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## **Activation of Minilateral Alliances with the Participation of European Countries and Ukraine in the Context of Russia's Armed Aggression: Security Dimension**

### **[Aktywacja minilateralnych sojuszy z udziałem państw europejskich i Ukrainy w kontekście agresji zbrojnej Rosji: wymiar bezpieczeństwa]**

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie działalności sojuszy minilateralnych, których członkami są Ukraina i państwa europejskie, przez pryzmat wymiaru bezpieczeństwa. Przedstawiono definicję minilateralizmu, genezę koncepcji, jej mocne i słabe

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strony. Autorzy skupili się na znaczeniu i priorytetach współpracy w ramach minisojuszy, w szczególności na wymiarze bezpieczeństwa współpracy Ukrainy w ramach takich sojuszy, jak: „Trójkąt Lubelski”, „Associated Trio”, „Quadriga”, Sojusz Trójstronny, Sojusz Rumunia–Republika Mołdawii–Ukraina, Sojusz Wielka Brytania–Polska–Ukraina. Przedstawiono kryteria politycznego, gospodarczego, wojskowego i sankcyjnego wsparcia Ukrainy przez państwa-uczestników minilateralnych sojuszy w czasie wojny. Podkreślono kluczowe wyzwania dla funkcjonowania sojuszy i obiecujące obszary dalszej współpracy. Autorzy wykorzystali metody systemowe, instytucjonalne, porównawcze i statystyczne, a także metodę analizy dokumentów i studium przypadku, aby scharakteryzować proces bieżącej aktywacji minilateralnych sojuszy w ramach Ukrainy i krajów europejskich. Artykuł badawczy podsumowuje pozytywne konsekwencje minilateralnej współpracy Ukrainy z krajami europejskimi, które przyczyniają się do przezwyciężenia współczesnych wyzwań w zakresie bezpieczeństwa.

**Summary:** The article is devoted to the analysis of the activities of minilateral alliances, the member states of which are Ukraine and European countries seen through the prism of the security dimension. The definition of minilateralism, the origins of the concept, its strengths and weaknesses are presented. The authors focused on the importance and priorities of mini-alliance cooperation, in particular, the security dimension of Ukraine's cooperation within such alliances as: „The Lublin Triangle”, „Associated Trio”, „Quadriga”, Tripartite Alliance, The Romania–Republic of Moldova–Ukraine Alliance, the Great Britain–Poland–Ukraine Alliance. The criteria of political, economic, military, and sanctions support of Ukraine by the countries-participants of minilateral alliances during the war are presented. The key challenges to the functioning of alliances and promising areas for further cooperation are highlighted. The authors used systemic, institutional, comparative and statistical methods, as well as method of document analysis and case study, to characterize the process of current activation of minilateral alliances within the Ukraine–European countries framework. The research paper summarizes the positive consequences of Ukraine's minilateral cooperation with European countries, which contribute to overcoming modern security challenges.

**Słowa kluczowe:** minilateralizm, sojusze minilateralne, Ukraina, Unia Europejska, wymiar bezpieczeństwa, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska.

**Keywords:** minilateralism, minilateral alliances, Ukraine, European Union, security dimension, Russian-Ukrainian war.

## Introduction

Modern changes in the global world order are the main driving force for uniting international actors who pursue similar goals and see prospects in forming a joint action plan to overcome a particular crisis or several acute problems. The present reality of the international community is life in a world where new geopolitical crises arise every time and wars with brutal violations of human rights and genocide burst out. The consequence

of such challenges is the intensification of the phenomenon of „minimalism” which was popular in the past but again has become a relevant trend in international interaction.

Since 2021, Ukraine, in accordance with the Foreign Policy Strategy, has been developing active cooperation in the format of „small alliances”. Such „alliances” do not contradict Ukraine’s aspirations to join NATO or the EU, but only constitute added value to Kyiv’s efforts to create a coalition of like-minded nations that share a similar perception of threats and have a common vision of the future.

The fact remains unquestionable that the aggression of the Russian Federation has intensified the creation of mini-lateral alliances on the European continent with the participation of Ukraine, and contributed to its general support at the international and domestic political levels. The following are examples of minilateral alliances on the European continent with the participation of Ukraine: The Trilateral Alliance (Ukraine, Poland, UK), Lublin Triangle, The Associated Trio, The Union of Romania, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, „Quadriga” with Turkey, The Trilateral Alliance (Ukraine, Poland, Romania), which became the subject of the proposed study.

## Literature Review

Scientific studies that analyze minilateral alliances with the participation of European countries and Ukraine in the context of Russia’s armed aggression within the security dimension should be divided into three main groups. The first group focuses on the understanding of the term „minilateralism” (Alexandroff A., 2020; Patrick S., 2015; Moret E., 2016; Landi A., 2023; Tirkey A., 2021; Naim M., 2009; Fathah A., 2022), its main advantages (Tirkey A., 2021; Anuar A. and Hussain N., 2021), and disadvantages in the cooperation of the participating countries (Tirkey A., 2021; Mladenov N., 2023; Anuar A. and Hussain N., 2021).

The second important group of studies is aimed at highlighting the peculiarities of Ukraine’s cooperation with the member states of minilateral alliances, such as: the „Lublin Triangle” (Herasymchuk S., 2022; Kuleba anonsuvav zasidannya, 2021; Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023; Zawadzka S., 2020; Spil’na deklaratsiya Prezydentiv, 2023); „Associated Trio” (Braylyan Y., 2023; Hruziya vidmovylasya povernuty, 2023); „Quadriga” (IDEF-2021, 2021; Turets’kyy interes u viyni, 2022; Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023; Ivasechko O. and Khivrenko D., 2023); Trilateral Alliance (Demchysyak R., 2023); The Union of Romania–Republic of Moldo-

va–Ukraine (Huyvan O., 2022); Union of Great Britain–Poland–Ukraine (Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023). Within this group, the criteria of political, political-economic, and military support for Ukraine in the context of the Russian full-scale invasion have also been presented (Bomprezzi P. and others, 2023).

The latter group records studies related mainly to the challenges faced by the nations within minilateral alliances and further prospects for cooperation within these associations (Stan ta perspektyvy 2021; Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023; Ukrayina ta Moldova 2022; Turets'kyy interes u viyni 2022; Chaykovs'ka V., 2023; Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023; Het'manchuk A. and Solodkyy S., 2022).

## Theoretical Foundations for the Study of Minilateralism

The researchers attribute the origins of the concept of „minimalism” to the beginning of the 19th century when the „Concert of Europe” formed the basis of the world order. The emergence of such a phenomenon was a reaction to the inefficiency of the formal organizations of the Bretton Woods system, their bureaucratization, and the complexity of consensus-based decision-making by member states. The modern „return” of minilateralism is closely linked to the understanding of the fact that multilateralism has failed if the world is facing acute crises in most spheres of public life. The growing number of global problems and their diversification have demonstrated the need for alternative systems of international cooperation. With modern challenges, the ideal vision of global cooperation has been tarnished as individual reforms remain elusive, while personal gain and institutional inertia continue to affect decision-making (Alexandroff A., 2020, p. 5).

The term „minilateralism” was introduced into scientific use in 1992 by Miles Kaler, a political economist of international importance, to refer to a system of governance in the form of cooperation among great powers (Patrick S., 2015, p. 116). In a broader modern sense, the concept of minilateralism describes the diplomatic process of a small group of stakeholders who have a common goal to complement the activities of international organizations aimed at solving problems that are too complex to be properly addressed at a multilateral level. The above process is also often attributed to various terms, including „reasonable multilateralism”, „plurilateralism”, „unification and sharing” (through the European Defence Agency), „reasonable defense” (in NATO), „contact groups”, „coalitions of relevant players”, „major groups”, etc. (Moret E., 2016, p. 2). The term was

later popularized by Venezuelan politician and journalist Moisés Naím, who argued that despite the growing need for cooperation in international relations, multilateralism had failed to succeed. Meanwhile, minilateralism consists of small subsets of actors, and their agreements are aimed at solving specific problems of global governance (Alexandroff A., 2020, p. 4).

The current trends in international cooperation confirm that the approach to solving problems by means of multilateral negotiations has inevitably failed, and the promises made and declared in agreements within the framework of such meetings for the most part remain unfulfilled. A striking example of such a situation is the ineffectiveness of the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on ending the war in Ukraine and the inability of the Security Council, which today confirm that the ideas of the Yalta Conference and the balance of power after the Second World War no longer work and this does not only weaken the authority of such a global actor as the UN but also brings chaos to international relations (Landi A., 2023).

It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic also reinforced the importance of minilateralism, highlighting the shortcomings of multilateralism, as nations mostly decided to act alone or with separately defined partners, understanding the ineffectiveness of multilateral platforms for coordinating efforts in response to the then crisis (Tirkey A., 2021).

In addition, now the international community is witnessing an extraordinary confrontation, in which, on the one hand, the United States of America seeks to ensure unipolarity where Washington would subordinate several democracies, and on the other hand, China, Russia, and other countries supporting them demonstrate the multipolarity of the world (Landi A., 2023). Such a struggle also influenced the intensification of minilateralism, blocking multilateralism, which, de jure, offered benchmarks of global norms to prevent wars, and, de facto, became one of the reasons for the return of war to the European continent.

The above-mentioned problems do not only testify to the lack of international consensus but also to the false adherence to multilateralism as a panacea for all the problems of the world. Instead, minilateralism is focused on involving as few countries as possible (the so-called „magic number”), which makes it possible to achieve the greatest impact on solving a particular problem (Naim M., 2009). The presence of an imaginary „magic number” makes this format of associations exclusive, but at the same time flexible, since the fact that there are fewer stakeholders means that fewer sets of interests are involved during the forums and, therefore, there is a greater chance of reaching a common solution (Fathah A., 2022).

Minilateralism mostly refers to informal and focused initiatives that concentrate on addressing a specific threat or situation by a small number of states that have common interests during the time it takes to solve the problem (Tirkey A., 2021). The American political scientist Kenneth Oy interprets minilateralism as solving the difficulties of conditional cooperation in multilateral institutions, namely: lower feasibility of sanctions, lower transparency, and control over other's actions, accompanied by an inability to determine common interests. Scholars Bhubhinder Singh and Sara Theo argue that minilateral arrangements are „exclusive, flexible and functional” and occupy the space between a bilateral regime (led by the US and China) and broader global multilateralism (UN, WTO, IMF, etc.), bringing together three to nine countries (Fathah A., 2022).

According to global governance expert Stuart Patrick, the informality of agreements under the minilateralistic approach offers „speed, flexibility, modularity, and opportunities for experimentation”, as opposed to the impasse of a multilateral problem-solving format (Patrick S., 2015, p.115). Minilateralism can also rely on codes of conduct, strategic partnerships, and collaboration with non-governmental actors and transnational companies, including moderate religious associations (Moret E., 2016, p. 2). Most of the countries that participate in minilateral alliances are large or medium-sized developing countries and they often pursue the goal of establishing themselves in their regions.

Minilateralism is often interpreted as a new version of multilateralism. From the point of view of Richard Haas, President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, it is possible to distinguish four types of minilateral groups, starting from the basics of the concept of multilateralism:

1. „Elite Multilateralism”, which includes groups such as the G20, made up of leading powers with significant leverage in specific areas.

2. „Regional multilateralism”, that involves the proliferation of bilateral and regional trade agreements that have arisen due to the inefficiency of the World Trade Organization.

3. „Functional multilateralism”, that forms „coalitions of willing and relevant” and evaluates small parts of governance as the first step in solving a broader problem.

4. „Informal multilateralism”, characterizing the actions of national governments applied to implement measures in accordance with global norms in cases where a multilateral agreement is blocked by national parliaments (Moret E., 2016, p. 2).

It should be understood that the phenomenon of minilateralism has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages of minilateralism there are the following: it allows to bypass the „outdated” formal framework

and solve problems of common concern; low bureaucratization promotes more open and honest discussions; it forms voluntary targeted commitments, which is an attractive alternative to multilateral legally binding agreements (Tirkey A., 2021); it builds mutually beneficial and effective cooperation; the innovative and flexible approach; a relative simplicity; it divides problems into specific dimensions, rather than analyzes a comprehensive collection of global problems at the same time; the decision-making process is faster among nations with common interests; there is less need for institutionalization funding (Anuar A. and Hussain N., 2021, p. 4); it involves non-governmental structures that can help achieve better results due to having a specific set of tools; it is possible to transfer the successful experience of minilateralism to regional and multilateral platforms in order to gain the support of a wider community.

Instead, among the shortcomings of minilateralism, the following are worth highlighting: the forums created in accordance with the ideas of minilateralism can undermine the legitimacy and authority of critical international organizations; there is a decrease in accountability in global governance, which may hinder the achievement of global governance and cooperation goals; the non-binding character of minilateral associations may be less effective for shaping public policy or interests due to the lack of a system of incentives, restrictions or sanctions, or may fragment the global order system based on rules (Tirkey A., 2021); it exacerbates power imbalances, potentially prioritizing short-term interests over long-term goals; it is possible to sign contradictory agreements if nations form alliances not on the basis of common values, but based on narrow interests; it shapes international fragmentation that can complicate the achievement of global collective goals (Mladenov N., 2023); possible negative consequences for states that were not included in the association; minilateral forums can become platforms for rivalry of nations; the ambiguity can become a strategic tool when broadly formulated goals and vague formulations build a space for maneuvers between members who cannot reach an agreement (Anuar A. and Hussain N., 2021); lack of legitimacy.

Despite the presence of weaknesses, minilateralism remains a mode that succeeds and shapes a new vision of the world order. First of all, minilateralism spread the most in the Indo-Pacific, but the Russian–Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and reached its full scale on February 24, 2022, became one of the driving forces of minilateralism in Europe. This, in turn, formed topical issues for analysis, both for scientists, politicians, and for the participants of minilateral associations themselves: „Is there a future for minilateralism in Europe?” and „Is there a future for Europe in minilateralism?”.

## The Security Dimension of Ukraine's Cooperation with European Countries within Minilateral Alliances

Today, the international support to Ukraine in response to the Russian invasion comes from the ability to form alliances with other states. It's a matter of common knowledge that Ukraine's aspiration to become a member of the EU and NATO is the primary goal of foreign policy. In addition, small alliances have been formed over the past decade, which has strengthened the dialogue at the regional level. For Ukraine, mini-alliances are significant because they allow it to integrate into the sphere of both security and defense, and this contributes to fighting against Russian military aggression, which has been ongoing since 2014. As a result, the importance of small alliances as a representation of the efforts of Ukrainian diplomacy cannot be ignored. So, we will focus in more detail on the analysis of minilateral alliances, the participants of which are Ukraine and European countries, namely:

- „The Lublin Triangle” (Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania);
- „The Association Trio” (Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine);
- „Quadriga” (Ukraine, Turkey);
- The Tripartite Alliance (Ukraine, Poland, Romania);
- The Romania–Republic of Moldova–Ukraine Union;
- The Great Britain–Poland–Ukraine Union.

„The Lublin Triangle” (pol. *Trójkąt Lubelski*, lit. *Liublino trikampis*) is a minilateral regional initiative established on July 28, 2020. The key objective of their functioning is to strengthen political communication, trust, and strategic partnership among Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine in the fields of security and defense, financial development, and cultural exchange (Herasymchuk S., 2022, p. 3).



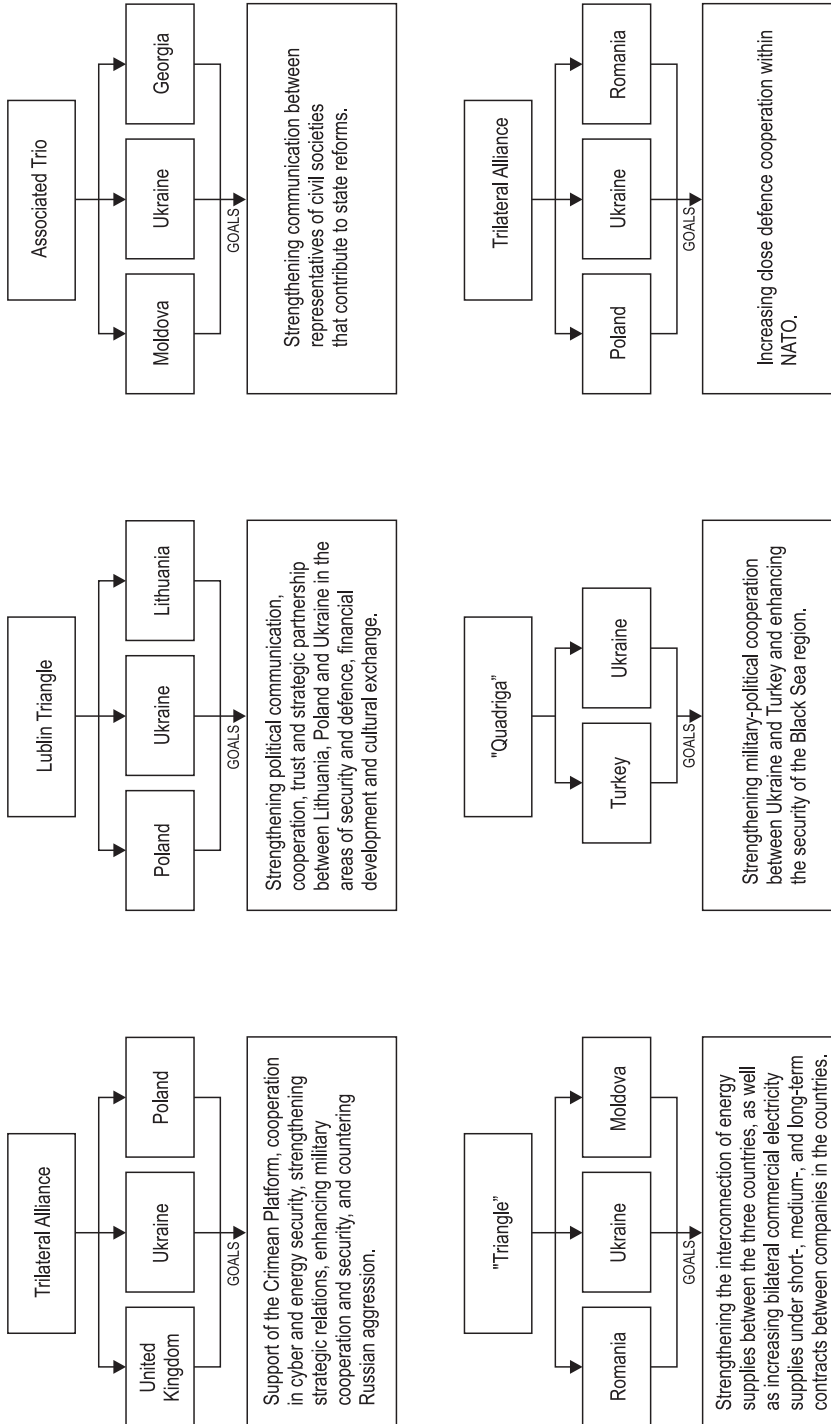


Figure 1. Minilateral alliances with the participation of Ukraine (made by the authors)

On October 20, 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, during an online briefing, noted that „the Lublin Triangle is actively developing and every time covers new dimensions of interaction between the three countries at all levels: governmental, parliamentary, and of civil society” (Kuleba anonsuvav zasidannya, 2021). Summing up the functioning of the Lublin Triangle as a new form of minilateral regional cooperation, the Head of the Foreign Ministry named 10 priorities for its work (Herasymchuk S., 2022, p. 5):

- 1) counteraction to the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation;
- 2) military and defense cooperation using the potential of NATO and the EU, where the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade is indispensable;
- 3) cybersecurity and struggle against the disinformation;
- 4) fighting the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- 5) economic cooperation, counteraction to illegal financial flows and tax crimes, coordination in the field of labor migration;
- 6) energy interaction, counteraction to the implementation of Nord Stream 2;
- 7) cultural, scientific, and educational cooperation, youth exchanges;
- 8) coordination in other regional formats and international organizations;
- 9) issues of crossing the border, combating violations of customs rules and norms of phytosanitary certification;
- 10) cooperation of security institutions.

The cooperation within the Lublin Triangle as a mini-alliance is active and productive (high-level meetings; use by countries of the combined potential of political influence in the debate on the future of the program; regular meetings of foreign ministers and consultations with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but it is worth noting that it serves rather as a conductor of Ukraine’s interests in the international political and security arena and is not an independent operational structure capable of solving problems in the region (especially of a security nature). An objective limitation in this regard is the scarce resources of the member states of the alliance as independent entities in the field of security. It is also worth noting that Poland and Lithuania have their own internal obligations to the EU and NATO. That is, there is an immediate risk that the activities of member countries outside these integrating associations can be considered as factors that contradict their overall strategies (Dudko I. and Pohoriełova I., 2023, p. 276).

After the beginning of the large-scale aggression of Russia, the support of Ukraine from Poland and Lithuania, in particular in the format of the Lublin Triangle mini-union, has increased even more. This was confirmed

at the second Summit of the Lublin Triangle held in Lviv on January 11, 2023. In the joint declaration, the Presidents of the states Volodymyr Zelensky, Andrzej Duda, and Gitanas Nausėda identified the priorities of the alliance and confirmed its fundamental security principles. In particular, the declaration emphasizes „Ukraine’s significant contribution to the security of the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond, in particular by containing the military threat from Russia”; it also proclaims that Ukraine’s membership in the EU and NATO is its inalienable right; it confirmed the readiness of Poland and Lithuania to strengthen Ukraine’s defense capability by providing it with „powerful military, defense, political, diplomatic, economic, logistical and humanitarian assistance”; Poland and Lithuania will fully support Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic orientation, taking care of „international security guarantees” for our state before joining NATO; it declares a further desire to develop a joint Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian military brigade within the framework of Ukraine-NATO „cooperation as an operational platform for a tripartite military partnership” (Spil’na deklaratsiya Prezydentiv, 2023).

In particular, a modern Polish researcher Sylwia Zawadzka noted that, although Ukraine is not a member of the EU and NATO, it has equal status with Poland and Lithuania within the framework of the trilateral initiative. Through cooperation within the framework of this platform, which provides for the coordination of a common position in the field of European policy (especially in the eastern dimension), it can strengthen its influence on the formation of the EU agenda regarding the relations with Russia. Therefore, it will be a tool of soft power for political influence in Europe (Zawadzka S., 2020, p. 115).

Instead, the „Associated Trio” minilateral alliance established in May 2021 to strengthen communication between representatives of civil societies that contribute to the reform of states, was marked with significantly lower indicators of cooperation. One of the reasons for this is that Ukraine and Moldova have obtained the status of candidate states for EU membership, while Georgia has not (Braylyan Y., 2023). In addition, there was a certain aggravation in relations between Kyiv and Tbilisi after the pro-Russian government came to power. It is known that Ukraine provided Georgia with Buk anti-aircraft missile systems during the Russian attack of 2008, which supported the country during the war. However, Georgia distinguished itself by the fact that during the full-scale invasion, it did not provide Ukraine with military assistance and even refused to transfer the same complexes that had been provided years earlier (Hruziya vidmovylasya povernuty, 2023).

„Quadriga” is a bilateral, in particular, defensive format of cooperation between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of Defense

(2+2) of Ukraine and Turkey, established in 2020. The key task of this mini-lateral association is to consolidate the military-political cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey and strengthen the security of the Black Sea region as a whole (IDEF-2021, 2021). Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Turkey, one of the few NATO member countries, has not only provided additional drones to the Ukrainian Armed Forces but also helped to produce drones near Kyiv using Ukrainian engines. Also, in the first quarter of 2022, Ukraine's military imports from Turkey increased 30 times, reaching \$59.1 million. The total defense exports of Turkey during this period at the height of the war increased by 48.6% (Turets'kyy interes u viyni, 2022). In addition, Turkey blocked the Bosphorus Strait for warships to prevent the concentration of reserve forces in the Black Sea for a large amphibious operation off the coast of Odesa. In the humanitarian sphere, it contributed to the release of the defenders of Mariupol from captivity, transported grain to Europe, and gave shelter to Ukrainian refugees. Turkey supported the UN General Assembly resolution suspending russia's participation in the Human Rights Council (Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023, p. 279).

Despite the positive aspects, certain factors impede a more productive dialogue between Ukraine and Turkey: deepening economic and trade relations with the Russian Federation; non-alignment with the sanctions against russia; deepening cooperation in the field of trade with russia; Turkey has become a kind of „safe haven” for Russian oligarchs and their businesses; the cooperation in the field of tourism with the aggressor country has not stopped; it opposes the disconnection of russia from SWIFT; it does not apply effective measures to counteract the theft of Ukrainian grain; Turkey opposes the presence of NATO ships in the Black Sea region and does not oppose Russian propaganda (Ivasechko O. and Khivrenko D., 2023, pp. 226–227).

The Poland – Romania Ukraine minilateral Tripartite Alliance – should also be considered, since it is with these states that Ukraine has the largest length of the common border in the west. Also, Romania and Poland are the leading states of the „Bucharest Nine”, which presents itself as the „eastern flank of NATO” and whose main goal is to increase close defense cooperation within NATO. It is also undeniable that Romania and Poland are the most loyal allies of the United States and the most vocal supporters of NATO's maximum presence in the region. The leaders of these states, Klaus Iohannis and Andrzej Duda, consistently express their support for Ukraine in its long-term struggle against the Russian aggressor at all international meetings (Demchyshak R., 2023, p. 126).

Next, we suggest to consider the Romania – Republic of Moldova – Ukraine mini-union. On September 15, 2022, a meeting was held with

the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova Nicolae Popescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania Bogdan Aurescu, and a number of other officials from the three countries. The Ministers agreed to conclude a trilateral agreement to strengthen the interconnection of energy supply between the three countries, as well as to increase the bilateral commercial supply of electricity under short-, medium- and long-term contracts between companies of the countries. In order to immediately implement these decisions, the work was started with the European Commission, where the issue of financing the specified vectors was included (Huyvan O., 2022).

If we consider cooperation in the security dimension, it is worth mentioning the mini-lateral union of Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Poland. On February 17, 2022, London, Kyiv, and Warsaw agreed on a British-Polish-Ukrainian tripartite agreement, which would strengthen strategic cooperation between the three states. According to the agreement, the main vectors of cooperation between the three countries were defined: the support for the Crimean Platform, cooperation in the field of cyber and energy security, and strengthening strategic ties in general. It also included issues of mutual assistance, military cooperation, and security. However, the key goal of creating a trilateral agreement is to counter Russian aggression. It is noteworthy that the states participating in this format provide Ukraine with the largest amounts of assistance, political contacts at the highest level are consistently high, and London and Warsaw are supporters of strict sanctions (Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023, p. 6).

	UK	Poland	Lithuania	Turkey	Romania	Moldova	Georgia
Visits of political leaders to Ukraine	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Assistance	+	+	+	+	+	No data	No data
Application of Sanctions	+	+	+	-	+	+/-	+/-
EU, NATO Inclusion/ Membership, G7	+	+	+	+	+	-	-

Chart 1. Criteria for support of Ukraine by states participating in mini-alliances: political, military-political, economic (Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023, p. 20)

According to the criterion of economic support, the situation looks as follows. The economic component, according to the estimates of the Kiel Institute of World Economy, the assistance provided to Ukraine as of December 2022 is as follows (Bomprezzi P. and others, 2023):

The UK. Total commitments: 7.082 billion euros (second in the ranking by total amount), 0.258% of GDP (sixth in the ranking by share of GDP); humanitarian commitments: 0.398 billion euros (fourth in the ranking by total amount), 0.014% of GDP (18<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP); financial commitments: 2.555 billion euros (second in the ranking by financial liabilities), 0.093% of GDP (fourth in the ranking by share of GDP); military commitments: 4.129 billion euros (second in the ranking), 0.150% of GDP (eighth in the ranking by share of GDP).

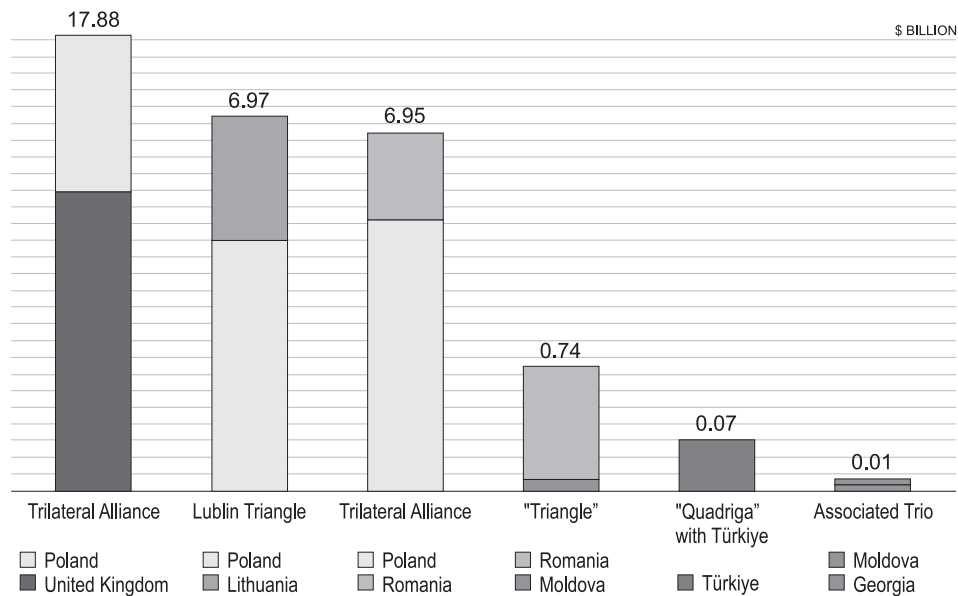
Poland. Total commitments: 3.001 billion euros (fifth in the ranking by total amount), 0.505% of GDP (third in the ranking by share of GDP); humanitarian commitments: 0.175 billion euros (ninth in the ranking), 0.029% of GDP (eighth in the ranking by share of GDP); financial commitments: 1.003 billion euros (fifth in the ranking), 0.169% of GDP (first in the ranking by share of GDP); military commitments: 1.822 billion euros (fourth in the ranking), 0.307% of GDP (fourth in the ranking by share of GDP).

Lithuania. Total commitments: €0.261 billion (21<sup>st</sup> in the ranking by total amount), 0.463% of GDP (fourth in the ranking by share of GDP); humanitarian commitments: €0.057 billion (19<sup>th</sup> in the overall ranking), 0.101% of GDP (second in the ranking by share of GDP); financial commitments: €0.005 billion (18<sup>th</sup> in the ranking), 0.009% of GDP (17<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP); military commitments: €0.199 billion (17<sup>th</sup> in the ranking), 0.353% of GDP (third in the ranking by share of GDP).

Turkey. total commitments: 0.064 billion € (30<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by total amount), 0.009% of GDP (33<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP); humanitarian commitments: 0.000 billion € (39<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP; information on the amount of aid is not disclosed), 0.000% of GDP (38<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP); financial commitments: none (without rating); military commitments: 0.064 billion € (24<sup>th</sup> in the ranking), 0.009% of GDP (25<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP).

Romania. total commitments: €0.011 billion (35<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by the total amount), 0.004% of GDP (38<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by the share of GDP); humanitarian commitments: €0.008 billion (24<sup>th</sup> in the ranking), 0.003% of GDP (31<sup>st</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP); financial commitments: none (no rating); military commitments: €0.003 billion (31<sup>st</sup> in the overall ranking), 0.001% of GDP (29<sup>th</sup> in the ranking by share of GDP).

The volumes of assistance from Moldova and Georgia were not measured by the Kiel Institute of the World Economy.



The infographic is based on data from the Kiel Institute for the World Economy as of 17.07.23

Figure 2. Amount of assistance provided to Ukraine by the countries participating in minilateral alliances in the context of Russia's armed aggression

According to the above schedule based on the data of the Kiel Institute of World Economy, as of July 2023, the assistance to Ukraine by the nations participating in minilateral alliances was formed as follows:

- „Lublin Triangle”: the total assistance amounted to \$6.97 billion, where a larger percentage contribution was made by Poland;
- „Association Trio”: in general, it did not manifest itself in financial assistance, since the indicators remained minimal;
- „Quadriga”: Turkey provided assistance totaling \$0.07 billion;
- The Tripartite Alliance managed to provide \$6.95 billion, where again the lion's share of assistance to Ukraine was assumed by Poland;
- The Romania–Republic of Moldova–Ukraine Union transferred funds for \$0.74 billion and it was Romania that took the leading position in the financial support;
- The Great Britain–Poland–Ukraine Union provided Ukraine with \$17.88 billion, which is the largest aid among all minilateral alliances, and the United Kingdom became the largest donor.

## Challenges and Prospects for Cooperation

Despite the considerable success that Ukraine has achieved by cooperating within the framework of minilateral alliances, the war continues to dictate its rules. The dynamics of events developing directly on the battlefield affects not only the military but also the domestic and international political spheres. Some member states of alliances also do not want to give in to their own ambitions and, despite support, continue to maneuver. It is also obvious that some alliances need to keep developing and not stop at what they have achieved.

The platform of the Lublin Triangle is not limited to security issues but includes a wide range of aspects, such as economic, social, and humanitarian with potential for development. Therefore, the conclusions made at the initial stage of the triangle formation remain relevant, in that further social and political institutionalization is necessary for cooperation between the parties, which will make trilateral cooperation more fruitful. First, to convince the societies of the three countries of the importance of such cooperation and explain its goals. Secondly, there is a need to form intergovernmental, interdepartmental, inter-parliamentary, and other forms of organization at the level of think tanks. The Lublin Triangle should leave the declaration stage as soon as possible and develop a medium-term plan for its development. The development of the triangle should be divided into „hard” cooperation (political and military) and „soft” (historical and educational policies aimed at stimulating mental processes) (Stan ta perspektyvy, 2021, pp. 40–41).

If we consider the challenges facing the „Associated Trio”, it is appropriate to note that even though political events have led to significant changes in the European integration prospects and opportunities of countries, we can agree with the opinion that the members of the „trio” have not developed specific measures for joint steps towards the ultimate goal: in June 2022, against the background of large-scale Russian aggression, Ukraine was granted the status of a candidate for EU accession, Moldova received the same status, and Georgia remained an associate partner of the EU. There were also specific disagreements between the countries of the Trilateral Group on issues of European security related to the war between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine showed strong resistance to the aggressor, Moldova declared its neutrality, and the political leadership of Georgia showed a tendency to maintain relations with Russia (Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023, 277–278). Probably, the listed factors influenced the blocking of the process of institutionalization of the „trio” in the context of the conscious need for additional coordination among the parties in the



integration sphere. In particular, following the results of the meeting of the Prime Ministers of Ukraine (Denys Shmyhal) and Moldova (Natalia Havrylytsa), in December 2022 a bilateral working group of countries was created, whose task was to coordinate the movement of both countries to the EU (Ukrayina ta Moldova, 2022).

Turkey, which is a member of the Quadriga defense format, is a NATO member country that maintains trade relations with Russia and seeks to benefit from the fact that Western companies have quit the Russian territory. Tourism, trade, and large exports from Russia are among the many economic reasons that Turkey does not want to ignore. In March 2022, Russia became Turkey's main trading partner. Its exports have reached \$4.1 billion. The country's leadership believes that Turkey should be guided solely by its own interests in order to „prevent its people from freezing without Russian gas”. Ankara also insists on maintaining channels of dialogue with Moscow and refuses to support international sanctions against Russia (Turets'kyy interes u viyni, 2022). It is important not only to recognize the success of Ukrainian–Turkish cooperation in this format and continue the upward trend of its development but also to use the level of trust established between the parties to reduce the pro-Russian influence on the political leadership. The challenge for diplomacy in this context is to prevent the Turkish leadership from turning towards pro-Russian interests and to develop the security dimension of Quadriga's policy in a way that meets the practical guidelines and needs of each side (Dudko I. and Pohorielova I., 2023, pp. 279–280).

The tripartite alliance of Poland, Romania, and Ukraine makes a significant contribution to the defense capability of Ukraine, but the recent „grain” conflict between these states showed that national interests come first, and the statement of Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on the cessation of arms supplies, followed by a refutation of this information after the US intervention, has significantly shaken the balance (Chaykovs'ka V., 2023). All this contributed to the growth of disinformation spread by Kremlin propagandists. The situation has been normalized thanks to diplomatic work and joint agreements.

As for the Ukraine–Romania–Republic of Moldova format, it is obvious that this alliance has the opportunity to realize itself not only as a platform through which effective tripartite cooperation is formed but also as a space for promoting the European integration agenda of Ukraine and Moldova. In such circumstances, Romania can prove itself as one of the advocates of the „Associated Duo” at the EU level, as well as transfer to Ukraine and Moldova knowledge based on its own experience of European integration (Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023, p. 7).

To ensure the proper development of the Ukraine–Poland–United Kingdom „triangle” format should initiate a panel discussion on the goals and priorities of the participating states, as they may differ depending on the degree of geopolitical vision of the states themselves. That is why it is extremely important to recognize common features and focus on them (Herasymchuk S. and Drapak M., 2023, p. 7). It is significant that in London and Warsaw, the tripartite cooperation is seen as an in-depth partnership between the three countries. Official persons in the two countries avoid the terms like „union” and „alliance”, which are often used in Kyiv. Ukraine should not focus on them either. The alliance involves a higher level of commitment (including legally binding), but neither Poland nor the UK currently see their partnership as a kind of ‘mini-NATO’ (Het’manchuk A. and Solodkyy S., 2022, p. 12).

## Conclusions

Thus, we can confidently state that thanks to the creation of new mini-associations and alliances the international security environment is undergoing positive changes. A positive factor is that Ukraine does not lag behind the trends and is a proactive participant in minilateral groups. That is why it is extremely important to go on and ensure continuous work to strengthen and enhance cooperation in this direction.

Obviously, some alliances are passive and have not brought the expected results. For example, the „Associated Trio” mini alliance is exhausted, and the differences in political views between the Georgian government that exercises a more pro-Russian policy, and the Ukrainian side, have led it to stagnation. However, it is necessary to take into account the pragmatic interests of partner countries which do not always fully coincide. That is why it is worth working on jointly coordinated projects that will take into account the positions of the parties. It is important to convince the participants of mini-alliances that there are well-known problems in the region that can only be solved through jointly coordinated work.

Minilateral alliances such as the „Lublin Triangle”, „Quadriga”, the Tripartite Alliance; the Romania–Republic of Moldova–Ukraine Union; and the union of Great Britain–Poland–Ukraine continue to set ambitious goals, which in the future have every chance of being achieved, which indicates the availability of these mini-formations’ goals. Also, there is a high probability that such minilateral alliances can become part of a Pan-European security strategy that will help to confront new challenges and threats. Since Ukraine plans to become a full member of NATO, this

approach serves as an excellent start for the implementation of Euro-Atlantic integration ambitions.

It is appropriate to emphasize that Ukraine is a reliable ally in the security sense, as it has proven its ability to protect the Eastern European region from Russian aggression. However, the war is still going on and it is important that the cooperation does not stop and continues to intensify, transform, respond, and react to modern challenges that are acquiring pan-European significance. It is obvious that for Ukraine, participation in small alliances is a great opportunity to become a regional leader, and at the same time to prove itself as an actor in the European system of international relations.

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