Closer than a neighbor (Ukrainian-Polish relations)

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Abstract
The article examines Poland's relations with Russia and Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as the efforts of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine to create a security zone from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In the 1990s and early 21st century, Poland introduced a policy of supporting the sovereignty of countries separated from the USSR, including Ukraine (the Orange Revolution) and Georgia. Moscow has always opposed Poland's policy of supporting independence and developing democracies in countries such as Ukraine or Georgia, and for this reason, relations between Poland and Russia have been tense and conflicting since the early 1990s. The new order in the international environment provided favourable conditions for domestic political changes but created new challenges and threats. It is connected with the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war that also threatens Poland.
Therefore, the content and essence of the history of Ukrainian-Polish relations and their current state in the conditions of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine have been analyzed.

Key words: Ukrainian-Polish relations, war, the Ukrainian army, Russia's aggressive policy.

Introduction

The full-scale war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine has shown the importance of allies. Those who will not only help themselves but will also encourage others to do so. One of the main allies of Ukraine traditionally remains Poland, which supports our country in the confrontation with Russia, and lobbies for Ukrainian interests in the European Union and NATO. This was evidenced by Poland's position since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, including the transfer of Polish weapons for the needs of the Ukrainian army. Poland became the first country to which Ukrainians rushed, fleeing from Russian missiles, which on the night of February 24 cut open the sky and hit the peaceful cities of Ukraine.

It is difficult to overestimate Poland's support for Ukraine in the war with Russia. The neighbouring country supported Ukraine in perhaps the darkest times since its independence. Poland plays a leading role in these efforts, with a significant contribution of military equipment, the training of Ukrainian servicemen, and the provision of humanitarian and economic aid to Ukraine.

Polish high-ranking officials at every opportunity, taking into account the supranational level within the framework of the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance, and other international organizations, convey the necessary messages to the community. In particular, those related to strengthening sanctions pressure on Moscow and the provision of versatile assistance to Ukraine.

In addition, Warsaw shows by all its actions that it will not impose any conditions on Ukraine, and will not demand anything in exchange for any element of its assistance, even symbolic.

Moreover, it makes it clear that it is ready to take on any problems in the relationship.

Given the current political realities associated with the Russian Federation waging a full-scale war against Ukraine, everyone is obliged to know and understand the actions of our country's allies in this great war, to take into account the fact that Poland since the first days of open Russian aggression has demonstrated its support for the people of Ukraine in every possible way, actively using political and diplomatic tools on the international stage.

Purpose. The article aims to analyze in retrospect the main changes in Ukrainian-Polish relations from not always being neighbourly in the past to being allied today.

Theoretical background

The analysis of the latest research and publications makes it possible to state that the general issues of the past and the present Ukrainian-Polish relations are reflected in several works of domestic and foreign politicians, political scientists, and military experts, but the current stage of their development is only being investigated. Among such specialists, we can name Antoniuk N., B1rzoza C., Bojarski W, Buglai N., Celewicz M., Demchyshak R., Horbatenko V., Ilchuk I., Korinovska A., Korzh A., Kuleba D., Kulytskyi S., Krill M., Malinovsky O., Melekiescevy K., Leshchenko L., Sulowski S., Sowa A., Stoetskyi S., Turchyn Ya., Trofymovych V., Znakhorenko O. and many others. Although the pre-independence stage of bilateral relations for Ukraine is covered comprehensively, the modern time of the development of relations requires further research.

Results and Discussion

Historically, Ukrainian-Polish relations have been in many ways contradictory and even tragic. Among the most painful conflicts between the two sides are the following.

1. The dramatic history of the Polish and Ukrainian peoples in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, filled with Polish expansion into Ukraine, peasant-Cossack riots, and uprisings which were suppressed in the bloodstream and left in the minds of many generations of unforgettable mutual wrongs, feelings of social injustice.

2. The experience and lessons of the war lost by the Ukrainians with Poland in 1918-1919, which pointed to the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as one of the main obstacles to building an independent Ukraine.

3. National policy of the Polish Second Commonwealth in the eastern territories that was based on the principles of nationalism and the exclusion of other nationalities from participation in state and public life (the cause of autonomy and self-government, the problem of land reform, educational policy, violations of civil rights and freedoms, repression against Ukrainians).

4. The Ukrainian-Polish conflict during the Second World War took place in Ukrainian or nationally mixed territories. The tragic events in Volhynia in 1943-1944 became a conflict of political, territorial, social, economic, cultural, religious, and other interests and were part of the general interethnic Ukrainian-Polish conflict that took place during World War II in the territory of common residence of Ukrainians and Poles. Some Polish historians claim that up to 100,000 Poles and 25,000 to 30,000 Ukrainians died. Ukrainian scientists, mostly agreeing with this ratio, give more modest numbers of losses – 35 and 15 thousand, or even 12 and 5 thousand (Polish-Ukrainian relations, 2019: 12).

However, despite a very complex socio-historical and information-psychological «legacy», Ukrainian-Polish political relations have been developing quite successfully since the early 1990s. It is interesting to note that the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence was Poland (in 1991). Poland's policy of reconciling Ukraine with Europe and the Euro-Atlantic alliance was undoubtedly influenced by the concepts of the Polish emigrant magazine Kultura, published in Paris by Giedroits, and by Professor Brzezinski, a scientist on Soviet Union and American of Polish descent.

According to these concepts, an independent Ukraine was to ensure the independence of Poland.

In 1992, Poland and Ukraine signed the Agreement on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation. In two years, a declaration of principles of relations was signed, emphasizing the strategic importance of countries for each other. In 1995, a joint Ukrainian-Polish peacekeeping battalion was established based on the Prykarpattia and Krakow military districts by agreement between the Ministers of Defense of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland. Within 5 weeks (July 15-20, 2000), the Ukrainian part of the joint peacekeeping contingent was deployed as part of a KFOR force in Kosovo, where it carried out its tasks until 2010.

Poland played an important role in the events of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. The presidents of Poland and Ukraine usually also had good personal relations and well-established channels of communication. Poland was one of the initiators of the Eastern Partnership project in 2008, which aimed to make the EU's eastern borders safer and bring the six target countries closer to European standards.

It should be noted that, according to Ukrainian scientist Buglay, from the point of view of regional and continental security, an important segment of "Eastern policy is the active support of the sovereignty of the friendly eastern circle", as the independence of Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, which is considered a guarantor of Poland's own and European security; active support of sovereignty in the East already has a historical goal – to weaken or minimize Russia's influence through active support of countries (Buglay, 2017: 3, 312).

Therefore, a new foreign policy concept for post-communist Poland was presented in 1990 by the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Skubiszewski. The idea was to treat all of the eastern neighbours as independent and equal partners. Its implementation in practice led to rapid Poland's recognition of the post-Soviet republics' independence. At the same time, in the early 1990s, Poland, struggling with its economic and political difficulties, lacked the tools to support a democratic transition in Ukraine or Belarus, no mentioning Russia. "As a former Soviet satellite, Poland had problems similar to those of its neighbours and offered very little help. In addition, its ambitions were limited by Russia's penetration into the Belarusian and Ukrainian political and economic systems. Eastern European elites were also unwilling to accept aid. The discussed societies have preserved the past mentality and have not been able to take advantage of the new independence" (Celewicz, 2006: 4, 223).

At the same time, Poland has finally established itself as an EU expert on relations with its neighbours in the East, which has significantly strengthened its position in the EU and strengthened its authority among its allies.

However, during Kaczynski's presidency (2005-2010) the topic of Ukraine has become a "bargaining chip" that the Law and Justice (PiS – conservative, clerical party) used in competition with right-wing radicals. As a result, the ruling party become hostage to its own policies: having identified historical policy as a foreign policy priority and issued many statements about the "banderization" of Ukraine, the PiS simply could not afford public support for Ukraine.

Russian President Putin's new policies and military actions were implemented in 2014 in Crimea. Thanks to well-thought-out military operations (with Russian special forces operating in complete anonymity), politics (a 95 per cent referendum in favour of reunification with Russia) and, finally, Putin's propaganda (Russian television is on the "front line"), Russia annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in March 2014, thus consolidating its geostrategic position in the Black Sea.

We must remember that the ultimate goal of Putin's policy is to radically change the current territorial system of Central and Eastern Europe to restore direct or indirect influence over some former Soviet territories. Putin himself has repeatedly said that the collapse of the Soviet Union (by which he also means the fall of Russian rule) was the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the twentieth century. Putin's wars, from Georgia to Ukraine, are territorial and geopolitical. Russia's

annexation of Crimea and de facto domination of the Donbas region mean, in particular, about Crimea, a serious violation of international law and a dangerous precedent for possible territorial change in Europe.

Pieklo, the ambassador of Poland to Ukraine in 2016-2019, says that in recent years, Poles have learned to be cautious about Russia, while at the same time beginning to understand Ukraine better. He explains: "Many people in our country today understand that Ukraine is paying a huge price for Russia's aggressive policy. This brings us Poles and Ukrainians closer, we can say that a Polish-Ukrainian union is being formed, which I would not compare to the political agreement of Pilsudski and Petliura because now we can talk about the civic dimension of the Polish-Ukrainian union" (Pieklo: 11).

For the same purpose, the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade was created within the framework of trilateral cooperation in the field of defence in 2014. Provides national contributions to high-readiness international military formations (UN Standby Agreements, EU Combat Teams, NATO Response Force), as well as international peace and security operations under the auspices of the UN, EU, NATO, and other international security organizations based on the mandate of the UN Security Council and if approved by the parliaments of the participating countries.

Moreover, on July 28, 2020, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania signed a Joint Declaration on the establishment of a new regional alliance in recognition of the centuries-old historical and cultural ties between the three peoples (so-called Lublin Triangle).

During his official visit (October 5-6, 2021) to Poland Foreign Minister of Ukraine Dmitry Kuleba discussed ways to strengthen the security of the region with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau and Lithuanian Deputy Foreign Minister Mantas Adomenas. The Minister emphasized that the Lublin Triangle is a vivid example of a new trend in international politics for the creation of regional alliances. "This important regional format of interaction already today reveals the potential of our three countries, brings us closer, and strengthens the security of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania against the backdrop of growing challenges in the region," he said.

On July 6, 2021, in Vilnius, the Foreign Ministers of the three countries signed the Joint Declaration on the European Heritage, the Roadmap for Cooperation of the Lublin Triangle and the Disinformation Plan (*Lublin Triangle: 6*).

It is especially necessary to emphasize that Poland and Ukraine since February 24, 2022, with the beginning of a full-scale war against Ukraine by Russia, have come closer than in the past 30 years. Several circumstances have contributed to that.

The surprisingly humane reaction of Polish society towards Ukrainian women, children, and elderly people who were forced to seek refuge in Poland, as well as the powerful military and diplomatic assistance of the Polish state, has caused the admiration of Ukrainians. To make it easier for citizens of Ukraine to legalize their stay, as well as employment and study, a special law has been adopted, the provisions of which apply to persons who have arrived in Poland since February 24 with a one-and-a-half-year validity period. However, to take advantage of its benefits, a refugee needed to register with the immigration office and obtain a PESEL number, which was necessary, for example, to register with a social security institution during employment.

The legal act simplifies the legalization of residence, employment, education, and the receipt of social benefits for Ukrainian citizens. It also provides tax benefits for donations made to help Ukraine.

According to the government commissioner for refugees P. Shefernaker, Ukrainian emigration is unique. And there are at least two reasons for this, he believes.

"90% are women with children, secondly, these people become independent very quickly. Among people of working age registered in the PESEL database, about 80% are currently working legally in Poland. Therefore, these are very good results – unattainable in any other migration in the

world", assessed P. Shefernaker (How the relations between Ukraine and Poland: 5)

According to the agreements of the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyi with the Prime Minister of Poland M. Morawiecki, 2.5 thousand Ukrainian defenders will be able to undergo treatment and rehabilitation in Poland (More than two thousand: 7).

The volume of humanitarian aid provided has been large and diverse. In particular, 35 powerful generators, protective equipment and shoes for rescuers, warm blankets, tactical first-aid kits, medical supplies, and other things have been sent to Ukraine. We were pleasantly surprised when they brought not only the first aid which we had asked for but also significantly supplemented the list with very important things that we need, informed a people's deputy A. Kovalev (Bodnar H.: 1).

Along with this, among the aid Poland provided during the destruction of most of the power grid by Russian missiles: 6,000 pairs of firefighting shoes, more than 30 sets of clothing for firefighters, gas-tight suits with equipment, an air apparatus and a cooling vest, helmets, microphone headsets, wires for ventilation, flashlights and additional air vehicles, radio telephones and a large number of medical supplies.

Poland ranks third in the world in the sphere of military aid to Ukraine after the USA and Great Britain. Until May 1, 2023, Poland has already provided Ukraine with military aid worth almost 3 billion euros (Poland has already provided military aid: 10).

During the official visit of the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyi to Poland on April 5, 2023, the following data was made public. Poland provided Ukraine with a certain amount of military aid: T-72, Leopard-2 and PT-91Twardy tanks; "Krab" ACS; MiG-29 aircraft; MANPADS "Perun". In addition to this, ammunition, mortars and reconnaissance drones. Also, Poland is a very important country in the sphere of logistics, because the transit of weapons for the Defense Forces of Ukraine takes place through its territory. As well as training of the Ukrainian servicemen under the EU program (EUMAM) is taking place on Polish territory.

During the visit of his Ukrainian colleague, Polish President Andrzej Duda announced that Poland would hand MiG-29 fighter jets to our country. To create a future aviation fist, the Polish side has already handed over 10 MiG-29 to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. During V. Zelenskyi's visit to Poland, it was also announced, that Ukraine would be provided with Rosomak armoured personnel carriers.

According to Ukrainian scientist Yevhen Magda, Poland is a key ally of Ukraine due to its geographical proximity and the provision of unprecedented military, humanitarian, and financial assistance (Brailyan E.: 2).

Even though the war is still going on, Ukraine has begun to rebuild the country. Poland did not stay outside this process, acting as a foreign assistant. Yes, lists are being formed in Poland, probably several hundred companies. The agreement, which was signed at the beginning of April 2023, shows that Poland will have priority; we will be informed by the Ukrainian authorities. This is something like primacy in receiving information. And Poles are really going to take advantage of that, like all of these guarantees, and Poland is ready to do that. There are many transport and construction companies in Poland. The Polish country assumes responsibility for helping in the reconstruction of Lviv and the Lviv region (Lukasz Jasina: 9).

Conclusion

For Poland, one of the key issues related to the further expansion of Euro-Atlantic structures to the East is the general relations between Russia, the United States and the European Union, with a special focus on satellite countries. In this context, it is not surprising that Poland has taken an active position on the events in Ukraine, in particular its' negative assessment of Russia's actions in Crimea and Donbas. Events in Ukraine are not perceived in Poland as part of NATO's strategy to "disintegrate Russia". On the contrary, in Poland, the conflict is seen as a sign of Russian

expansionism, and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is an unprecedented forced change of border lines established in Europe after 1945. Despite the best intentions in Poland and Russia of those who want to improve mutual relations, despite the awareness of the importance of Russia as a great power with a unique identity and significant cultural heritage, modern realities cannot lead to positive conclusions, especially in the context of the dispute over Ukraine in 2014-2021.

First of all, it is necessary to put this issue on the bilateral agenda – at the level of presidential administrations, ministries of foreign affairs, and joint hearings of interparliamentary cooperation groups.

It is worth considering the possibility of holding joint exercises of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with Polish territorial defence units – such exercises will contribute to the realization of the joint mission of the two states' troops, as well as interpersonal contacts.

Another partner of Ukraine in Poland is the Polish business. Ukraine should involve Polish businessmen in publicly announcing the role and quality of Ukrainians' work in the Polish economy, as opposed to the Polish government's public manipulation of the million "refugees" from Ukraine who were allegedly accepted by Poland.

The Lublin Triangle is a vivid example of a new trend in international politics for the creation of regional alliances. It is enshrined in the recently approved Strategy of Ukraine's Foreign Policy. Activity is one of the important new international formats of interaction between these states.

During the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, relations between Poland and Ukraine became even stronger. The foundation, which was laid at the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, when Polish society showed great solidarity, created new opportunities for increasing practical cooperation. Now we can already see that this cooperation has reached a very systematic, practical level and it is manifested in many directions.

First of all, if we talk about military aid, then we see well-established logistics channels that allow the uninterrupted supply of military weapons, equipment, and everything necessary for our military from Poland to Ukraine. We see an established system of delivery of humanitarian aid, we see financial support. We find how our cooperation in the medical field is developing, especially when it comes to the treatment of Ukrainian military personnel and civilians.

In his report "On the tasks of Poland's foreign policy for 2023" in the Seimas, Zbigniew Rau, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, which will probably become the basis of a new strategy for the next five years, emphasized that immediately after the end of the war in Poland, it is considered more expedient to speak on the creation of an additional security architecture for Ukraine «based on, on the one hand, the political and military participation of the United States, and on the other hand, the military cooperation of the countries of our region with Ukraine supported by the United States.

"Russian aggression has brought our nations so close together and has created a huge mutual social capital of sympathy and trust, we have got a unique chance to recreate Polish-Ukrainian unity, which was destroyed in recent centuries by German and Russian invaders, as well as Bolshevik totalitarianism", the report says.

"We would like Ukraine to be something more for us in the future than a partner in the EU and NATO, and more than just a good neighbour with whom we have friendly relations and good economic cooperation", the document adds.

The unity of the two countries in Warsaw is considered as "permanent cooperation between two nations very close to each other in spheres of language, culture and mentality, living in two sovereign states".

Of course, this level of relations presupposes the final resolution of the historical disputes that poisoned the relations between Kyiv and Warsaw for so long before the full-scale war with the Russian Federation.

"Our goal is to form relations between Poland and Ukraine in such a way as to eliminate the potential for any serious dispute regarding the interpretation of history or the position of citizens who identify with the Polish language, culture and traditions" (Panchenko Yu.: 12).

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