

## NATIONAL MEMORY AS AN INDICATOR OF THE STABILITY OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UKRAINE AND POLAND

## НАЦІОНАЛЬНА ПАМ'ЯТЬ ЯК ІНДИКАТОР СТІЙКОСТІ СТРАТЕГІЧНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА УКРАЇНИ ТА ПОЛЬЩІ

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**Abstract.** *This article is aimed at a comprehensive analysis of the Ukrainian-Polish strategic partnership in the context of national memory and its impact on bilateral relations in the current geopolitical reality. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, became a key challenge for European security, highlighting the need for new forms of cooperation. Ukraine found itself on the front line of defending democracy, while Poland, as a major logistical and military hub, became a key partner in ensuring regional stability. At the same time, Ukrainian-Polish relations remain complex due to shared historical memory. The article analyzes in detail the role of national memory in shaping the contemporary politics of both countries, paying particular attention to interpretations of the Volhynia tragedy of 1943–1944 and its political instrumentalization. Polish and Ukrainian historical narratives differ significantly. These differences create the risk of tension even in the face of a common threat and a high level of cooperation. The article also highlights contemporary institutional and regional formats of cooperation, including the Security Cooperation Agreement (2024), the Three Seas Initiative, and the formation of a trilateral alliance with the United Kingdom in the context of the broader European security architecture. The key conclusion of the article is that the long-term sustainability of the Ukrainian-Polish alliance depends not on attempts to create a single historical narrative, but on the ability of the political elites and citizens of both countries to develop mechanisms for managing historical conflicts.*

**Keywords:** *National memory, Ukrainian-Polish relations, strategic partnership, memory policy, Volhynia tragedy, geopolitics, security.*

**Анотація.** *Стаття присвячена комплексному аналізу українсько-польського стратегічного партнерства у контексті національної пам'яті та її впливу на двосторонні відносини у сучасній геополітичній реальності. Повномасштабне вторгнення РФ в Україну 24 лютого 2022 року стало ключовим викликом для безпеки Європи, актуалізуючи потребу в*

нових формах співпраці. Україна опинилася на передовій захисту демократії, а Польща – як головний логістичний та військовий хаб – стала ключовим партнером у забезпеченні регіональної стабільності. Водночас українсько-польські відносини залишаються складними через спільну історичну пам'ять. Стаття детально розглядає роль національної пам'яті у формуванні сучасної політики обох країн, звертаючи особливу увагу на інтерпретації Волинської трагедії 1943–1944 років та її політичну інструменталізацію. Польський та український історичні наративи значно різняться, що створює ризик напруженості навіть перед обличчям спільної загрози та за високого рівня співпраці. Стаття також висвітлює сучасні інституційні та регіональні формати співпраці, включно з Угодою про співробітництво у сфері безпеки (2024), Ініціативою трьох морів та формуванням тристороннього альянсу з Великою Британією в контексті ширшої архітектури європейської безпеки. Ключовим висновком статті є твердження, що довгострокова стійкість українсько-польського альянсу залежить не від спроб створення єдиного історичного наративу, а від здатності політичних еліт і громадян обох країн виробити механізми управління історичними конфліктами.

**Ключові слова.** Національна пам'ять, українсько-польські відносини, стратегічне партнерство, політика пам'яті, Волинська трагедія, геополітика, безпека.

**Introduction.** The full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, was a turning point not only for Ukraine but also for the global system of collective security. Russia's actions fully exposed the vulnerability of international institutions, demonstrated the ineffectiveness of old security paradigm, and forced European states to seek new formats for cooperation. Ukraine, which has become an outpost for the defense of European values, democracy, and sovereignty, found itself in a situation where its own security is directly linked to the security of the entire European continent.

One of the most prominent manifestations of these changes was the deepening of the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Poland. Warsaw has become a key military and logistical hub for Ukraine, its main advocate on the international stage, and has provided shelter to the largest number of Ukrainian refugees. This level of solidarity, covering the military, humanitarian, economic, and political spheres, has allowed us to speak of a historic peak in bilateral relations. At the same time, against the backdrop of this rapprochement, a paradoxical situation has arisen – the revival of memory politics and the growing intensity of discussions around the sensitive chapters of the shared past. Issues that have been a source of tension for decades, including the interpretation of the Volhynia tragedy of 1943–1944, have not only remained relevant but have also begun to be actively instrumentalized in political discourse, especially by the Polish side.

This contradiction between a high level of cooperation and constant mentions of historical conflicts forms a key research problem, involving the analysis of the stability of the Ukrainian-Polish partnership, which is undergoing a kind of «stress test» under the influence of two powerful factors – on the one hand, geopolitical necessity, caused by the common threat from Russia, and on the other, conflicting historical memory, which is a source of constant tension. In this context, national memory is not just a cultural and historical phenomenon, but also an important indicator that helps to assess the real state of bilateral relations and potential risks to them. The research objective of this article is to go beyond the traditional description of historical conflicts and try to understand their significance in the context of the new geopolitical reality.

**Literature review.** The issue of national memory holds a significant place in international relations research, particularly within the context of Eastern European studies. It has become especially relevant for post-Soviet countries, which, following the collapse of the communist bloc, faced the task of rebuilding their national identities and overcoming the legacy of totalitarian regimes. While scholars of Ukrainian-Polish relations have made considerable contributions in this area, their work often reflects a one-sided approach to historical events. However, there are almost no joint studies that offer a comprehensive and unbiased analysis.

Among Ukrainian researchers who have made a significant contribution to the study of historical memory in Ukrainian-Polish relations, it is worth noting L. Zashkilnyak, M. Lytvyn, V. Viatrovych, L. Strilchuk, O. Kalishchuk (2013), L. Khakhula, and I. Ilyushyn. Their works cover a

wide range of issues related to the historical development of bilateral relations and the interpretation of tragic events. L. Zashkilnyak and M. Lytvyn, in particular, focus on the historical preconditions for conflicts and emphasize the need for a compromise in understanding the Volhynian Tragedy and other traumatic events of the shared past. In his book «Ukrainians and Poles: 1000 Years of (Mis)understanding» (2019), Petro Kraliuk aims to explain why, despite the closeness of the two peoples, their relations remain complex. By analyzing key episodes of their shared past, author highlights events that had a decisive influence on the formation of both modern nations. These works create a factual basis for understanding the depth of historical disagreements. Meanwhile, M. Doroshko and V. Kopyika (2018), as well as N. Nechaieva-Yuriiichuk, propose examining Ukrainian-Polish cooperation and its prospects within the context of national memory.

The Polish academic tradition generally demonstrates a somewhat different approach to interpreting the problem of memory. Researchers such as Grzegorz Motyka, K. Jędraszyk (2018), Ryszard Torzecki, and Tadeusz A. Olszański offer a more critical and moderate reflection on the difficult pages of the common past, although their works can also hardly be called impartial. However, many Polish authors represent more radical views. Among them are Ewa and Władysław Siemaszko, who are often cited by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, as well as Władysław Filar, Grzegorz Mazur, and Józef Turowski. They represent the so-called «Kresy» (borderland) societies and treat the Volhynian Tragedy exclusively as genocide, demanding that the actions of the OUN and UPA be recognized as a crime. Thus, Ukrainian and Polish academic circles differ not only in their interpretation of historical events but also in their terminology and their definition of the conflict's nature and key actors. Such discrepancies create significant obstacles to forming a common historical vision and building a strong partnership for the future.

In the context of the importance of Ukrainian-Polish cooperation, it is also essential to mention Zbigniew Brzezinski and his work «The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives». He viewed Ukraine as a geopolitical pivot, whose existence as an independent and strong state fundamentally changes the entire Eurasian geopolitical landscape. He argued that without control over Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. In this context, Poland acts as Ukraine's most important Western partner, supporting its sovereignty and Euro-Atlantic integration.

**The purpose** of this article is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Ukrainian-Polish strategic partnership through the prism of national memory. This analysis aims to determine the role of national memory in bilateral relations within the new geopolitical reality that has emerged since 2022.

**Main results of research.** The historical foundation of Ukrainian-Polish relations is rooted in the formation of two national historical narratives that are, at many historical points, contradictory (Poplavskiy, 2024). Before analyzing them, it is worth mentioning the concept of so-called «historic» and «non-historic» nations, proposed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. According to this concept, «historic» nations are those with a long experience of their own statehood and established political elites. Their memory is often focused on preserving heritage and the greatness of the past. In contrast, «non-historic» nations are those that were historically deprived of statehood, for whom the struggle to achieve it became the central element of their national idea.

Poland is a clear example of a «historic nation,» as it is considered the heir to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – a powerful state that played a key role in European politics of its time. The Polish historical narrative is formed around this idea. Its central element, especially in the context of relations with Ukraine, is the myth of the «Kresy Wschodnie» (Eastern Borderlands) (Bilobrovets, 2017). This is not just a geographical term but a deeply rooted cultural idea of lost eastern lands, which were perceived as the cradle of Polish culture. This narrative, romanticized in literature and art, explains the emotions with which the loss of these territories and the tragic events that occurred there are perceived in the Polish public consciousness. In this context, the Ukrainian struggle for their own statehood is often interpreted as a «betrayal» or «rebellion» against legitimate authority and cultural dominance.

The Ukrainian historical narrative, on the other hand, is the story of a «non-historic nation»—a people deprived of their own state for centuries and forced to fight for their existence and right to self-determination within several empires, including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Therefore, the central axis of Ukrainian memory is the

national liberation struggle. In this narrative, the Polish presence on Ukrainian lands is viewed primarily as an occupation and colonization, accompanied by social, religious, and national oppression. Consequently, armed uprisings against Polish rule are perceived as a just fight for freedom.

This asymmetry in the starting points of national histories leads to completely different interpretations of key events in the shared past. The uprising led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky (1648-1657) is viewed in Polish memory as a rebellion that marked the beginning of the decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and was accompanied by mass killings of the nobility, clergy, and Jews. In contrast, for Ukrainian society, it represents the National Liberation War – the apex of Cossack statehood and the struggle against noble oppression – with Khmelnytsky himself regarded in national history as the founding father of the nation (*Poplavskyi, 2024*).

This conflict of interpretations continued into the 20th century. The Polish-Ukrainian War (1918–1919) is seen by Poles as the heroic «defense of Lviv» and a struggle for the integrity of the reborn state, while for Ukrainians it represents a war for the independence of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, suppressed by Polish aggression. The policy of the Second Polish Republic toward the Ukrainian minority (1921-1939) is presented in the Polish narrative through the lens of state-building and the fight against OUN terrorism. In Ukrainian memory, however, this period is remembered as one of systemic discrimination: violent Polonization, «pacification», colonization, and repression – all of which only radicalized the Ukrainian national movement.

Accumulated historical grievances exploded during the Second World War in the Volhynian Tragedy (1943–1944) – the central and most painful node in the conflict of memory. The Polish position, fixed at the legislative level, unequivocally qualifies these events as genocide (*ludobójstwo*) – a planned action by the OUN and UPA for the mass destruction of the Polish civilian population. The Ukrainian side, using the term «Volhynian Tragedy», views these events within the framework of a wider struggle, emphasizing the conflict's preconditions, the influence of external forces, and the mutuality of violence. Official Kyiv rejects the term «genocide» and proposes a joint study of the events and the formation of a compromise position.

The final act of the tragedy was Operation «Vistula» (1947). In the official historiography of communist Poland, it was presented as a necessary measure to combat the UPA underground. However, in Ukrainian national memory and in modern Polish historiography, Operation «Vistula» is considered ethnic cleansing – a crime of the communist regime that consisted of the forced deportation of about 150,000 Ukrainians from their ethnic lands with the aim of assimilation and the final «solution» to the Ukrainian issue in the country.

Despite the difficult legacy of the past, following 1991, Ukraine and Poland initiated a process of establishing good-neighborly relations that gradually developed into a strategic partnership. Although this process was not without challenges, its dominant trajectory was defined by pragmatism and driven by common interests in security, economic cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration.

A paradigmatic shift in bilateral relations occurred after February 24, 2022, when the declarative partnership was filled with real substance. Russian aggression transformed cooperation from a matter of rational choice into a vital necessity – both for Ukraine's survival and for Poland's security (*Pitney, 2023*). This was reflected in multidimensional support encompassing economic, humanitarian, and military spheres.

However, this unprecedented level of support is not explained solely by altruism or good neighborliness. It is grounded in a profound awareness among Polish political elites and society that their own country's security is directly linked to the existence of an independent and resilient Ukraine. This stance is deeply rooted in Poland's historical memory – the centuries-long struggle against Russian imperialism, the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the experience of Soviet occupation. For Poland, a sovereign and pro-Western Ukraine is not merely a «neighbor,» but a crucial buffer that physically distances the country from the threat posed by the Russian federation. Thus, aiding Ukraine is a direct investment in its own national security.

This is precisely where the multifaceted role of historical memory reveals itself. On one hand, it is a source of tension in bilateral relations due to the tragic pages of the shared past. Yet, on the other hand, it also acts as the most powerful driver of the strategic partnership, thanks to common

anti-imperial and anti-russian sentiments. Understanding this duality is key to analyzing the stability of the modern alliance.

Unfortunately, the full-scale war did not freeze historical disputes – rather, it turned national memory into a kind of bargaining chip in a larger political game. Instead of setting aside differences in the face of a common threat, some political actors have begun using the past as a tool of pressure and leverage for advancing contemporary political goals. In their rhetoric, historical justice became a precondition for continued strategic support (*Konończuk, 2023*).

The most vivid example of such instrumentalization is the constant appeal to the topic of the Volhynian Tragedy. On July 11, 2023, marking the 80th anniversary of the events, the Polish Sejm unanimously adopted a resolution once again labeling them as genocide and emphasizing that genuine reconciliation must include an acknowledgment of guilt (*Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2023*). Moreover, several prominent Polish politicians have openly linked this issue to Ukraine's future in the European Union. For instance, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz declared that Ukraine «will have no chance of joining the European Union» unless it recognizes the Volhynia events as genocide (*Karpat.in.ua., 2025*). Similar views were voiced by Polish President Karol Nawrocki, who stated that he could not envision Ukraine in the EU or NATO until «key civilizational issues» – referring to the Volhynia tragedy – are resolved.

In Polish society, the Volhynian Tragedy holds a central place as a symbol of national suffering, and its interpretation is enshrined not only in official documents but also in culture, media, and political discourse. One of the most striking examples is the feature film «Hatred» (directed by Wojciech Smarzowski, 2016), which became a major cultural event in Poland (*Strilchuk, 2022*). The film depicts brutal scenes of mass killings of Poles by Ukrainians, including an episode where Ukrainian peasants burn a boy alive simply for being Polish. This film, hailed by Polish critics as one of the best historical pictures, reinforces the emotional division into victims and aggressors and solidifies this specific interpretation of events in the public consciousness.

In addition to «Hatred» other documentary projects have appeared in the Polish information space, such as the film «Deceptive Genocide» («Лькаве Людобójstwo»), which is based on Ukrainian and Polish sources, archival documents, and eyewitness testimonies. Its authors aim to provide a more rational response to the harsh position of Polish politicians and the Sejm, who accuse Ukrainians of exterminating Polish settlers in Volhynia (*Strilchuk, 2022*).

The official narrative is also reinforced by the position of Polish state institutions, particularly the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, IPN), which cites a figure of 120,000 Polish victims and likewise insists on classifying the events as «genocide.»

For many Ukrainians, however, the Volhynia tragedy remains a complex and deeply sensitive topic, closely linked to the struggle for independence. In Ukraine, soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), who are symbols of resistance against totalitarian regimes, are currently honored at the official level.

The reaction of Ukrainian society to Poland's politics of national memory is also quite predictable. According to a 2024 survey conducted by the Info Sapiens sociological center for the Mieroszewski Centre, 33% of Ukrainians unconditionally agreed to permit exhumation and reburial of the remains of Poles killed in Volhynia and Galicia between 1943–45. Another 40% were willing to agree to this step on the condition that the list of the buried and the inscription «They fell for a free Ukraine» be restored on the graves of UPA members located on Monastyr Mount in Poland's Podkarpackie Voivodeship (*Juliusz Mieroszewski Centre for Dialogue, 2024*).

The issue of exhuming Polish victims on Ukrainian territory has for years been among the main triggers in bilateral relations (*TVP World, 2024*). Ukraine's recent lifting of the moratorium on search operations can be seen as a step towards de-escalating tensions. However, while it solves a humanitarian problem, it does not cancel out the fundamental disagreements.

A troubling barometer of current bilateral relations is public opinion in Poland and Ukraine. According to data from the Mieroszewski Centre (conducted by Info Sapiens), in November 2024, only 41% of Ukrainians maintained a positive view of Poles (down from 83% in 2022) (*Juliusz Mieroszewski Centre for Dialogue, 2024*). One of the main reasons for this cooling of relations was economic friction, primarily the so-called «grain conflict», where Polish farmers blocked the transit of Ukrainian grain, and accusations and emotional statements intensified in the media of both

countries. In Ukraine, this was perceived as undermining support during the war, while in Poland, it was seen as a defense of their own economic interests and a reaction to competition from Ukrainian producers. However, polls show that most Ukrainians are not inclined to blame Poland solely for these problems, the grain crisis led to a shift from euphoria to a more pragmatic, restrained attitude. Nevertheless, sociological data reveal a disturbing trend in the attitude of Polish society towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. The initial burst of solidarity, when 94% of Poles supported accepting refugees in March 2022, has gradually decreased to 53% by September 2024 (*Radio Svoboda, 2024*).

This shift is partly driven by narratives circulating in the media landscape and on social networks. Both the issues of national memory and the economic dimensions related to Ukrainian refugees in Poland have repeatedly become subjects of intense and often negative online debates.

Despite deep disagreements over historical memory, modern Ukrainian-Polish relations are built on a solid foundation of shared security interests. As mentioned earlier, from the first days of the full-scale invasion, Poland became the main logistical and military hub for Ukraine, through which the bulk of international aid flows. This role is critically important not only for Ukraine's defense capabilities but also for the entire European security architecture, as the stability of NATO's eastern flank directly depends on Ukraine's ability to deter Russian aggression (*Kuzio, 2023*). Warsaw was one of the first to provide heavy weaponry, initiate the creation of the «tank coalition,» and deliver combat aircraft.

The strategic partnership was formally institutionalized with the signing of the **Security Cooperation Agreement** in July 2024. This ten-year treaty provides not only for further military aid packages but also for deep integration in the defense sector. Key areas include cooperation in the defense industry, joint training and exercises, and achieving full operational interoperability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with NATO forces, which is the foundation for Ukraine's future membership in the Alliance. Special attention is given to sharing experience in new domains like drone warfare, where Poland is actively adopting Ukraine's unique combat experience to strengthen its own defense capabilities and the security of the entire eastern flank of NATO (*Official website of the President of Ukraine, 2024*).

The Ukrainian-Polish alliance also serves as the core of broader security formats rooted in deep historical and geopolitical traditions. Its long-term significance extends far beyond current military cooperation and is closely linked to the revival of the **Intermarium concept** - the idea of a strategic union of states situated between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas (*Polegkyi, 2021*). Originally formulated by Józef Piłsudski, this concept placed the Polish-Ukrainian axis at the center of a geopolitical bloc capable of resisting imperial ambitions from both East and West.

In today's world, this idea has found practical expression in the **Three Seas Initiative (3SI)**, which serves as its economic and infrastructural successor. The 3SI focuses on strengthening regional connections along a north-south axis in energy, transport, and digital technology, thereby reducing the historical dependence on the east-west axis. Granting Ukraine the status of a participated partner in the initiative underscores its integral role in this regional project.

A concrete embodiment of this strategy is the large-scale **Via Carpathia** project – a trans-European highway connecting Klaipėda in Lithuania with Thessaloniki in Greece, passing through Poland and other regional countries (*Poręba, 2018*). This corridor carries dual significance, as it not only stimulates economic development in the EU's eastern regions but also significantly enhances military mobility.

In turn, the **British–Polish–Ukrainian Initiative**, launched in 2022, creates a new security axis «London–Warsaw–Kyiv», complementing regional integration with the participation of a powerful non-regional actor. The long-term goals of this format include not only military assistance but also strengthening national resilience, deepening defense-industrial cooperation, and developing infrastructure.

Another important component of the regional security architecture is the **Lublin Triangle** - a trilateral platform of cooperation between Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania designed to foster political dialogue, coordinate defense efforts, and counter hybrid threats. Today, this initiative serves as a key mechanism for coordinating responses to regional security challenges posed by Russia and for advancing Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

One of the most important practical manifestations of sub-regional solidarity in the face of Russian aggression is the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade (LITPOLUKRBRIG), which was established as part of trilateral defense cooperation back in 2014. Initially created for joint exercises and peacekeeping missions under NATO, UN, or EU auspices, the brigade has since adapted to wartime realities, focusing more on training Ukrainian units according to NATO standards. Thus, it also plays an important role in shaping the security architecture in Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, security cooperation between Ukraine and Poland, as well as their joint participation in subregional security initiatives, is not merely a response to external threats but a part of a broader process of forming a new geopolitical center of gravity in Europe. Deepening this partnership across economic, security, and political dimensions has the potential to permanently reshape the balance of power on the continent, turning the Polish-Ukrainian tandem into one of the key pillars of the future European security architecture.

However, memory politics serves as a litmus test for the resilience of this alliance. The common threat undoubtedly remains the main driver of cooperation between the two countries, yet whenever new points of tension – economic or social – emerge, historical traumas tend to become tools of political mobilization and pressure. The durability of the strategic partnership, therefore, is measured not only by the scale of military assistance but also by the ability of both nations' political elites to resist the temptation to instrumentalize the past for short-term political gain, as such dynamics create serious risks for bilateral relations.

First and foremost, this leads to the erosion of trust – both at the political and societal levels. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the constant return to the so-called «wars of memory» hampers the implementation of long-term strategic projects. The energy and political capital that could be directed toward deepening integration within sub-regional projects or joint defense initiatives are instead diverted to resolving historical conflicts, thereby shifting the focus from building a shared future to endlessly solving the problems of the past.

The question of a Ukrainian-Polish compromise on national memory becomes particularly acute in the context of the threat of spreading Russian influence in Europe. The Russian Federation is increasingly resorting to asymmetric methods of warfare, utilizing the information and ideological front for this purpose. The Kremlin's main tool is providing ideological, and sometimes material, support to political actors, primarily from the far-right sector, who often manipulate sensitive political, social, or historical issues to consolidate their electorate and achieve their own domestic political goals.

Examples of such a policy can be seen in Hungary and Slovakia, where the governments of Orbán and Fico demonstrate openly anti-Ukrainian positions and undermine the collective security of the West from within by blocking critical decisions. With the victory of the populist ANO party in the Czech parliamentary elections on October 4, 2025, it is highly likely that the Czech Republic may join this trend, creating the risk of a pro-Russian bloc emerging in the very heart of Europe.

At the same time, Poland is also witnessing permanent trends of strengthening influence and popularity of far-right forces, particularly the «Confederation of the Polish Crown» party, which actively instrumentalizes historical issues, especially the Volhynian Tragedy, to form an anti-Ukrainian narrative. Such activities have been quite successful and have already significantly influenced public sentiment (*UACrisis*, 2025). Furthermore, this creates pressure not only on society but also on the ruling circles, forcing them to adopt tougher positions. Given this, it is crucial to prevent historical disputes from escalating into open confrontation. That is why the issue of national memory requires a balanced approach from both states and an understanding of the danger of excessively politicizing such matters. One of the most effective methods to overcome the problem is to mobilize scholars and stimulate joint research that could rationally and critically integrate this topic into the political discourse. This includes, in particular, resuming the work of the Historians' Forum, which was interrupted in 2017 amid rising political tensions.

Therefore, the future of Ukrainian-Polish relations, and with them the stability of NATO's eastern flank, depends on whether both nations can develop a common strategic culture of memory. This certainly does not mean creating a single, artificial narrative that would deny the tragedies of the past. The potential of the Polish-Ukrainian tandem to change the geopolitical landscape of



Europe is enormous. However, it can only be realized if the memory of the shared struggle against tyranny always outweighs the memory of mutual grievances.

**Conclusion.** Ukrainian-Polish relations are developing in two dimensions. On the one hand, they represent a powerful strategic alliance founded on pragmatic security interests and a shared awareness of a common threat. On the other, this alliance is constantly influenced by deeply rooted and antagonistic historical narratives that stem from fundamentally different experiences of state-building. This article argues that national memory is not merely a historical backdrop but a dynamic factor capable of both strengthening and significantly weakening bilateral relations.

The analysis of developments after February 24, 2022, shows that while the full-scale war has fostered rapprochement, it has not resolved historical disputes and, moreover, has altered their significance within the political discourse. Issues of the past, especially when combined with economic and social difficulties, remain an effective tool for political manipulation and are capable of eroding public trust, creating a gap between the strategic course of the states and relations at the citizen level.

Thus, the main conclusion is that the long-term resilience of the Ukrainian-Polish partnership depends not on attempts to eliminate or ignore historical conflicts, but on the establishment of mechanisms to manage them. The prospects for further development of bilateral relations and the realization of their geopolitical potential directly depend on the ability of both governments to consciously separate the pragmatism of the present from the traumas of the past, prioritizing shared interests over historical grievances.

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