

# RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE EXPEDIENCY OF PARTICIPATION OF UKRAINE IN REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND MINI-ALLIANCES IN TERMS OF ITS FUTURE MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU AND NATO

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## INTRODUCTION

The strategy of small alliances has undoubtedly become a hallmark of Ukraine's foreign policy in recent years. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the logic of this strategy is not to wait for security and prosperity sometime in the future, when we become members of the EU and NATO, but to unite with partners in mini-alliances and achieve practical results right now<sup>1</sup>.

This approach demonstrates Ukraine's proactivity, which is undoubtedly a good image strategy. Yet, do small alliances really enhance Ukraine's position in the international arena, help to counter Russian aggression, strengthen economic ties with partner countries and promote integration with the EU and NATO?

In this study, we considered Ukraine's participation in regional associations, mini-alliances and initiatives through the prism of their effectiveness and benefits for the state in the context of EU and NATO accession, and provided recommendations for further development of the strategy of small alliances.

## Methodology

Regional associations, initiatives and mini-alliances (hereinafter—associations) were evaluated based on three criteria: (1) political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression, (2) promotion of integration into the EU and NATO, (3) prospects. To obtain an aggregate estimate of the associations according to the above criteria, an expert survey was conducted among ADA STRA analysts:

- Bohdan Myronenko, expert on Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/UkraineMFA/posts/310306974473108/>

- Stanislav Kovalchuk, expert on Central and Eastern Europe
- Taras Prodaniuk, Executive Director
- Yaroslav Suprun, research director
- Viktor Karvatskyi, development director
- Olena Yurchenko, expert on strategic culture
- Anatolii Chernysh, expert on international security
- Oleksii Otkydach, expert on Latin America and Southern Europe

## *Rationale of criteria for assessment*

The criteria were chosen with due regard to the essence and functions of regional associations, as well as Ukraine's interests in participating in them (facilitating counteraction to Russian aggression and integration into the EU and NATO).

## *Explanation of the assessment criteria*

(1) Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression. This indicator demonstrates the extent to which the association is pro-Ukrainian regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. The following factors were taken into account:

- Did the association condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine?
- Has Russia been expelled / suspended from membership in the alliance?

The analysts considered only political support, while economic, military and humanitarian support were excluded due to the heterogeneity of the assessed associations.

When answering the question about the condemnation of Russian aggression, the rhetoric of condemnation was also taken into account (whether there was a direct accusation of Russia or only concern about the "Ukrainian crisis").

The maximum score for an association according to this criterion from one expert is 1 (i.e. the association strongly condemned Russia). A possible score from one expert is 0.5 (i.e., the association condemned Russia, imposed certain restrictions against Russia, or in some way limited Russia's participation in the association). The minimum score from one expert is 0 (i.e. complete or almost complete ignoring of Russian aggression). The maximum overall score is 8.

(2) Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO. This criterion was chosen in view of the analytical question of the study and demonstrates the degree to which Ukraine's participation in the association contributes to the acquisition of EU and NATO membership. The following factors were used for evaluation:

- Are there programs within the association to support Ukraine's “European integration” reforms?
- Does Ukraine’s participation in the association contribute to an increase in the level of interaction between Ukraine and the EU/NATO or EU/NATO states?
- Will Ukraine’s proactive participation in the association have a positive impact on relations with the EU/NATO or EU/NATO countries?
- Will the position of the association have a direct or indirect impact on the success of Ukraine’s integration into the EU/NATO?

The maximum score for an association according to this criterion from one expert is 1 (i.e. participation in the association contributes to Ukraine’s membership in the EU and NATO). The possible score from one expert is 0.5 (i.e. participation in the association to some extent contributes to Ukraine’s membership in the EU and NATO, but not necessarily). The minimum score from one expert is 0 (i.e. participation in the association does not contribute to Ukraine’s membership in the EU and NATO). The maximum total score is 8.

(3) Prospects. This criterion demonstrates whether the association creates added value of participation and cooperation. The following parameters shall be accounted for the assessment:

- Does the association fulfill its functions?
- Are there successful/promising projects and initiatives within the association that are of interest to Ukraine (especially in the context of reconstruction and mitigation of the negative consequences of Russian aggression)?
- Do the projects and initiatives within the association have/will have positive effects for Ukraine in the future (strengthening of positions in the international arena, economic growth, increase in the welfare of the population, strengthening of institutions, etc.)
- Is there a possibility to attract funding for projects/initiatives that are beneficial for Ukraine? (optional)

The maximum score for the association according to this criterion from one expert is 1 (i.e. participation in the association is useful, and projects and initiatives create added value from Ukraine’s participation in the association). A possible score from one expert is 0.5 (i.e. the association has certain promising projects and initiatives, but their usefulness or feasibility is questionable). The minimum score from one expert is 0 (i.e. participation in the association has no positive effect). The maximum total score is 8.

The maximum total score for the association is 24.

## MAIN PART

Priority matrix of regional associations and mini-alliances in terms of Ukraine's future membership in the EU and NATO (based on the sum of 8 experts' assessments).

|  | Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression (max 8) | Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO (max 8) | Prospects (max 8) | Total score (max 24) |
|--|--|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Priority formats</b>  |  |   |                   |                      |
| Three Seas Initiative  | 8  | 8   | 8                 | 24                   |
| Council of Europe  | 8  | 7,5   | 8                 | 23,5                 |
| OSCE   | 8  | 6,5   | 8                 | 22,5                 |
| Visegrad Group   | 8  | 6,5   | 7                 | 21,5                 |
| Danube Initiatives (Danube Commission and EU Strategy for the Danube Region) | 8  | 5,5   | 7                 | 20,5                 |
| <b>Secondary formats</b>   |  |   |                   |                      |
| Eastern Partnership  | 6,5  | 5,5   | 6,5               | 18,5                 |
| Central European Initiative  | 8  | 6,5   | 4                 | 18,5                 |
| Lublin Triangle  | 8  | 5,5   | 4                 | 17,5                 |
| Ukrainian-Polish-British Alliance  | 8  | 2,5   | 5,5               | 16                   |
| <b>Ineffective formats</b>   |  |   |                   |                      |
| Associated Trio  | 6  | 4   | 0,5               | 10,5                 |
| GUAM   | 4,5  | 0,5   | 1                 | 6                    |
| BSEC   | 4  | 0   | 2                 | 6                    |

## THREE SEAS INITIATIVE

### *Summary:*

The organization emerged as a platform to foster connectivity between the Eastern EU Member States with a particular focus on infrastructure, energy and digital interconnection.

Since June 2022, Ukraine has been a participating partner in the initiative, as well as a member of several projects. The main interest of the state within this platform is possible participation in projects to finance infrastructure and energy development, which is especially relevant given the damage caused by the war and the need to increase energy supplies from Europe.

| Total  | 24/24 |
|--|-------|
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8   |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 8/8   |
| Prospects  | 8/8   |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

By signing a joint declaration<sup>2</sup>, the participants of the Initiative strongly condemned the Russian invasion and expressed their full support to Ukraine, including in its reconstruction and integration into the EU.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 8/8*

The Three Seas Initiative is a platform for the coordination of regional projects within the EU, and therefore Ukraine's joining the initiative as a full participant is a positive marker. Projects implemented within the framework of the association will facilitate Ukraine's integration into the EU's energy, transport, digital and telecommunications networks, which will also contribute to the overall process of European integration.

### *Prospects — 8/8*

The Three Seas Initiative is a promising format given the amount of projects of interest to Ukraine<sup>3</sup> that will not only have a positive impact on European integration, but also on increasing energy independence, improving cross-border infrastructure and overcoming the devastating consequences of the Russian invasion. One more advantage of the Three Seas

<sup>2</sup> Joint Declaration of the Seventh Summit Three Seas Initiative <https://3seas.eu/about/joint-declaration-of-the-seventh-three-seas-initiative-summit>

<sup>3</sup> Three Seas Project Database <https://projects.3seas.eu/>

region is its own investment fund<sup>4</sup>, which may be useful for Ukraine in the future (the fund is at the initial stage of formation, and therefore it is too early to talk about its success).

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### *Summary:*

The Council of Europe remains an essential platform for representing Ukraine’s interests, and the current level of participation in the organization is acceptable. Positive relations have been established between the parties.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>23,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 7,5/8          |
| Prospects  | 8/8            |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

Among the member states of the Council of Europe there is a consensus on support for Ukraine. The exclusion of Russia from the organization allowed it to carry out its work smoothly and will not prejudice the lawsuits against Russia for its destructive activities in Ukraine.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 7.5/8*

Although the Council of Europe is not part of the EU institutions, its voice is taken into account by Brussels when assessing the compliance of a candidate country with the political Copenhagen criteria (democracy, rule of law, human rights, respect and protection of minority rights). That is why cooperation with the Council of Europe and its advisory bodies directly affect the success of European integration.

### *Prospects — 8/8*

Ukraine needs to continue working on the enforcement of ECtHR decisions: as of 2021, more than 250 judgments have not been executed<sup>5</sup>. In addition, it is important to continue cooperation with the Venice Commission in improving anti-corruption and anti-oligarchic legislation, as well as the legal framework on national minorities.

<sup>4</sup> Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund <https://3siif.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> “Results of 2021: Ukraine is the leader in unexecuted ECHR judgments” (in Ukrainian), <https://www.echr.com.ua/pidsumki-2021-roku-ukra%D1%97na-lider-z-nevikonanix-rishen-yespl/amp/>

## OSCE

### *Summary:*

Although the outbreak of full-scale war led to the suspension of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Eastern Ukraine, the organization continues to work with the state. In particular, at the time of writing, foreign ministers of member states are meeting in Lodz to discuss the possibility of holding Russia accountable for its aggression against Ukraine. The reaction of Russian propagandists and top officials who blame the organization for the “tense situation in Europe” is indicative.

| Total  | 22/24 |
|--|-------|
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 7,5/8 |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 6,5/8 |
| Prospects  | 8/8   |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 7.5/8*

The OSCE continues to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine and call on Russia to stop its aggression. However, Russia still remains a member of the OSCE despite Ukraine’s insistence to exclude Moscow.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 6.5/8*

Membership in the OSCE is an important factor in the ideological and political sense, in particular, with regard to the importance of the Helsinki Accords for the settlement of relations in post-war Europe. The treaties set out the intentions of the states to peacefully settle any disputes and not to encroach on each other’s territories, to establish friendly relations between the population and to cooperate on non-political issues with the help of governments and special institutions.

Moreover, an integral part of the OSCE’s role is to monitor the democratic nature of the state system of its member states, to oversee the proper functioning of institutions and the observance of the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. Cooperation with interested governments in this regard should be maintained at the current level and developed after the end of the war (at least in its active phase).

### *Prospects — 8/8*

The OSCE is an organization with established traditions and practices. However, while practices such as arms control and human rights monitoring represent its strong points, the

principle of consensus, according to which any member state has substantial powers to limit discussion of issues it considers inappropriate, needs to be reconsidered.

## VISEGRAD GROUP

### *Summary:*

Founded prior to the accession of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the EU, the Visegrad Group has become a kind of “training ground” for the “approximation” of the countries to the requirements of the Union’s legal norms.

The organization holds joint consultations with Ukraine in the field of defense (meetings of chiefs of staff), cooperates at the level of efforts of individual governments, and has created a fund to help Kyiv. Ukraine’s accession to the Visegrad Group is not on the agenda and so far, this option has not been put up for public discussion. Nevertheless, cooperation with this key political association in Eastern Europe and its support is of utmost importance.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>21,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 6,5/8          |
| Prospects  | 7/8            |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

The Visegrad Four unanimously supported Ukraine and condemned the Russian invasion. Despite the Hungarian government’s internal political speculations about the Russian-Ukrainian war and pandering to the Kremlin, the general position of the Group is fairly straightforward and pro-Ukrainian.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 6.5/8*

Given the successful experience of integration of the Visegrad countries into the EU and NATO, cooperation in the V4+Ukraine format deserves the attention of our country. In order to operationalize and enable knowledge exchange, it is necessary to establish regular meetings between ministries and parliaments, similar to those held by the V4 in 1994–2004.

In addition, productive cooperation at the level of the Visegrad Group is a good prerequisite for reducing tensions between Kyiv and Budapest, which in the long run will have a positive impact on Hungary’s position on Ukraine’s membership in the EU and NATO.



### *Prospects — 7/8*

Ukraine's accession to the organization (or at least cooperation at the level of association/partnership, holding regular joint governmental meetings) would be a winning strategy for all parties: Ukraine would gain access to even wider cooperation with EU countries and experience of European integration, and the members of the Group would be able to take advantage of Ukraine's economic and geographical potential to establish strong ties.

Ukraine could benefit from the implementation of joint projects in the energy, transport, humanitarian and other priority areas of the Group's activities<sup>6</sup>. They present a good opportunity to raise the level of interaction with the closest EU and NATO member states, as well as to improve Ukraine's integration into European networks.

## **DANUBE INITIATIVES: THE DANUBE COMMISSION AND THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION**

### *Summary:*

Before the full-scale invasion, the Danube initiatives such as the Danube Commission and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region were considered rather niche formats, performing important but still routine work. Since the invasion, the role of the Danube Commission has significantly expanded, as it is one of the bodies responsible for the operation of the so-called Danube Solidarity Lane, which allows Ukraine to export grain to the EU via Romania.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region, being one of the four macro-regional strategies of the European Union, may also be relevant for Ukraine, taking into account the current challenges and future membership in the organization. Although Ukraine's presidency in 2021-2022 was not active enough due to the hostilities, several projects were launched under the initiative that are useful for Ukraine to diversify gas supplies to the region and develop hydrogen energy.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>20,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 5,5/8          |
| Prospects  | 7/8            |

<sup>6</sup> Programme of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group (July 2022 – June 2023)  
<https://www.visegradgroup.eu/download.php?docID=493>

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

Back in March, the Danube Commission suspended all representatives of the Russian Federation from participation in the work of the organization until the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Commission as a non-Danube state is being considered. Ukraine's membership (and chairmanship) is instrumental in drawing attention to Russia's alleged violation of the 1948 Belgrade Convention.

The leading trio (past, current and future chair) of the Danube Strategy issued an official statement condemning Russia and supporting Ukraine<sup>8</sup>.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 5.5/8*

The Danube initiatives are platforms for deepening sectoral and cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU and the countries of the region. Such formats build the experience of cooperation between ministries and local authorities and self-government bodies with colleagues from the European Union, which has a positive impact on the rapprochement between Ukraine and the EU.

### *Prospects — 7/8*

For a long time, the Danube region has been somewhat out of focus in Ukraine's foreign policy, although it is promising in view of the need to diversify export routes and develop new energy corridors. Moreover, fruitful cooperation within the regional formats will help improve Ukraine's relations with rather problematic Hungary and Romania, as well as with the Balkan states in the future.

## **EASTERN PARTNERSHIP**

### *Summary:*

This EU initiative has been in crisis for a long time due to the lack of a differentiated approach and in-depth cooperation with countries that have strong European integration aspirations (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia). Still, Brussels considers this policy as a stage that will help prepare the participating countries for European integration, supporting reforms in the field of institutional development, fight against corruption, respect for the rule of law, civil society development and other sectoral programs within the format. As a result of this limited approach, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia created a new format to promote their own

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<sup>7</sup> PRESS RELEASE The 12th extraordinary session of the Danube Commission [https://www.danubecommission.org/uploads/doc/2022/press/en\\_12\\_ext\\_session.pdf](https://www.danubecommission.org/uploads/doc/2022/press/en_12_ext_session.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The Danube Region Strategy stands with Ukraine <https://danube-region.eu/the-danube-region-strategy-stands-with-ukraine/>

interests—the Associated Trio.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>18,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 6,5/8          |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 5,5/8          |
| Prospects  | 6,5/8          |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 6.5/8*

The Eastern Partnership is an EU initiative, so the assessment primarily takes into account the Union’s position, which is certainly pro-Ukrainian. Yet, the assessment was also influenced by the fact that formally this policy is a common one between the EU, the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, including the states that take a “cautious position” (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia) and openly hostile Belarus.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 5.5/8*

The Eastern Partnership remains a platform of interest for Ukraine, given the possibility of participation in the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership<sup>9</sup> (€2.3 billion) and programs to support reforms necessary for European integration, although the platform itself is not an instrument of EU enlargement.

### *Prospects — 6.5/8*

Undoubtedly, the format requires a thorough revision, considering the candidacy granted to Ukraine and Moldova, the European perspective of Georgia, the lack of interest of Armenia and Azerbaijan in major strengthening of relations with the EU, and the pro-Russian nature of Belarus. Nevertheless, the importance of the format cannot be neglected in view of the programs to support reforms, institution building and civil society.

Taking into account the political problems, Ukraine should consider the Eastern Partnership solely as an opportunity to receive additional funding. At the same time, if the EU pursues attempts to revise the format, Ukraine should actively engage in the redesign of the initiative, insisting on the following:

- inadmissibility of considering any multilateral partnership as an attempt to bind the European integration prospects of several states into one case;

<sup>9</sup> Recovery, resilience and reform: post-2020 Eastern Partnership Priorities: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgleclefindmkaj/https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/eap\_future\_priorities\_eng.pdf

- the impossibility of substituting European integration with some format of in-depth multilateral cooperation;
- priority of the Ukraine-EU bilateral dialogue and use of the Eastern Partnership 2.0 only as an additional platform for deepening integration with the EU;
- strict adherence to the “more for more” principle.

## CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE

### *Summary:*

The organization has been quite inert lately, but the connections within it can be used to build closer relations with the states of the Balkan region, as well as to attract funds from the Central European Initiative funds.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>18,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 6,5/8          |
| Prospects  | 4/8            |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

The Central European Initiative resolutely supported Kyiv, condemned the Russian aggression, and suspended Belarus’ participation in the organization (it is a member of the CEI) over its complicity in the attack on Ukraine<sup>10</sup>.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 6.5/8*

The CEI was designed as an organization that will act as a preparatory platform on the way to EU integration for the Balkan and Eastern European countries, and therefore, the association has a number of useful tools in its arsenal, such as a fund for the exchange of know-how and best practices of the EU and candidate states, technical assistance programs and funding for civil society initiatives. Although these initiatives are not too large in scale, they organically complement the ecosystem of European integration support programs, contributing to the development of partnership networks between initiative groups of CEI countries.

<sup>10</sup> Joint Statement on the Russian War on Ukraine <https://www.cei.int/news/9273/joint-statement-on-the-russian-war-on-ukraine>

### *Prospects — 4/8*

During its lifespan, CEI has demonstrated that it is quite effective in supporting projects and developing partnerships between civil society organizations. However, given the small scale of such initiatives, it is not worth talking about great prospects and tangible results from the activities of the CEI. It is reasonable to further consider it as a platform for raising funds for public projects.

## **LUBLIN TRIANGLE**

### *Summary:*

Given the close relations between Poland and Lithuania, it is difficult to assess how much the Lublin Triangle has influenced the development of the partnership. Since its inception, this format has not caused a tangible breakthrough in relations between Ukraine and the partner countries, but it is inappropriate to deem it a failure. After all, members have provided substantial assistance and support in countering Russian aggression, as well as on Ukraine's path to the EU and NATO.

It can be assumed that the Lublin Triangle rather declares the intention to strengthen the already close relations.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>18,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 6/8            |
| Prospects  | 4,5/8          |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

Poland and Lithuania have been pro-Ukrainian since 2014, strongly condemning Russian aggression.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 6/8*

Poland and Lithuania actively support the start of substantive negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO<sup>11</sup>. Such support within the alliances is crucial, as it expands the toolkit of Ukrainian diplomacy in defense of integration.

<sup>11</sup> Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of Ukraine, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland on the results of the Lublin Triangle meeting (in Ukrainian), <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/spilna-zayava-premyer-ministriv-ukrayini-litovskoyi-respubliki-ta-respublika-polshcha-pro-rezultati-zustrichi-lyublinskogo-trikutnika>

*Prospects — 4.5/8*

Despite the fact that after the establishment of the Lublin Triangle, Ukrainian-Polish-Lithuanian relations have not reached a fundamentally new level, the format can evolve into something more than just a club for advocacy of Ukrainian European integration. For instance, the sphere of exchanging European integration experience in this format is not well developed, there are almost no initiatives to deepen trilateral economic relations, and there are no flagship projects that could become the hallmark of the association (except for LitPolUKrBrig). Therefore, it is necessary to decide whether Ukraine plans to expand and deepen cooperation or will retain the current level of trilateral relations.

**UKRAINIAN-POLISH-BRITISH ALLIANCE**

*Summary:*

The format announced in early 2022, which aims to counter the Russian threat and work together for the sake of European security, has not yet taken shape, which makes its assessment difficult. At the same time, the significant progress in cooperation between the three countries is hardly the merit of the initiative, but rather the result of successful bilateral talks and the Ramstein negotiations.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>16,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 8/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 3/8            |
| Prospects  | 4,5/8          |

*Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 8/8*

The United Kingdom and Poland are among the biggest allies of Ukraine in the war against Russia, providing assistance in all possible dimensions.

*Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 3/8*

It is difficult to assess the extent to which this association promotes integration with the EU and NATO, because due to the Russian invasion, the format has not been even fully conceptualized.

*Prospects — 4.5/8*

Although the alliance was never officially launched, Ukraine's cooperation with Poland and the UK in the field of defense deepened significantly due to the Russian invasion. Poland

provided Ukraine with its own infrastructure for the transportation and repair of military equipment, and the UK, in addition to arms transfers, launched a large-scale training program for the Ukrainian military, which was joined by other states. However, all these achievements became possible not because of the format, but rather as a result of work in other areas: bilateral relations, Ramstein meetings, work with NATO and the EU. Undoubtedly, the initiative may develop its scope in the future, but now cooperation takes place on other platforms and levels, and the fate of the alliance remains uncertain.

## ASSOCIATED TRIO

### *Summary:*

The Associated Trio primarily emerged as a reaction to the unsuccessful attempts to reform the Eastern Partnership. The main goal was to lobby for the guarantee of distinct European perspectives for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. After the first two were granted the EU accession candidacy, the advocacy task became irrelevant for Kyiv and Chisinau (although this issue is still problematic for Georgia), and the format did not elaborate new key objectives.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>10,5/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 6/8            |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 4/8            |
| Prospects  | 0,5/8          |

### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 6/8*

The trio of partners condemned the Russian invasion and supported Ukraine in the fight against the aggressor. However, the refusal of the Georgian government to introduce new economic sanctions against Russia and the lack of clear anti-Russian rhetoric<sup>12</sup> damaged both Ukrainian-Georgian relations and the unity of the Associated Trio.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 4/8*

The usefulness of the format in promoting integration into the EU and NATO is also debatable. Ukraine and Moldova's obtaining the candidate status was not an achievement of the Associated Trio, as the prospects of integration were given due to the reforms carried out

<sup>12</sup> "Stockholm Syndrome of Garibashvili: why Georgian authorities ignore the war in Ukraine?" (in Ukrainian), <https://adastra.org.ua/blog/stokgolmskij-sindrom-garibashvili-chomu-gruzinska-vlada-ignoruye-vijnu-v-ukrayini>

long before its emergence and taking into account the bilateral work between Kyiv and Brussels. At the same time, Georgia did not receive the candidate status due to serious deviation from democratic principles and provisions of the Association Agreement<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, the format has de facto split, as now the participating countries not only have different goals and objectives, but even differ in their determination to move towards the EU. In addition, it has become obvious that it is not politically beneficial for Ukraine to link its own European integration with the progress of unsuccessful Georgia and potentially problematic Moldova (due to a large number of internal crises<sup>14</sup> and a possible renaissance of pro-Russian forces), even at the symbolic level.

*Prospects — 0.5/8*

The above-mentioned problems of the Trio cause considerable skepticism about the success of the format in the future. Currently, the member states of the association are at different stages of movement towards EU membership, and therefore they encounter not identical challenges. In addition, the previous Ukrainian experience shows that bilateral work with Brussels, both in negotiations and in the process of adopting reforms, is much more productive than any multilateral format.

**GUAM**

*Summary:*

Over the years, GUAM has not carried out any of its flagship projects. The passive role of the organization without virtually any hints of its revitalization and the exhaustion of the idea of a “community of democratic choice” (opposing GUAM to the CIS as an “organization of young democracies uncontrolled by Russia”) cast doubt on the expediency of Ukraine’s active participation in the organization.

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>6/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 4,5/8       |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 0,5/8       |
| Prospects  | 1/8         |

<sup>13</sup> Association agreement between the EU and Georgia - European Implementation Assessment (update) [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_STU\(2022\)699489](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_STU(2022)699489)

<sup>14</sup> “Ukraine’s European integration satellite: successes and threats for Moldova on the European path” (in Ukrainian), <https://adastra.org.ua/blog/yevrointegracijnij-suputnik-ukrayini-uspivi-j-zagrozi-dlya-moldovi-na-yevropejskomu-shlyahu>



### *Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 4.5/8*

GUAM expressed its support for Ukraine and categorically condemned the Russian invasion<sup>15</sup>, but since Azerbaijan and Georgia took ambiguous positions, one cannot claim that the association unanimously supported Ukraine.

### *Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 0.5/8*

The GUAM member states are not united in their desire to integrate into the EU and NATO, so the format itself does not provide for cooperation to promote the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the member states.

### *Prospects — 1/8*

GUAM has not lived up to expectations, failing to complete all its flagship projects: the free trade area (hereinafter—FTA) has not become fully operational, the system of transportation of Caspian energy resources to Ukraine and the construction of a transport corridor have not progressed, etc. However, from year to year, the organization continues to declare these projects as the primary ones, hardly taking any measures, which proves its utter bankruptcy.

The best option for GUAM would be to turn into an advisory type organization that would work on a flexible principle—in the format of forums (presidents / heads of government / ministers) similar to the Slavkov format (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria): holding annual meetings of heads of government, during which they will determine a specific direction of cooperation for the year and projects with measurable results. It is not advisable, however, to maintain a permanent secretariat and staff.

## **BSEC**

### *Summary:*

Before the full-scale invasion of Russia, BSEC had already proved its inefficiency in realizing large-scale projects, as well as almost complete disregard for regional conflicts (Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Armenian-Azerbaijani war).

The organization has recently been criticized for the lack of political will to exclude Russia from its membership. Moreover, the aggressor country uses its status to impose its own views on others (in March, it refused to extend Japan's partnership status due to the introduction of sanctions). Besides, the BSEC leadership does not respond to the appeal of Ukraine to review Russia's membership.

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<sup>15</sup> Appeal of the GUAM Secretary General Altai Efendiev (day three of the war against Ukraine) <https://guam-organization.org/en/urgent-appeal-of-the-guam-secretary-general-altai-efendiev-2/>

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>6/24</b> |
| Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression | 4/8         |
| Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO                        | 0/8         |
| Prospects  | 2/8         |

*Political support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression — 4/8*

After the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, the BSEC managed only to issue a statement of “serious concern,”<sup>16</sup> to extend the chairmanship of Moldova instead of Russia and to exclude the aggressor state from the parliamentary dimension of cooperation<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, Russia continues to be a full member of the organization and still influences its decisions.

*Promotion of integration into the EU and NATO — 0/8*

In view of Russia’s membership, the absence of successful projects that would link Ukraine and the EU Black Sea states, as well as the low ambition of the BSEC-EU track<sup>18</sup>, this format does not contribute to Ukraine's movement towards EU or NATO membership.

*Prospects — 1/8*

BSEC cooperates with the UN (and the UN Development Program as an agency within its structure), WTO, World Tourism Organization, etc. There is no denying that cooperation with these institutions regarding the Black Sea issues would be quite promising, but it will be opposed by the Russian Federation and the states that support it (Armenia, Serbia, Türkiye). Naturally, changing the decision-making process may be complicated, so it is not clear how advantageous the membership would be; in any case, continuing passive participation is the best option for now.

<sup>16</sup> Hope that dialogue and diplomacy will prevail <http://www.bsec-organization.org/news/29404hope-that-dialogue-and-diplomacy-will-prevail>

<sup>17</sup> Vadym Ivchenko <https://www.facebook.com/vadym.ivchenko/posts/pfbid0WLmzFCbyxawZnBVB8XCURpZrzDFNHeV1JVnsDeZhx9vB5snSdjpcKVsa8Av1DUJ8l>

<sup>18</sup> BSEC-EU Cooperation <http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas-of-cooperation/bsec-eu-cooperation>

## CONCLUSIONS

The study was devoted to the feasibility of creating new and developing existing formats of cooperation between Ukraine and European states. It assessed whether the above 13 formats are truly effective in terms of countering Russian aggression, promoting Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic organizations and delivering projects with practical, win-win results.

The conclusion was made that the so-called mini-alliances, as well as regional associations, should play a supporting role on the path to EU and NATO membership, and their work should not be perceived as an end in itself or as a guaranteed “formula for success” on this path. Their tools are limited in scope and, most importantly, in the vision of the participants, since even partners (as the Associated Trio has proved) often create dissonance through their practical, non-public actions. Therefore, the formation and development of mini-alliances requires considerable resources and thorough work, so that they do not turn out to be dead on arrival.

That is why in the present conditions it is better to concentrate not on the cultivation of multilateral partnerships, but on simpler and more reliable tactics, which involves signing declarations of support for Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO with the member states of the respective organizations, as well as bilateral agreements that enshrine the strategic nature of relations (such as the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Commission or Quadriga). This will guarantee long-term assistance from partners and provide the necessary level of institutionalization of contacts with the most friendly states.

However, if we proceed from the need to work in the formats of multilateral regional associations, we should first of all adhere to a differentiated approach in determining the priorities for Ukrainian diplomacy, based on the real benefits of a particular association, not on image dividends. The study found that the most effective formats are those that have already “stood the test of time” and enjoy a pan-European consensus (Council of Europe, OSCE), formats whose participants have a clear picture of the tasks and goals for which they have been established (the Three Seas Initiative, the Visegrad Group), or macro-regional EU strategies, such as those supported in Brussels and aimed at sectoral convergence of European countries (Danube Initiatives).

The following formats have demonstrated their effectiveness in certain areas of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration:

- The Eastern Partnership has proved useful for funding programs to support reforms and civil society development; yet it makes sense only in combination with other programs of concrete political support;
- The Central European Initiative serves as a platform for the development of partnerships between civil society actors in Ukraine and EU countries, allows

attracting funding for projects in the fields of culture and arts, science and education, and is promising in terms of infrastructure initiatives, but most of them are still at the stage of implementation;

- The Lublin Triangle is conceived as a tool for promoting Ukraine's interests in the EU and NATO, as well as a format for cooperation between NGOs and youth initiatives, but to some extent its effect is overlapped with participation in other initiatives, and its activities have not yet shown tangible progress in relations between Ukraine and partner countries, which are developing better in the bilateral plane;
- The Ukrainian-Polish-British alliance can work as a platform for military and political cooperation with the largest European allies of Ukraine, but so far it does not have any more or less material form of expression. Moreover, the issue of Ukraine's integration into the EU does not play a key role in it.

At the same time, some organizations that were once promising have not been tested by time and now exist, in fact, solely for the demonstration of "international solidarity." One of such formats that raises the most questions, and therefore doubts about its viability, is the Associated Trio, whose members now have different perspectives, problems and priorities on their European integration path. With some regret, we can also state that Tbilisi and Chisinau lacked the political will—due to certain circumstances—to resolutely confront the imperialist policy of Moscow.

As for GUAM, with the strengthening of centripetal authoritarian tendencies in Azerbaijan and Georgia, the organization no longer resembles the "commonwealth of democratic choice" it was once supposed to represent. The organization does not pursue a single project that could at least somehow remind us of its existence: neither the free trade zone, nor the system of transportation of Caspian energy resources to Ukraine, nor scientific and technical cooperation have become a reality, and the initiatives implemented have not affected the lives of most citizens of the member states. Such detachment from life is hardly positive and does not promote trust and interest in the development of regional organizations in Ukraine.

Another inefficient format is the BSEC, where Russia retains its membership and some influence (although reduced after its recent exclusion from the parliamentary dimension of cooperation). Currently, this organization is the central format of cooperation on issues related to the Black Sea, and there is no other one that could become an adequate substitute. Therefore, the interaction of democratic states in order to minimize the weight of Moscow's voice in the organization and its further exclusion from the format is considered expedient.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of Ukraine's international activities, it is necessary to pay attention to both theoretical (programmatic principles of activities) and practical (implementation of specific projects) foundations of cooperation formats. Only considering them in their entirety, it is possible to achieve success in cooperation on the European/Euro-Atlantic track.

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