukrainian military by British instructors on the territory of Poland—the British took a different path, involving some countries of the world to the training of the Ukrainian military in Britain itself. At the same time, it is possible that a request for such an “alliance” will emerge later on, especially under the scenario of the re-election of U.S. President Donald Trump. For now, the future of the triangle depends on its strongest member—the United Kingdom. It is important to convince the British that a Ukrainian-Polish-British alliance could be as valuable a contribution to the concept of “Global Britain” in Europe as an AUKUS alliance in the Indo-Pacific region. Close cooperation within the triangle may play a rather restrictive role in the process of Ukraine’s accession to the EU, but has a positive influence on Ukraine’s integration into NATO, particularly in the context of switching to NATO principles and standards and strengthening interoperability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces with the armed forces of the Alliance—a process which in fact began at triangle level back in 1996 with the launch of Ukrainian-Polish-British exercises “Cossack Steppe.” In addition, the triangle would be the place to test initiatives for which NATO does not agree on—Poland and especially the United Kingdom can act as a sort of trendsetters for the Alliance in this case. As part of the strategic security dialogue, Kyiv, Warsaw and London can discuss initiatives, approaches to security guarantees for Ukraine, future security in general, the transformation of Russia, etc.*

The idea of Ukrainian-Polish-British “alliance” caused unequivocal—sometimes on the verge of euphoria—support in Ukraine both at the level of political establishment and in the society in general. In terms of public approval, it is second only to the idea of membership in the European Union, and according to some surveys<sup>1</sup>, it is even ahead of support for NATO membership. Sympathy for the idea of such an alliance is reinforced by sympathy for the leadership of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Polish President Andrzej Duda demonstrated in the time since full-scale Russian invasion. It is these two foreign leaders who have proven to be the most resolute and committed partners to Ukraine’s victory. They are the ones with whom the President of Ukraine has built up the most trusted dialogue in the last five months.

But does this idea evoke the same uniform support and enthusiasm in the UK and Poland as it does in Ukraine? To what extent do the two other members of the “trio” want to develop such a trilateral partnership, and what is the practical added value of this “alliance” in London and Warsaw?

### **Polish Approaches to the Ukrainian-Polish-British “Alliance”**

In contrast to Ukraine, Poland’s approach to this format of cooperation is quite reserved. This can be explained, in particular, both by the critical remarks concerning the format of such an “alliance,” which have appeared in the Polish media since the idea was made public, and by other factors, that the Polish government has to consider in its policy on the “alliance”. We would venture to assume that among the three countries participating in the format, it is in Poland where this format has caused the most discussion about its expediency and prospects. The factors influencing Poland’s rather restrained position compared to the Ukrainian (and even British) one are as follows:

- The reluctance of the Polish government to come under attack of the internal opposition—political, expert and media, which may discern in such ideas the desire of the Polish authorities to prepare the ground for withdrawal from NATO or the EU. That is why both government and parliament representatives stress in their messages that the key security priority for Poland is NATO, while other formats can be seen only as complementary, not as an alternative to EU and especially NATO. Marcin Przydacz, the sectoral Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, calls<sup>2</sup> NATO the “main alliance” of Poland, which includes its key allies “starting from the United States and the United Kingdom to Western European countries.” He also assures: “We remain loyal and active allies within NATO.”

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<sup>1</sup> National survey “Ukraine in Conditions of War”, Sociological Group “Rating”, March 20, 2022, [https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/pyatyy\\_obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ukraina\\_v\\_usloviyah\\_voyny\\_18\\_marta\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/pyatyy_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ukraina_v_usloviyah_voyny_18_marta_2022.html)

<sup>2</sup> Boris Johnson chce stworzyć sojusz militarny z Polską i Ukrainą. Wiemy, co na to polski rząd, Fact.pl, 20 czerwca 2022, <https://www.fakt.pl/polityka/boris-johnson-chce-sojuszu-militarnego-z-polska-i-ukraina-wiemy-co-na-to-polski-rzad/r3r1n58>

- The very term “alliance,” as positioned in Kyiv, arouses certain suspicion. According to Łukasz Adamski, in Poland the concept of an “alliance” is seen as something legally binding, and they want to help Ukraine not because of the obligation but because they want to do so<sup>3</sup>. Not without reason, when the Head of the National Security Bureau (BBN) Paweł Soloch was asked in an interview<sup>4</sup> whether the new format of the Alliance was in question, he emphasized that it was not about the alliance, but about the cooperation format, aimed at coordination of actions for the security of Ukraine. Among Polish officials and experts, Ukraine’s emphasis precisely on an “alliance” with Poland and the UK was perceived as a high-profile PR stunt, which was not necessary in this context.
- The pragmatic and rational dimension of the “alliance.” It is unclear what exactly this format yields for Poland, and what can be done within this framework that cannot be done in a bilateral format with Ukraine on one side and the UK on the other. In addition, there are reservations about the geographical remoteness of London, which can hardly contribute to the effectiveness of such an alliance, as well as about the small military weight of Britain with “only 227 tanks” (according to Military Balance 2021), which would not allow to adequately counter large-scale military threats.
- Historical factors being that in Poland’s past, Britain did not meet its status as a reliable ally. Particular appeals have been made to the fact that Poland still remembers very well the outcome of Poland’s alliance with the United Kingdom in 1939 — London’s failure to provide military assistance that Poland thought was necessary. And in 1943, Britain even consented to Poland losing a substantial part of its territory. Apparently, the UK sees the experience of alliance with Poland differently, as evidenced by a column<sup>5</sup> in *The Sun* by British Minister of the Armed Forces James Heappey, in which he states: “To be British is to go to the aid of others and defend those who cannot defend themselves. That’s why we went to the aid of Poland in 1939.” Such discrepancies in historical events have only sharpened the discussion in the Republic of Poland about the experience of alliance with Britain in the past.

As for Ukraine, complex historical issues have been overshadowed by the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, and even the so-called “Kresowiaks,” who were negative towards us in recent years, have understood the obvious truth formulated by a popular blogger on Twitter who used to criticize Ukraine heavily: “We have to help Ukraine, because one thing is Ukraine and another is Banderism”. However, the historical moments still ricocheted indirectly on the idea of Ukrainian-Polish-British alliance. We are referring primarily to the acronym UPA (Ukraine-Poland-Anglia), which was half-jokingly used in some Ukrainian

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Łukasz Adamski, Vice Director of Mieroszewski Centre, August 1, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Sojusz Polska, Ukraina, Wielka Brytania? Szef BBN Paweł Soloch o nowym formacie współpracy, Dziennik Polski, 2 lutego 2022, <https://dziennikpolski24.pl/sojusz-polska-ukraina-wielka-brytania-szef-bbn-pawel-soloch-o-nowym-formacie-wspolpracy/ar/c1-16027395>

<sup>5</sup> Ukraine needs our help. Being British means we stand up for freedom, James Heappey, The Sun, 25 January 2022, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/17429984/ukraine-needs-our-help-british-freedom-democracy/>

media and social networks to call the newly-formed “alliance.” This, of course, did not go unnoticed<sup>6</sup> in Poland, where any idea with such an abbreviation was doomed to failure<sup>7</sup>.

As for supporters of closer tripartite cooperation between Ukraine, Poland and Britain, they proceed from the following arguments:

- Such a format is a unique chance to bring the United Kingdom, a nuclear-armed state and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to the side of Ukraine and Poland in Central and Eastern Europe. Understanding NATO’s inflexibility, it is very good to have established alliances with individual influential NATO members who can act faster and more decisively than the cumbersome NATO machine. For instance, the UK demonstrated this last year when it dispatched its military to the Polish-Belarusian border in the midst of Lukashenko’s artificial migration crisis. Britain's decisive stance with the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine has only exacerbated this impression.
- An alliance with the United Kingdom should, on the one hand, send a signal to Germany and France, whose actions to deter the Russian threat are causing frustration in both Ukraine and Poland. There is a popular view that Britain has, in a sense, begun to play the role that Germany should actually play in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, this should also be a signal to Russia that the UK is only increasing its presence in this part of Europe, and its withdrawal from the EU does not mean abandoning Europe. Boris Johnson repeatedly stressed this during Brexit, but concerns about London’s distancing from European affairs still lingered.
- Military cooperation in the tripartite format has been going on for a long time. This argument is especially popular among the Polish military. In particular, they appeal<sup>8</sup> to the fact that in the military sense, the Ukrainian-Polish-British alliance essentially emerged as early as 1996, when the trilateral exercise “Cossack Steppe” was launched between Ukraine, Poland and the UK within the framework of the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme. Poland was then just aspiring to become a member of NATO. These exercises were held many times in the territory of Ukraine (near Mykolaiv), as well as in the territory of Poland and the UK. The very idea of such a triangle was first discussed in detail, according to former Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski<sup>9</sup>, in 2016, during his joint visit to Kyiv with former British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. Consequently, Ukraine, the UK and Poland have been pursuing such a format for a long time and along different tracks. This idea did not

<sup>6</sup> Ukraina-Polska-Anglia – sojusz niebezpieczny, Mysl Polska, <https://myslpolska.info/2022/02/03/ukraina-polska-anglia-sojusz-niebezpieczny/>

<sup>7</sup> Translator’s note: abbreviation of the triangle is consonant with the Ukrainian acronym for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the UPA.

<sup>8</sup> Sojusz Wielka Brytania-Polska-Ukraina. Gen. Polko: Dołączenie Niemiec byłoby ważnym sygnałem dla Kremla, wPolityce.pl, 31 stycznia, <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/583792-sojusz-wielka-brytania-polska-ukraina-gen-polko-komentuje>

<sup>9</sup> Szansa na sojusz Polski z Ukrainą i Wielką Brytanią? Waszczykowski: Są dwie możliwe drogi ku temu, 31.05.2022, Niezależna.pl, <https://niezalezna.pl/444740-szansa-na-sojusz-polski-z-ukraina-i-wielka-brytania-waszczykowski-sa-dwie-mozliwe-drogi-ku-temu>

suddenly emerge out of nowhere, and by the time it was made public it had a certain background, both military and diplomatic.

So, to summarize the Polish vision, it is worth noting the following:

- So far, the consensus view in Poland is that this framework is needed today as another format of assistance to Ukraine—no more and no less. It is primarily a question of military assistance. Poland has already become the second contributor of military aid to Ukraine after the United States, despite the fact that its GDP is seven times less than that of Germany<sup>10</sup>.
- The majority of our Polish interlocutors in diplomatic and expert circles consider the idea of the Lublin Triangle to be a higher priority and perspective than the idea of Ukrainian-Polish-British “alliance”. Nevertheless, according to Sławomir Dębski, Director of the Polish Institute for International Studies (PISM) these two initiatives should be considered (and, obviously, developed) as complementary, not mutually exclusive. The Lublin Triangle is a format of interaction between the EU member states and Ukraine and can be useful specifically on the European Union track. The format with Britain is more important in the context of NATO and the elaboration of the position of the international coalition in support of Ukraine, where London acted as a kind of trendsetter in the provision of heavy weapons to Ukraine and in the formation of a more decisive approach to Russia.
- In Poland they believe that the success of the “alliance” will depend on how active will be the position of its strongest participant in this issue, i.e. the United Kingdom. Neither on the position of Ukraine, which considers itself the initiator of the coalition, nor on that of Poland. So far, from the Polish point of view, London “lacks appetite”<sup>11</sup> for the development of this format, and moreover there is no desire to upgrade it to the level of other “small alliance,” where the UK is a member together with the USA and Australia—AUKUS.
- If Ukraine wants to have Poland’s support in the development of the triangle, it is important to avoid PR constructions like “alliance,” which causes an ambiguous reaction in the Polish elites. Although some Polish experts do not rule out that over time such interaction may develop into a kind of “alliance” (especially under the scenario of Donald Trump returning to the presidency in the United States). Then Britain’s authority on security issues on the European continent and interest in closer interaction with it may grow. It is possible that Washington itself will delegate more European issues to the United Kingdom, as it once did to Germany.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Sławomir Dębski, Director of the Polish Institute for International Studies (PISM), September 10, 2022

<sup>11</sup> Interview with a Polish expert, July 28, 2022

- The European Union acts in the context of “alliance” more as a restrictive factor than as a contributing one. Poland’s membership in the EU and the corresponding trade restrictions call into question deep economic integration at the trio level, given the consequences of Brexit. Ukraine’s acquisition of candidate status and desire to begin accession negotiations as soon as possible make the Ukrainian position sensitive to the positions of other member states. For Poland, it is important that Ukraine, as a future EU member, see the future of the EU as Warsaw does: as a union of nations, not as a would-be federation. Ukraine, as a candidate for EU membership, will sooner or later have to formulate its vision of the ultimate goal of the EU internal reform, and the question of whether it will look similar to the position of Warsaw.
- The idea of developing small alliances does not arouse the same enthusiasm in Poland as it does in Ukraine or even the UK. Consequently, with regard to Ukraine, the key priority for Poland today is the bilateral track. There is a conviction in Warsaw that the war simply obliges Ukraine and Poland to reach a completely new, unprecedentedly high level of bilateral relations. That is why the diplomatic efforts of the Polish side are focused on the preparation of a new basic Treaty on Good-Neighbourliness to replace the Treaty of 1992 that no longer meets the current realities (the working name of the new document in Poland sounds like the Sarmatian Tractate). The very fact that this treaty is being prepared on the model of the Elysée Treaty between France and Germany should contribute to the emergence of Ukraine and Poland as a new alliance in Europe, which is already self-sufficient on its own, and does not necessarily include geographically distant Britain. For Poland, unlike the vast majority of EU and NATO member states, Russia’s war in Ukraine is also its war, and Poles associate 50% of RP security precisely with the security of Ukraine<sup>12</sup>.

### **British Approaches to the Ukrainian-Polish-British “Alliance”**

The United Kingdom is an important partner of Ukraine, which has made a significant contribution to countering Russian aggression since 2014. Currently, it has provided more than £2.3 billion<sup>13</sup> in military aid. Since 2015, the United Kingdom has been training Ukrainian servicemen as part of the ORBITAL mission (a total of 22,000 Ukrainians have been trained). London launched a new phase of the program to train Ukrainian soldiers in the UK with the aim of providing training for 10,000 Ukrainians<sup>14</sup>.

British interest in developing relations with Ukraine has been rather fluctuating, characterized by significant declines, but there have also been sharp rises (for example, in the spring of 2022). Two eloquent facts testify to the past level of London’s “interest” in interaction with

<sup>12</sup> Sojusz z udziałem Polski. "Ukraina to 50 proc. naszego bezpieczeństwa", O2.pl, 01.02.2022, [https://www.o2.pl/informacje/sojusz-z-udzialem-polski-ukraina-to-50-proc-naszego-bezpieczenstwa-6732666499799744a?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=dsa&gclid=Cj0KCQjw\\_vjWBhD8ARIsAH1mCd5NXo-c58qI3O77INvVCLc9B-LgKpUGW0XEo0wF\\_Dk6rlurUbtI9fgaAp1KEALw\\_wcB](https://www.o2.pl/informacje/sojusz-z-udzialem-polski-ukraina-to-50-proc-naszego-bezpieczenstwa-6732666499799744a?utm_source=google&utm_medium=dsa&gclid=Cj0KCQjw_vjWBhD8ARIsAH1mCd5NXo-c58qI3O77INvVCLc9B-LgKpUGW0XEo0wF_Dk6rlurUbtI9fgaAp1KEALw_wcB)

<sup>13</sup> «Міністр оборони Бен Воллес відвідав військових Збройних Сил України під час початку навчальної програми в Сполученому Королівстві», 09.07. 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-ben-wallace-visits-armed-forces-of-ukraine-as-training-programme-starts-across-the-uk>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Kyiv. The first is that during the 30 years of independence the head of the British government came to Ukraine as many as one (!) time—it was John Major’s visit in 1996. Prime Minister Boris Johnson must have tried to make up for the short-sightedness of his predecessors, and therefore paid three visits in just a few months of 2022. The second is that the British side still does not even want to hear about at least simplifying the visa regime for citizens of Ukraine, and the story with the provision of visas for Ukrainian refugees in the spring of 2022 resulted in a scandal<sup>1516</sup>.

Ukraine should be realistic about the pragmatic approach of Britain and not overestimate London’s interest in supporting Ukrainian initiatives, especially the triangular cooperation proposal. Media euphoria in Ukraine about British unconditional support can sometimes give an inaccurate impression of London’s priorities. On the other hand, one should understand that Russian aggression, however paradoxical it may sound, has opened a window of opportunity for deepening cooperation between the two countries. The United Kingdom demonstrated substantial support for Ukraine after the occupation of Crimea in 2014—this was reflected in its commitment to the sanctions policy against Russia, training of Ukrainian soldiers, and provision of arms. After the start of the open full-scale invasion, the UK entered the circle of Ukraine’s closest partners. The trustful dialogue that developed between Volodymyr Zelenskyi and Boris Johnson influenced the level of interaction between the countries in various fields, in particular in the military one, naturally. It is quite possible to assume a significant influence of the British Prime Minister on the Ukrainian President’s vision of the reliability of agreements with Moscow<sup>17</sup>. Johnson has publicly compared negotiations with Putin to talking to “a crocodile when it’s got your leg in its jaws”<sup>18</sup>.

Although the idea of triangular cooperation belongs to the Ukrainian side, not well-informed observers sometimes attribute the authorship to London. Primarily because one of the first to report such cooperation was British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss<sup>19</sup>. Meanwhile, some reports indicate that official Kyiv proposed the first documents for consideration to its partners back in fall of 2021. The fact that the announcement of cooperation coincided with heightened anxiety about a Russian attack added extra meaning to the triangular format. That is why observers began to assess the new initiative almost as a new security alliance, which was definitely not the purpose of the diplomats—at least from Britain and Poland. At this stage, we can say that the parties still have unresolved conceptual issues regarding further cooperation, and as to what the added value of the new format is.

<sup>15</sup> Financial Times, ‘The UK’s shameful Ukrainian refugee policy’, March 8, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/2d3fca5f-7dd1-4cc7-a899-25d119158eff>

<sup>16</sup> Заява Президента Володимира Зеленського: «Велика Британія – наш потужний союзник», 2 квітня, 2022, <https://twitter.com/zelenskyiua/status/151033601777270790>

<sup>17</sup> «Українська правда», 05.05. 2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/articles/2022/05/5/7344096/>

<sup>18</sup> Reuters, ‘UK PM Johnson says Ukraine peace talks are doomed because of "crocodile" Putin’, April 21, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/negotiating-with-putin-like-dealing-with-crocodile-uk-pm-johnson-says-2022-04-20/>

<sup>19</sup> “Foreign Secretary Liz Truss’ speech to the Lowy Institute”, January 21, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-speech-to-the-lowy-institute>

The declaration of the idea was accompanied by considerable media support (the most in Ukraine, less in Poland and the least in Britain). But on an operational level the project remained virtually dead, and no one in the diplomatic department of the United Kingdom promoted this topic in any significant way<sup>20</sup>. The following reasons can be discerned that prevented London from getting more seriously involved in launching the triangle:

- Domestic politics. This is not the first time that the United Kingdom has attributed its lack of attention to Ukraine to a pressing domestic political agenda. Urgent and early elections have constantly served as an informal justification for weakening support for Ukraine on certain issues. Ostensibly for this reason neither David Cameron nor Theresa May, who were supposed to focus on elections, a referendum, or negotiations about the country's withdrawal from the EU, were able to come to Ukraine. The process of filling the trilateral cooperation also coincided with the scandals surrounding Prime Minister Boris Johnson (to be fair, here domestic politics, on the contrary, forced the Prime Minister to be more active in foreign policy—particularly, on the Ukrainian issue). The electoral statements of the two key contenders for the position of the new head of government—Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss—indicate a low interest in general in the subject of countering Russian aggression (the trilateral interaction is not to be mentioned at all).
- Lack of clarity about the benefits for the UK. In London, they still do not fully understand the added value of this project. Bilateral cooperation between the two countries is nearly exemplary—regular political dialogue, serious interaction in the field of security, support for the future reconstruction of Ukraine, etc. If necessary, Poland can be involved—as in the case of the training of Ukrainian soldiers on Polish territory by British instructors<sup>21</sup>. London seeks to figure out two things: how this project can effectively help Ukraine, but also whether the initiative will help affirm London's foreign policy vision of a “*Global Britain*.”<sup>22</sup>
- Other priorities. Eastern Europe was not in principle an area of special interest for London. The United Kingdom's policy document *The Integrated Review*, for example, devotes a separate subchapter to the Indo-Pacific region (which is quite predictable for a number of reasons)<sup>23</sup>. There are only two cursory references to Ukraine in broader contexts. For example, in a paragraph on the Russian threat, London promises to support Eastern European countries and Ukraine in particular in building the capacity of its army. Within the block on countering state threats to democracy, society and the economy, the authors of the review identified seven priority actions. Ukraine is mentioned in the seventh one, which is to place diplomacy at the center of international efforts to counter state threats: “This will include strong support to the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.” For obvious reasons, this point is no longer relevant.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with an expert in the UK, July 27, 2022

<sup>21</sup> «Українська правда», «Британські інструктори відновили навчання українських військових в Україні – Times», 16.04.2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/04/16/7339982/>

<sup>22</sup> Interview with an expert in the UK, July 27, 2022

<sup>23</sup> “Global Britain in a competitive age. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy”, March, 2021, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975077/Global\\_Britain\\_in\\_a\\_Competitive\\_Age- the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age- the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf)



In fact, there are apparently not many reasons for the lack of interest in tripartite interaction, but one reason is enough for the entire project to shut down at the start. As of today, the situation does not look deplorable—one cannot say that there is a complete lack of interest. On the contrary, the British side is trying at different levels to understand what exactly Ukraine expects; what kind of trilateral concrete measures are needed to give substance to the project. And may the triangular format be a total mystery to the general British public. In specialized circles in London, however, there is interest, at least at the working level—relevant meetings and consultations are being held involving representatives of various departments and at various levels (the Foreign and Defence Ministries, of course, play a key role here). Consequently, it is possible to assume that the future of the triangle depends on this working level—if the three countries manage to formulate a goal for the existence of the project and outline specific measures and projects for interaction, then it will also be possible to give it a fresh lease of life.

At the working level, London’s interest in triangular cooperation can be explained by the following motives:

- The same perception of threats. Britain, Poland and Ukraine are natural and logical partners, since they have the same understanding of the threats posed by Russia. And Britain demonstrated this understanding much earlier and more clearly than many other Western democracies, which have long tried to reconcile Vladimir Putin by negotiations. A strategic security dialogue between Ukraine, the UK and Poland can play an important role in devising approaches and initiatives to effectively counter Russia. These trilateral developments could then be advocated at NATO, EU or UN level. Ukraine could benefit from Britain's recent experience in providing security guarantees to Sweden and Finland during the vulnerable period before their NATO membership.
- “*Global Britain*”. Many Britons (especially from the pro-Brexit camp) felt resentful, believing that EU membership constrained London’s foreign policy and did not allow it to unfold at the proper level<sup>24</sup>. Consequently, British diplomats face the challenge of proving Britain’s influence as well as its key and indispensable role in global politics. The interest of other countries in building alliances with the participation of the United Kingdom proves London’s relevance and underscores its influential and unique role. AUKUS is one example that fits into the post-Brexit approaches of the new policy to assert the “*Global Britain*”. The Ukraine-UK-Poland triangle also demonstrates the exceptional importance of London for Central-Eastern Europe in general and Ukraine in particular in countering Russian aggressive policies.
- Significant bilateral advances. This is not the first time Ukraine has participated in the creation of regional alliances. For example, GUAM, created in 1997, actually

<sup>24</sup> James Rogers, ‘A new European triumvirate: Plurilateralism in action’, Council on Geostrategy, February 2, 2022, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/britains-world/a-new-european-triumvirate-plurilateralism-in-action/>

disappeared from Ukraine's foreign policy agenda, despite numerous attempts to revive the initiative. A new alliance and a new partnership always require content. The triangular initiative is a unique case, in which a partnership is not created from scratch. By and large, the triangle is a symbolic decoration for the "stuffing," which the countries have achieved during the long period of preliminary cooperation. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the idea of British instructors training Ukrainian military in Poland should be communicated and developed further as part of the triangle<sup>25</sup>.

- Personal interest. In the event that Liz Truss becomes Prime Minister, it is highly likely that the triangle will receive more attention from the United Kingdom. The Truss team involved in initiating the triangle will likely move to the PM's office. This will mean that the project has a better chance of progressing, since it is a question of not only preserving institutional gravity, certain obligations to Ukraine, but also of personal attachment, which should not be underestimated.

The foundation for the partnership will be the promise that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Poland made to Ukraine in a joint trilateral statement released on February 17, 2022. Namely, London and Warsaw "will continue to provide Ukraine with support, standing in unity with Ukraine, in the face of ongoing Russian aggression, and fully committed to stand with Ukrainian nation in its efforts aimed at defending Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders". Both countries have assisted Ukrainians to varying degrees since 2014.

Ukraine and Poland have an interest in Britain being more active in the region of Central and Eastern Europe: permanent membership in the UN Security Council, nuclear weapons, significant financial resources, and diplomatic ambitions to defend democracies make London particularly valuable. To a certain extent, the triangle can be seen as a kind of encouraging factor, which should solidify Britain's interest in supporting Ukraine and Poland. London has already shown itself to be an active player—the United Kingdom's desire to demonstrate the effectiveness of its diplomacy in the post-Brexit era has helped to strengthen Ukraine's defence position. It was Britain's resolve on supplying arms to Ukraine, both before and after Russia's large-scale invasion, that has contributed to the fact that other democracies have been forced to demonstrate their own engagement on this issue as well.

Ukraine cannot rely on the unwieldy EU and NATO, whose actions involve a consensual approach to decision-making. Consequently, Kyiv needs to forge the smaller partnerships that serve its interests best. The Ukraine-Poland-Britain triangle in this sense does not duplicate, but complements the efforts and capabilities of the EU and NATO. The triangle should actually bind Britain to Ukraine and Poland. At the same time, it should not prevent the formation of new partnerships beneficial to regional security. For example, Britain announced the training of Ukrainian soldiers on its territory; Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and

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<sup>25</sup> Укрінформ, «Українських військових у Британії та Польщі вчать користуватись новою технікою», 22.04. 2022, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3464271-ukrainskih-vijskovih-u-britanii-ta-polsi-vcat-koristuvatis-novou-tehnikou.html>

Canada subsequently joined the initiative—new countries will obviously be added to the list over time<sup>26</sup>.

Britain could also play a key role in the reconstruction of Ukraine (London has promised to participate in the reconstruction and development of Kyiv and the Kyiv region). Next year, the United Kingdom will organize a conference on Ukraine’s restoration in London. British investment could also play an essential role in establishing the investment appeal of Ukraine in the postwar period. An important point in the evolution of the Ukrainian-British alliance could be the revision of the visa regime for Ukrainian citizens.

## POTENTIAL AREAS OF THE TRIANGLE COOPERATION: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Not an *alliance*.** In London and Warsaw, the triangular cooperation is seen as a deep trilateral partnership. Such definitions as “union” or “alliance”, which are quite often used in Kyiv, seem to be avoided by the officials in the other two states. Ukraine should not focus on them either. The alliance provides for the highest degree of commitment (including legally binding), but neither Poland nor the UK yet regards this partnership as a kind of mini-NATO; they are also cautious about historical analogies of interstate military-political formations.

**(Ukrainian) security as the basis of the triangle.** Both Poland and Britain see the triangle primarily as another format of assistance to Ukraine, and this approach is optimal for as long as Russia’s war against Ukraine continues. Military support plays a key role here. The training and education of the Ukrainian military in Poland by British instructors appears to be one of the practical dimensions of such cooperation in the form of a triangle. Another issue is the establishment of joint defence production facilities on Polish territory. Especially since Poland and Britain already have experience in cooperation in this area: the production of the Polish KRAB self-propelled artillery units uses a licensed turret from the British AS90 howitzer.

**Strengthening of NATO and integration of Ukraine into the Alliance.** The UK and Poland have their own complicated history of relations with the EU, but both countries are proactive members of NATO, supporting Ukraine’s future membership in the Alliance. Hence, individual projects of the Alliance could be implemented in the trilateral format (in case they are slowed down at the NATO level for various reasons). On the other hand, the three countries could come up with ideas on how to expand trilateral cooperation by involving other NATO members. The triangle could become a leader in promoting new initiatives for the support of the whole Alliance. One should not forget that when the trilateral Ukrainian-Polish-British military exercise “Cossack Steppe” began in 1996, which laid the foundation for military cooperation between the three countries, it was only Britain that was a NATO

<sup>26</sup> АрміяInform, 12.08.2022, <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/08/12/norvegiya-pryvednayetsya-do-navchannya-ukrayinskyh-vijskovykh-u-brytaniyi/>

member, while Poland was just aspiring to join the Alliance at the time. Today Ukraine has taken Poland's place as a country seeking to join the Alliance: close interaction with two active NATO members could contribute to the level of Ukraine's readiness to join the Alliance when the political prerequisites for it arise.

**Strategic security dialogue.** A strategic security dialogue could become one of the key dimensions of further interaction between Kyiv, London and Warsaw<sup>27</sup>. Importantly, the UK is a signatory to the Budapest Memorandum, which should be seen as a certain political obligation on Ukraine's security. London's contribution to Ukrainian defence, as well as the British leadership in strengthening sanctions against Russia, reflects the United Kingdom's willingness to fulfill its share of commitments (although Britain effectively abstained from the negotiation process with Russia between 2014 and 2022 on ending aggression against Ukraine). Recall that from time to time Polish politicians have proposed creating new negotiating platforms for dialogue with Russia, which could, among other things, include Ukraine's neighbours (for example, such a proposal was made by Polish President Andrzej Duda in 2015)<sup>28</sup>. Provided Poland and Britain are interested, the triangle could discuss the future of the security architecture in Europe, the transformation of Russia, and the creation of prerequisites for minimizing threats further coming from Russia. The trilateral format could also serve as a kind of platform for a strategic dialogue between countries that share common values and the same threat assessment, and could then discuss a vision for a joint response to these threats, both presently and in the medium and long term. This is especially true since there is already some experience in this regard (in particular, Johnson's advice on negotiating with Russia). In the search for intermediate credible security models, Ukraine can take advantage of Britain's recent experience in providing safeguards to Sweden and Finland.

Poland has ambitions to take the lead in regional politics, and Britain aspires to prove its prominence at the global level. Ukraine needs partners with corresponding ambitions to defeat Russia. Dialogue at the level of heads of states and governments, at the ministerial and parliamentary levels is a factor that can contribute to the elaboration of future security strategy.

**S&T Partnership.** Defence cooperation could also be an important dimension of the triangle. The British *Integrated Review* demonstrates London's interest in renewing its own armed forces. S&T (science and technology) is seen as the key to achieving the United Kingdom's strategic advantage in the world. The S&T approach is a leitmotif of the country's vision for the coming years. Britain is also interested in creating a network of international S&T partnerships. Ukraine can take the initiative to make the S&T component one of the fundamental ones in the frames and triangles of cooperation. Especially since all three countries are interested in producing state-of-the-art weaponry, and all three have the proper scientific potential to do so. Moreover, the S&T element is also critical in the areas of nuclear security, cyber security, and the future economic development of the nations as a whole.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with an expert in the UK, July 27, 2022

<sup>28</sup> «Європейська правда», «Дуда: до переговорів по Донбасу слід залучити не лише Польщу, а й США», 19.08.2015, <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2015/08/19/7037180/>

**The Air Force sphere.** Britain, Poland and Ukraine could have a more robust dialogue with other allies to cooperate in the airspace (e.g., training on Polish territory). We will remind that the draft defence budget for 2023, approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, envisages \$100 million for the training of Ukrainian pilots<sup>29</sup>. The U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., spoke about the possibility of providing Ukraine with Western fighter jets. He listed American fighters, the Swedish Gripen, the French Dassault Rafale, and the Eurofighter Typhoon among available options. The latter may be of some interest to Kyiv as part of the dialogue with the United Kingdom.

**Triangle + existing initiatives.** The exploration of the triangle's involvement in partnership projects, which the UK has long supported, deserves special attention. In particular, the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) is a multinational expeditionary force created in 2015 by the UK. Apart from the UK, it includes nine other Northern European allies, namely Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. Although this will dilute the idea of the strictly triangle, it will strengthen Britain's interest in fostering a partnership with Ukraine and Poland. The Ukraine-Poland-Britain triangle might be too narrow for Britain's global reach, so it makes sense to consider joining London's existing initiatives. The closer interaction between the Ukrainian-Polish-British trio and the Lublin Triangle, which can complement each other, should also be considered.

**Recovery and visa-free travel.** Restoration of Ukraine is another of the proposals that could be in focus of trilateral interaction. It is known that the UK will host the next Ukraine Recovery Conference, which is planned for 2023. Ukraine, Poland and the United Kingdom could come up with a number of joint recovery initiatives. Incidentally, just in time for this event, London has a symbolic opportunity to demonstrate its allied sympathy for Ukrainians by simplifying the visa regime (for example, by removing high fees for visas) or abandoning them altogether. Achieving a visa-free regime would indeed be an important signal, as this issue has long cast a shadow over Ukrainian-British relations. Prominent representatives of the Ukrainian non-governmental sector have publicly refused to participate in the upcoming conference if there is no change in London's visa policy<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> House Passes 2023 NDAA With Funds For Ukrainian Pilot Training, Protects Sentinel ICBM, July 15, 2022, <https://www.airforcemag.com/house-passes-2023-ndaa/>

<sup>30</sup> Oleksandr Sushko's Facebook page, publication dated July 5, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100001223266185/search?q=Біз&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydDowIjoie1wibmFtZVwiOlwiY2hyb25vc29ydFwiLFwiYXJnc1wiOlwiXCJ9In0%3D>

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**Group of authors:**

Alyona Getmanchuk, Sergiy Solodkyy



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**New Europe Center**

Email: [info@neweurope.org.ua](mailto:info@neweurope.org.ua)

<http://neweurope.org.ua/>