

POLAND'S DIPLOMACY OF SOLIDARITY DURING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT: MILITARY, EDUCATIONAL, AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

A DIPLOMACIA DE SOLIDARIEDADE DA POLÓNIA DURANTE O CONFLITO RUSSO-UCRANIANO: DIMENSÕES MILITARES, EDUCACIONAIS E CULTURAIS

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Abstract

The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the Republic of Poland's diplomatic strategy in supporting Ukraine amid the full-scale Russian aggression that began in 2022. The authors explore the multifaceted nature of Polish diplomacy including political, military, humanitarian, cultural-educational, and informational dimensions. Poland emerges not only as an ally but also as an active architect of a new security model in Central and Eastern Europe where Ukraine occupies a key position. The focus is made on specific support mechanisms such as the supply of weapons, reception of refugees, diplomatic lobbying at the EU and NATO levels, scientific and educational cooperation, and cultural diplomacy. Poland's role as a regional leader in building coalitions in support of Ukraine is systematically examined along with the risks posed by internal political polarization and economic conflicts (such as the "grain crisis") for the first time. The article

Resumo

O artigo apresenta uma análise abrangente da estratégia diplomática da República da Polónia em apoio da Ucrânia no meio da agressão russa em grande escala que começou em 2022. Os autores exploram a natureza multifacetada da diplomacia polaca, incluindo as dimensões política, militar, humanitária, cultural-educacional e informacional. A Polónia surge não só como um aliado, mas também como um arquitecto activo de um novo modelo de segurança na Europa Central e Oriental, onde a Ucrânia ocupa uma posição-chave. O enfoque é dado a mecanismos de apoio específicos, como o fornecimento de armas, o acolhimento de refugiados, o lobby diplomático a nível da UE e da NATO, a cooperação científica e educativa e a diplomacia cultural. O papel da Polónia como líder regional na construção de coligações em apoio da Ucrânia é sistematicamente examinado, juntamente com os riscos representados pela polarização política interna



highlights the interdependence between Polish diplomacy and Ukraine's transformation processes, emphasizing the potential for a long-term strategic alliance. The research is based on an extensive source basis that includes analytical reports, statistical data, international documents, and scholars' publications. The findings indicate that Polish-Ukrainian cooperation represents a model of effective regional diplomacy in the context of war and post-conflict reconstruction. Poland increasingly acts as a bridge between Ukraine and Western institutions, while investing in long-term humanitarian and institutional ties.

Keywords: Poland. Ukraine. Diplomatic Strategy. Russian-Ukrainian War. Strategic Partnership. European Union. NATO. Humanitarian Support. Cultural Diplomacy. International Security. Information Policy. Diplomatic Relations.

e pelos conflitos económicos (como a “crise dos cereais”), pela primeira vez. O artigo destaca a interdependência entre a diplomacia polaca e os processos de transformação da Ucrânia, enfatizando o potencial para uma aliança estratégica a longo prazo. A pesquisa baseia-se numa extensa base de fontes que inclui relatórios analíticos, dados estatísticos, documentos internacionais e publicações académicas. Os resultados indicam que a cooperação polaco-ucraniana representa um modelo de diplomacia regional eficaz no contexto da guerra e da reconstrução pós-conflito. A Polónia actua cada vez mais como uma ponte entre a Ucrânia e as instituições ocidentais, investindo simultaneamente em laços humanitários e institucionais de longo prazo.

Palavras-chave: Polónia. Ucrânia. Estratégia Diplomática. Guerra Russo-ucraniana. Parceria Estratégica. União Europeia. NATO. Apoio Humanitário. Diplomacia Cultural. Segurança Internacional. Política de Informação. Relações Diplomáticas.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, international diplomacy has once again occupied a central place in global discourse, especially after the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The geopolitical shifts caused by this war have significantly transformed the European security system, raising the issues about collective defense, foreign policy solidarity, and strategic cooperation. Within this context, the Republic of Poland has become one of Ukraine's most consistent and active allies, implementing a multilevel diplomatic strategy both bilaterally and within the European Union, NATO, and other international institutions.

The relevance of the topic stems from the unprecedented nature of Poland's support for Ukraine and the need for a scientific analysis of the complex mechanisms underlying this diplomatic interaction. Polish diplomacy combines traditional and innovative forms of influence including political lobbying, cultural and educational cooperation, humanitarian support, and civil society mobilization, which makes it one of the key factors in strengthening Ukraine's international image and fostering European

unity (Ksenicz, 2023; Dudek, 2025).

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive study of Poland's diplomatic strategy in the context of supporting Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict since 2022. It aims to identify key mechanisms of cooperation, to analyze political, cultural, and humanitarian instruments of diplomacy, and to assess the prospects for bilateral relations in the post-war period.

Achieving the goal requires addressing the following tasks:

- to characterize the historical evolution of Polish-Ukrainian diplomatic relations after the onset of Russo-Ukrainian conflict;
- analyze Poland's strategic initiatives in support of Ukraine;
- to identify institutional and informal mechanisms for the implementation of diplomatic support;
- to identify the main challenges and potential limitations of further cooperation.

The scientific novelty lies in the attempt to analyze Poland's diplomatic actions in an integrated manner within the broader geopolitical context, taking into account the cultural, humanitarian and, academic components, which is an under-researched aspect in national scholarship.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of the study is a combination of systemic, historical and comparative, institutional, and discursive approaches. The source base includes official documents of both Poland and Ukraine governments, the European Council decisions, analytical reports from international organizations, and publications by leading researchers in the field of international relations.

The main research tool is narrative review. A narrative review might incorporate a wide range of studies and offer an overall overview, along with interpretation and critique, whereas a systematic review typically concentrates on a single subject in a particular context and follows a predetermined procedure to synthesize data from related studies (Sukhera, 2022).

Narrative reviews allow researchers to describe what is known on a topic while conducting a subjective examination and critique of an entire body of literature. Narrative

reviews are often useful for topics that require a meaningful synthesis of research evidence that may be complex or broad and that require detailed, nuanced description and interpretation. These features of narrative review method determined choosing it as a research tool for current study.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Literature review briefly

Researchers note that Poland has become one of the most influential advocates for Ukraine's interests within European Union institutions since 2022. According to Daniel Szeligowski, the author of "*Defining Ukraine's Victory*", Polish diplomacy has actively promoted sanctions packages against Russia, initiated EU financial support for Ukraine, and participated in debates over Ukraine's future EU membership (Szeligowski, 2025). Poland has insisted on strategic recognition of Russia as a direct threat within NATO (Wilk, & Żochowski, 2025, February 25). According to an analytical report by the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw has actively built "coalitions for Ukraine" among Central and Eastern European, Baltic, and Nordic countries (Szeligowski, 2025).

Demonstrative humanitarian solidarity is a discrete direction of Poland's diplomatic strategy. Poland was the first country to open its borders to Ukrainian refugees without restrictions, granting them access to social assistance, employment, and education. According to the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), this move significantly changed Poland's image in Europe, namely from being criticized for its migration policy the country became a model of humanitarianism (Buras, 2023, September 28).

Ukrainian researchers Masliy et al. (2020) emphasize the need to transform Ukraine's military logistics system during wartime to ensure the rapid supply of troops with necessary resources and maintain economic resilience in the article *On the Features of Logistic Support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine under Current Conditions*. The study identifies key directions for logistical development, highlights systemic issues and proposes modernization strategies. In this vein, Poland has also become one of Ukraine's

main arms suppliers, providing both Soviet-era weapons and modern equipment such as Leopard 2 tanks and Krab self-propelled howitzers. Scholarly literature highlights that Polish military aid is driven by both altruistic and geostrategic motives. Analysts from the Center for Eastern Studies (OSW) note that supporting Ukraine simultaneously strengthens NATO's eastern flank and gives Poland leverage over the US military presence in the region (Wilk, & Żochowski, 2025, February 25; 8].

Academic sources also examine the use of public diplomacy: speeches by Polish leaders in Kyiv and on international platforms, joint historical initiatives (e.g., regarding Volyn), and efforts aimed at easing historical memory tensions. According to research from Jagiellonian University, memory diplomacy has become part of a broader “historical partnership” strategy (Baranovskyi, Kamionka, & Melnyk, 2024).

Poland's geopolitical influence has grown since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, according to Thomas Pitney (Pitney, 2023). Poland's aspirations therefore have a growing impact on regional, European, and international security. According to his research, Poland has multiple reasons for getting involved in the conflict, and the war in Ukraine poses both a threat and an opportunity for Polish aspirations.

Zhelikhovskiy and Tykhonenko (2023) highlight how successful Poland's foreign policy efforts are in assisting Ukraine. However, they discovered that while though the sale of Ukrainian agricultural products to Europe negatively impacts Polish-Ukrainian ties, it became the focus of a diplomatic effort to reach an agreement.

At the same time, certain researchers point to internal constraints such as rising political polarization in Poland, the growth of populist movements, and farmers' protests over Ukrainian agricultural imports. These issues pose risks to the consistency of Poland's policy toward Ukraine. Zalewski notes that support for Ukraine is a point of political competition between the Polish government and opposition, weakening policy continuity (Zalewski, 2024).

Among Ukrainian scholars studying Poland's diplomatic strategy in support of Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine war. there are the following: Savchenko, an international relations expert focusing on Ukraine's security policy and Poland's role in supporting Ukraine in the context of Russia conflict; Snihur, an expert in Euro-Atlantic integration who analyzes Ukraine's security cooperation with Eastern European countries, especially Poland; Kulykov, a political scientist and diplomat, author of works

on Ukraine's foreign policy and Polish support; Shulha, an expert on international security and diplomacy exploring Poland's role in Ukraine's military and humanitarian assistance; Zahorodnyi, who studies diplomatic strategies and Ukraine's foreign policy within the NATO context, including Polish cooperation.

In the literature, it is noted that Poland's diplomatic strategy toward Ukraine is multi-layered one, covering political, humanitarian, security, and informational dimensions (Olchowski, & Surmacz, (Eds.), 2024). However, it is not without risks, namely political, economic, and intra-European. Nonetheless, the general trend points to deeper bilateral integration and the foundation of a new regional security order. Academic discourse shows that Poland's Ukraine policy evolved from an emotional, reactive stance at the war's outbreak to a rational, long-term strategic partnership. Poland not only supports Ukraine but also actively shapes the architecture of regional security, positioning Ukraine as a core component (Konończuk, 2023, October 3).

In the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, international support has become an increasingly significant issue politically, militarily, humanitarily, and legally. It is therefore important to analyze academic approaches to assessing Ukraine's cooperation with international organizations and key states that play a decisive role in consolidating global support. The research "Prospects for Ukraine's Cooperation with International Organizations in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Analysis and Forecasts" by Denysiuk and Fokin (2024) is a substantial study in this area. The authors argue that international organizations are central actors in global governance, forming legal and political responses to global challenges. Special attention is given to the UN, the Security Council, the International Criminal Court, and NATO. The study contends that current global security architecture requires reform, particularly in decision-making mechanisms and the responsibilities of permanent UNSC members. It also provides an in-depth analysis of Ukraine's status within international organizations, highlighting the importance of Euro-Atlantic integration and collective security (Denysiuk, & Fokin, 2024).

Complementary to this work is the work by Zhelikhovskiy and Tykhonenko, "Foreign Policy Initiatives of the Republic of Poland in Support of Ukraine During the Russia-Ukraine War" (Zhelikhovskiy, & Tykhonenko, 2023). The article provides a detailed review of Poland's support for Ukraine in military, humanitarian, and diplomatic

spheres. Poland serves not only as a major advocate within the EU and NATO but also as a logistical hub for Western arms and aid, as well as a participant in regional formats such as the Lublin and Weimar Triangles and the Three Seas Initiative. The authors analyze Warsaw's diplomatic initiatives, arms deliveries, and participation in Ukraine's postwar reconstruction. They also acknowledge tensions in bilateral relations such as disputes over Ukrainian agricultural exports to the EU (Zhelikhovskiy, & Tykhonenko, 2023).

Buslenko' (2024) article examines the development and prospects of Ukrainian-Polish relations following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. The current state of bilateral relations reflects geopolitical realities and shared political goals. The strengthening of cooperation is driven by mutual interest in enhancing security, preserving democracy, and resisting Russia's aggressive policy. The article highlights a gradual mitigation of contentious historical issues which previously provoked political tensions. This shift is partly explained by recognition of the destructive potential of these issues amid Russia's hybrid warfare, which seeks to weaken Ukrainian-Polish unity and reduce international support for Ukraine. Overall, relations between the two countries remain stable, predictable, and marked by growing public goodwill (Buslenko, 2024).

The war in Donbas between Russia and Ukraine became not only one of Ukraine's most acute internal political crises but also a serious international challenge that threatened the stability of the Ukrainian state, the integrity of the European security system, and the overall balance of the global order. The issues are the focus of Perepelytsia's research (2021). The author argues that, years into the so-called "Russia-Ukraine conflict", an effective resolution remains elusive. The matter remains a key focus of President Zelensky's foreign policy. However, the chosen diplomatic strategy has yet to deliver the final resolution expected by the Ukrainian public. Meanwhile, the international institutions, acting especially in the security sector, have not formulated a clear, actionable response. The article analyzes Zelensky's diplomatic efforts during the first two years of his presidency and proposed possible ways to overcome the political and diplomatic deadlock occurred in those years.

Bobrovska's (2025) article explores the evolution of Ukraine's cultural diplomacy in the context of armed conflict. Special attention is given to its role as a means of international communication, information security, and consolidation of external support. The key challenges are identified as the absence of a unified state strategy, weak

coordination between government and civil society, limited digital tools, and the need for sustainable international partnerships. The author argues for integrating cultural diplomacy into the national security system and outlines priorities for its future development particularly digital transformation and enhanced global cooperation (Bobrovska, 2025).

Thus, the reviewed sources represent an important segment of academic discourse on the new security architecture in Europe, Ukraine's role as a subject of international politics, the role of Poland in new security landscape, and the consolidation of global resistance to Russian aggression. They provide a foundation for further research on international support, transatlantic solidarity, and the role of regional initiatives in strengthening East European security.

3.2 Polish-Ukrainian relations in retrospect

Polish-Ukrainian relations over the past three decades have experienced a complex yet steadily positive trajectory. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, Poland was among the first countries to recognize its sovereignty, laying the foundation for further bilateral dialogue. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Polish diplomacy played a significant role in supporting pro-European reforms in Ukraine, consistently advocated for Ukrainian interests on the European stage (Ociepka, & Dobek-Ostrowska, 2017).

Bilateral relations became particularly active after the Orange Revolution (2004) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014), which Poland supported as examples of the Ukrainian people's democratic choice. Warsaw made efforts to mediate between the Ukrainian government and civil society and acted as a channel for transatlantic communication, emphasizing the need to strengthen Ukraine's course toward European integration.

Moreover, in 2014, Poland took the initiative to strengthen the Eastern dimension of EU policy, particularly through the Eastern Partnership, and recognized the Russian annexation of Crimea as a threat to European security. Warsaw consistently supported sanctions against the Russian Federation and reforms in Ukraine, promoting the integration of Ukrainian institutions into the European framework. By 2022, Poland had formed the image of "Ukraine's advocate" in Europe. With the onset of Russia's full-

scale aggression, Polish diplomacy quickly evolved from traditional support to active crisis diplomacy. In the early weeks of the war, Warsaw became a transit hub for international aid to Ukraine, coordinating security and humanitarian initiatives.

3.3 Poland' response to Russian aggression

President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, and Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, the representatives of Polish leadership, demonstrated unequivocal support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, making regular political visits to Kyiv. In June 2022, President Duda became the first foreign head of state to address the Verkhovna Rada during wartime, underscoring the symbolic character of bilateral solidarity. Poland also initiated several EU-level decisions aimed at granting Ukraine candidate status for EU membership. Within NATO, it called for expanded military support for Ukraine, including the supply of defensive weapons and the conduct of training missions for the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Polish diplomats also coordinated interactions among the Baltic states, Northern Europe, and Ukraine, shaping a new format of regional diplomacy under the Lublin Triangle initiative.

In terms of security policy, Poland not only supplied weaponry but also invested in logistics, transport infrastructure, and the deployment of NATO forces near its eastern borders. Politically, Poland effectively acted as Ukraine's advocate in Brussels, Berlin, and Washington. Polish leaders, including President Duda and Prime Minister Morawiecki, repeatedly expressed their support for Ukraine, and importantly, backed their words with actions. According to a symbolic "friends of Ukraine" ranking compiled by Forbes, Poland has held first place for several months in terms of foundational support, expulsion of Russian diplomats, aid to Ukraine and refugees (over €5 billion or 0.88% of GDP as of August 2022), and visits by top officials (Rose, 2025).

In January 2023, President Duda made a series of public statements about the war in Ukraine, addressing both domestic and international audiences. In his New Year's address, he emphasized that an extremely brutal war was taking place on Poland's eastern borders, one of the most severe conflicts Europe has seen since the end of World War II. He acknowledged that there was still no clear end in sight to the conflict. During his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, he suggested that the coming weeks

would clarify Ukraine's future, depending partly on the nature of a new Russian offensive. According to Duda, the war must end with peace negotiations which currently lack preconditions but it must not end in Ukraine's defeat.

Prime Minister Morawiecki warned that such a scenario could be the prelude to a third world war. He argued that there was no reason to delay or withhold support for Ukraine the Poland's eastern neighbor. The toughest stance was voiced by Deputy Foreign Minister Paweł Jabłoński, who declared that Warsaw was firmly opposed to giving Russian President Vladimir Putin the opportunity to "save face". According to Jabłoński, stable peace in Europe is only possible if Ukraine wins the war and fully liberates its territories from Russian occupation. The pro-Ukrainian stance of Polish leadership is further underscored by its harsh anti-Russian rhetoric. President Duda maintained that Russia must lose this war, as otherwise it will inevitably launch further aggressive actions. To keep Russia at bay from the free world, he even considers the possibility of restoring a so-called "Iron Curtain". He stressed that the ideology of the "Russian world" should remain confined within the borders of the Russian Federation. Notably, since March 2022, Poland has been officially included on Russia's list of "unfriendly countries" (Kramarenko, 2023, February 10).

Sus (2025) correctly observes that Poland's response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was decisive, motivated by strong leadership aspirations. While many European countries reconsidered their foreign policy goals, Poland established itself as a significant participant in shaping the Western reaction. Poland sought to impose its regional leadership by providing military aid prior to the invasion and pressing for robust NATO and EU actions. The author uses neoclassical realism to explain Poland's response and contends that it was influenced by four domestic factors that were present at the same time: Polish leaders' view of their nation's underappreciated role in Europe; a strategic culture that prioritized deterrence and close ties with the United States; a centralized institutional structure that allowed for quick decision-making; and a widespread social consensus that Russia posed an existential threat.

In response to Russia's aggression, Polish diplomacy has implemented a comprehensive support system covering political, military, humanitarian, and informational dimensions. Unlike the traditional "reactive diplomacy", Poland employs

a proactive strategy designed to influence not only developments in Ukraine but also the positions of its allies within the EU and NATO.

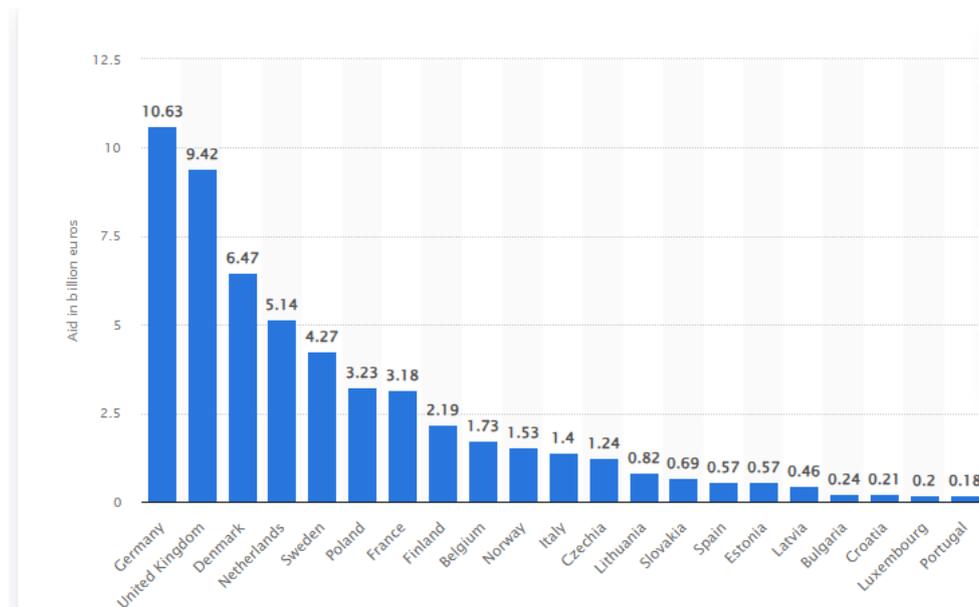
Poland is among the largest suppliers of weapons to Ukraine. Shortly before the Russian invasion, in late January 2022, the Polish government announced it would provide Ukraine with defense equipment selected from a list proposed by Warsaw. Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, Poland has delivered substantial military aid, including weapons, ammunition, gear, and equipment from its own military reserves. This allowed Ukrainian forces to quickly replenish losses in tanks, infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), and other equipment. Ammunition for various weapon systems and artillery support were also crucial for Ukrainian defenders. Notably, Poland supplied air defense systems, helping Ukraine counter Russian aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, and cruise missiles. Polish defense assistance has become a critical factor in equipping Ukrainian troops and outfitting newly formed military units (Katsimon, 2024, November 10).

President Duda emphasized that Poland was one of the first countries to provide timely and necessary support to Ukraine during the most critical phases of the war. The total aid reached 4.91% of Poland's GDP, 0.71% for military support and 4.2% for refugee assistance. The value of transferred weapons reached €3.23 billion. Poland delivered approximately 1,000 heavy military vehicles to Ukraine, including more than 350 tanks (such as T-72s and PT-91s), surpassing the combined contributions of many leading Western states (see Fig. 1). The first T-72s were transferred in the first half of 2022, and in January 2023, Ukraine received Leopard 2A 4 tanks. Poland also provided hundreds of drones (including combat drones), dozens of air defense systems, and more than 100 million rounds of ammunition. Facing a shortage of artillery shells, Poland joined the Czech-led initiative to procure them, allocating €100 million. Considerable attention was paid to the maintenance of weapons: Polish companies are engaged in the repair of Leopards, T-72s, PT-91s, and Krab self-propelled howitzers. Additionally, Poland supplied 20,000 Starlink terminals to ensure reliable communication at the front. In terms of military training, Poland organized or contributed to over 500 training events for Ukrainian service members. In total, approximately 25,000 personnel were trained, 14,500 of them under the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM). Poland also proposed a volunteer training program on its territory, though its implementation has been postponed. In January 2025, the NATO–Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education

Centre (JATEC) opened in Bydgoszcz the first institution of its kind designed to facilitate the exchange of combat experience among partners (Katsimon, 2024, November 10).

Figure 1

Military aid provided to Ukraine by European countries between January 2022 and August 2024 (in billion Euros) (Macchi, 2025, August 21)



Poland has been one of Ukraine's key partners in ensuring military security after the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion. The main emphasis was placed on the supply of armored vehicles. In addition to material support, the Polish side has actively participated in organizing military training for Ukrainian servicemen within the framework of the EU initiative EUMAM Ukraine. Polish training grounds have become a base for training new units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which has contributed to increasing their combat capability and adapting to NATO standards. The head of the Polish Embassy in Ukraine, Piotr Lukaszewicz, speaking about the military assistance that Poland provided to Ukraine during the full-scale Russian invasion, emphasized that the country is preparing the 47th package worth about 200 million euros, which were intended to be transferred to Ukraine in the coming months (Krichkovska, & Panchenko, 2025, May 16).

3.4 Poland' migration policy towards Ukrainian refugees

In 2022, Poland opened its borders to millions of Ukrainian refugees, providing one of the largest humanitarian operations in Europe since World War II. According to official data (from the Border Guard and the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs), Polish territory received more than 3.5 million people, during the first six months of the war. The process was accompanied by the prompt involvement of local administrations, churches, public organizations, and the media. The Polish government adopted a number of legal decisions guaranteeing Ukrainians' access to the healthcare, education, employment, and social security systems. The Law "On Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine" (special act of the Sejm RP, March 2022) became the basis for their integration into Polish society.

After the start of the full-scale war, millions of Ukrainians arrived in Poland. Since February 24, 2022, more than 9 million Ukrainian citizens have crossed the Polish border, and as of January 2023, about 1.5 million refugees have been registered in the country. An internal passport or birth certificate for children was sufficient for entry. Ukrainians could temporarily live in hotels, dormitories, or private households. For the first 120 days, accommodation was free and then partially paid (from 50% to 75% of the cost), with the exception of vulnerable categories. Upon arrival, a refugee was obliged to obtain a PESEL number, which gave access to one-time assistance (PLN 300), monthly payments for children (PLN 500), and also provided the right to work, study, and medical care. The status was canceled after 30 days outside Poland, but could be renewed. 900,000 Ukrainians have found work using the simplified procedure, and 185 thousand children went to Polish schools. Poland also simplified entry with pets. Although public attitudes were gradually changing, the government and President Duda expressed readiness to continue supporting Ukrainians (Kramarenko, 2023, February 10).

In October 2024, the Polish government approved a new Comprehensive and Responsible Migration Strategy for 2025–2030 under the slogan Regain Control. Ensure Security. The document provided for a rethinking of approaches to regulating migration processes with a focus on security, effective integration of foreigners, border control and optimization of entry and stay in the country. The strategy paid significant attention to a selective approach to migration, automation of procedures, strengthening border control,

especially on the eastern borders of the EU, as well as the introduction of digital services for legalizing the stay of foreigners. For Ukraine, which is the main source of migration to Poland, the adopted strategy appeared of great importance. The Polish experience can serve as a guide in shaping its own migration policy, in particular, regarding employment, educational mobility, combating illegal migration, and developing ties with the diaspora.

Poland has become Ukraine's mouthpiece in European structures. Within the EU, Warsaw has systematically initiated decisions to strengthen sanctions against the Russian Federation, expand financial support for Ukraine, and increase the EU's defense budget. Polish diplomacy has worked closely with Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Baltic states to form a common eastern front of political solidarity. At the NATO level, Polish representatives have promoted the idea of long-term security guarantees for Ukraine and opening up the prospect of its membership. In particular, this policy was manifested in the position that Warsaw took on the eve of the NATO Vilnius Summit (2023), where it resolutely supported the statement about the "inevitability of Ukraine's accession" after the war.

It is worth noting the growing role of Polish media, cultural, and analytical institutions in countering Russian propaganda. Polish media, in particular TVP, Onet.pl, Rzeczpospolita, as well as analytical centers, actively published materials debunking the Kremlin's disinformation, forming a positive image of Ukraine as a state-victim of aggression. Considerable attention was paid to media campaigns in Europe, in particular in Germany, France, and Italy, where Poland acted as a partner in explaining the essence of the conflict and its consequences for the entire Euro-Atlantic security.

Although the military and political aspects are critical in diplomatic support, cultural and educational diplomacy is no less important, forming a long-term basis for stable interstate relations. Poland applied soft power through systematic support for Ukrainian artists, scientists, and educators, contributing to the preservation of Ukrainian identity and cultural subjectivity in times of war. In 2022–2024, Polish universities (in particular, Jagiellonian, Warsaw, Wrocław, Lublin Catholic) have introduced simplified admission programs for Ukrainian students, tuition discounts, scholarship programs, and scientific mobility initiatives. The NAWA program (Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej) has launched a number of grants for displaced scientists from Ukraine, which has contributed to the preservation of the intellectual potential of the state.

Since 2022, in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict, Polish universities have increased academic support for Ukrainian students and scholars, which has become an important factor not only for preserving the educational process, but also for strengthening international scientific cooperation. During 2022-2024, there has been a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian students in higher education institutions in Poland, as well as an expansion of academic support programs aimed at the integration and adaptation of these students to the Polish educational environment. According to official data from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, in the 2023–2024 academic year, about 45 thousand students from Ukraine studied at Polish universities, which is almost 45% of the total number of foreign students in the country. A significant part of Ukrainian students are educated at both public and private universities, with approximately 11,900 students enrolled in private educational institutions and 7,800 in public ones (Sas, 2025, June 23).

Financial support from Polish universities is one of the key areas of assistance to Ukrainian students. In particular, the University of Warsaw allocated about PLN 700,000 for various forms of support, including scholarships and covering living expenses. The University of Silesia in Katowice provided over PLN 400,000 for material assistance and free accommodation in dormitories for Ukrainian students. The Gdańsk University of Technology, in cooperation with the National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), received over PLN 800,000 for the implementation of projects aimed at supporting Ukrainian universities and scientists (Degtyarova, & Kraśniewska, 2025). Some universities, in particular the University of Warsaw and the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, practice tuition fee exemption or partial reduction for students from Ukraine, and also organize special adaptation courses aimed at facilitating cultural and academic integration (Degtyarova, & Kraśniewska, 2025).

Statistical data confirm the positive dynamics of attracting Ukrainian students to the Polish higher education system. Thus, in 2022, the number of students from Ukraine increased by 33% compared to the previous year and reached 48 thousand people. In 2023, more than 35,600 Ukrainian students were registered, of which 22,200 studied full-time in Polish (Sas, 2025, June 23; European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022). According to the Information Processing Office (OPI), in 2024 the number of Ukrainian students in Poland increased to more than 48,000 people. This is about 47% of the total

number of foreign students in the country. In 2025, according to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, the number of students from Ukraine at Polish universities reached 46,100 people.

Thus, the activities of Polish universities in the direction of supporting Ukrainian students and scientists in 2022-2024 were multifaceted and systematic. It included providing financial support, organizing scientific cooperation, creating conditions for students' adaptation and ensuring unhindered access to education. Such an approach not only contributes to the personal and professional development of Ukrainian students and scientists, but also consolidates long-term partnership relations between scientific and educational institutions of Ukraine and Poland.

Polish cultural institutions, in particular the Instytut Adama Mickiewicza, actively supported Ukrainian cultural initiatives in the EU. Dozens of exhibitions, concerts, presentations of Ukrainian literature were organized. Cultural diplomacy has acquired symbolic significance as an act of solidarity and a demonstration of respect for Ukrainian identity. An example of an effective initiative was the opening of the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Poland (Warszawski Dom Ukraiński), where programs for refugees, exhibitions, language courses, and art residencies are implemented.

3.5 The landscape of challenges

Polish civil society is an important subject of informal diplomacy. Volunteer organizations, charitable foundations, and public activists played a critical role in mobilizing assistance, including in the cultural and educational spheres. According to the Stefan Batory Foundation, in 2022, more than 60% of Poles participated in one form or another of supporting Ukrainians. Despite the strategic nature of the partnership between Ukraine and Poland, this cooperation is not without challenges. Certain contradictions are accumulating in interstate relations that require systematic attention at the level of political communication, diplomatic sensitivity, and public dialogue.

Meanwhile, issues of historical memory, in particular, the interpretation of the events of the Volyn tragedy of 1943, remain a factor that can potentially destabilize bilateral relations. Polish and Ukrainian politicians have repeatedly used these issues in domestic political rhetoric, which complicates the work of diplomatic institutions. It is

important that during the war these conflicts were temporarily frozen, but in the post-war period they may escalate if a common position on reconciliation is not developed.

Moreover, Ukrainian issue became one of the significant elements of campaigns in Polish elections in the current year. Nawrocki' winning in presidential elections already reflected in some changes in Poland' policy in Ukrainian issue and strategies of treating Ukrainian refugees. As Jakub Romaniuk (Romaniuk, 2025, August 14) rightly warns, "many of Nawrocki's statements on Ukraine, especially during the election campaign, have caused widespread controversy and could raise doubts about Poland's continued commitment to supporting Ukraine". In this landscape, namely cultural and educational diplomacy can become an instrument to retain support for Ukrainian refugees and not to lose the achievements of bilateral diplomacy of previous years.

In this vein, one should also note that the agricultural sector is a strategic industry for both Ukraine and Poland. Both countries have significant resources that allow them to be important players in the European and global agricultural markets. However, since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the situation on the European agricultural market has changed dramatically. The result was the so-called "grain crisis" namely a conflict of interests between Ukrainian exporters and Polish farmers, which went beyond the economy and acquired a political character. In 2023, tensions arose between Poland and Ukraine over the transit and import of Ukrainian grain. Ukraine is traditionally one of the world's leading grain exporters. Before the war, Ukrainian ports shipped tens of millions of tons of grain annually. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Ukraine provided about 10% of world wheat exports, over 15% of corn, and was also the largest exporter of sunflower oil (FAO., 2023).

Poland, in turn, has a developed agricultural system, but its model is different: it is focused mainly on small and medium-sized businesses, with a strong farming tradition, a high level of mechanization, and significant state regulation. Polish farmers are actively supported within the framework of the EU's common agricultural policy, and have a well-structured internal market. After the war began, Russia blocked Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea, forcing Kyiv to seek alternative export routes particularly via rail, roads and ports in neighboring countries, including Poland, Romania and Hungary. This was made possible by the creation of the so-called Solidarity Lanes by the European Union.

However, some of this grain was not just transited, but remained in Poland, which led to a drop in domestic prices and angered Polish farmers. They argued that they could not compete with cheaper Ukrainian grain, which, unlike European grain, was not subject to the same sanitary and environmental standards (Stezycki, 2024, February 21).

The protests by Polish farmers became widespread in 2023–2024. The Polish government temporarily banned the import of Ukrainian grain, despite general EU rules. This caused diplomatic tension between Kyiv and Warsaw. Ukraine filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization (Andres, 2023, September 18), and Polish politicians began to use the agrarian issue as an argument in the election campaign. At the same time, for Ukraine, agricultural exports remained vital sector being one of the main sources of foreign exchange earnings and support for rural areas (Pitel, 2023). For Poland, the issue was to protect its domestic market and social stability in rural areas, where farmers have significant electoral influence. The European Commission found itself in a difficult position: it must support Ukraine, but it is also obliged to adhere to the principles of fair competition within the EU. The compromise was temporary quotas, new customs mechanisms, and the creation of “grain corridors” with clearly controlled transit routes. In addition, increasingly more attention was being paid to the logistical issue. Poland’s infrastructure was not ready for such a load, so investments in railways, transshipment hubs, and quality control laboratories are needed. Such infrastructure could serve the long-term interests of both countries (Shevnin, 2023, April 25).

So, the “grain crisis” is not just a conflict of interests between two neighboring agrarian states. It is a litmus test of deeper structural problems: asymmetric agricultural policy, weak logistics, and insufficient coordination at the EU level. At the same time, this situation demonstrates the potential for strategic cooperation between Ukraine and Poland. Under conditions of transparency, joint planning, and modernization of infrastructure, the agricultural sector of both countries can not only avoid the crisis, but also gain new opportunities in the European and global context.

4 CONCLUSION

Thus, we note that Ukraine and Poland have a unique opportunity to transform crisis interaction into a sustainable strategic partnership within the framework of the

European and Euro-Atlantic security architecture. At the political level, the formalization of the Polish-Ukrainian alliance within the framework of new bilateral agreements that will take into account security guarantees, investment cooperation and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is relevant. Such initiatives are already being developed within the framework of the Lublin Triangle, as well as in the format of interaction with the United Kingdom. Polish companies and municipalities are preparing to participate in infrastructure reconstruction projects in Ukraine. Despite emerging new political challenges, Warsaw still can be expected to become one of the key centers for coordinating European reconstruction assistance. Poland has already announced its intention to form the Ukraine Reconstruction Fund with the participation of private business and banking structures. After the war, cooperation in the fields of culture, education and science should move to a new level namely from temporary support to permanent integration. This means the creation of joint university clusters, the integration of research centers, the exchange of professors, textbooks, educational standards. Poland can become the main “entrance” of Ukraine to the European educational space.

Overall, the study shows that Poland's diplomatic strategy to support Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict appeared as a systemic, proactive and multidimensional approach. Poland was able to combine traditional foreign policy instruments (military assistance, political lobbying, participation in international coalitions) with innovative mechanisms of cultural, educational and humanitarian diplomacy. This allowed it to consolidate the role of one of Ukraine's most influential allies in the European and Euro-Atlantic spaces. Poland has actually become a hub for coordinating international support for Ukraine both in the context of ensuring security and in the field of humanitarian response. In particular, it provided Ukraine with a significant amount of weapons, facilitated the training of Ukrainian military personnel according to NATO standards, provided support for millions of Ukrainian refugees and mobilized national resources in all areas from education to culture. Poland's role in the international positioning of Ukraine both within the EU and within NATO is particularly significant. Warsaw consistently promoted the idea of granting Ukraine full membership in Western institutions, while simultaneously forming regional coalitions (Lublin Triangle, Three Seas Initiative) in support of Ukrainian sovereignty.

However, despite all the strategicity and solidarity, the Polish-Ukrainian

partnership is not without challenges. The “grain crisis”, the threat of political polarization in Poland, electoral populism and historical contradictions (in particular, regarding Volyn) create potential risks for further cooperation. In this context, there is an urgent need to institutionalize bilateral dialogue and develop a joint long-term cooperation strategy that would provide mechanisms for resolving conflict issues. Despite proclaimed shifts in political course, the broad space for dialogue still exists.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the synthesis of hard and soft dimensions of diplomacy, as well as in highlighting the role of Poland as a promoter of not only military, but also humanitarian, educational, and information security of Ukraine. A promising direction is the further strengthening of educational integration, the creation of joint research centers, the expansion of cultural diplomacy as the basis of interpersonal contacts and the formation of a positive image of both states. As a result, it can be stated that Polish-Ukrainian relations have potential to be transformed from a partnership of solidarity into a model of a strategic alliance. The alliance has every chance of becoming the foundation of a new security architecture of Central and Eastern Europe, in which Poland and Ukraine will play leading roles.

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All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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