# Effectiveness of International Cooperation of the Lublin Triangle Countries in Addressing Terrorist Threats

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**Abstract**

The problem of terrorism is gaining scale and acquiring new forms, requiring the international community to develop new approaches to combating threats. The aim of the work is to assess the Lublin Triangle countries' counter-terrorism activities and identify the potential problems associated with such activities. The research used the doctrinal approach, content analysis, and descriptive and comparative methods. The conducted research described such a format of international cooperation as the Lublin Triangle. Improving the defence capabilities of the countries within the alliance and countering terrorist threats from the Russian Federation is of particular importance because of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Both prospects and problems in the activities of the association were identified. The problematic aspects are related to the aggravation of relations between Ukraine and Poland. Coordinated work of countries in the field of combating disinformation was noted. Several recommendations provided by representatives of non-governmental organisations of the Lublin Triangle countries in this area are summarised. Potential directions for further development of relations between the studied countries were outlined. It was noted that cooperation will only be effective when resolving contradictions and establishing mutual respect and trust.

**Keywords:** international cooperation, Lublin Triangle, terrorist threats, cyber terrorism, war in Ukraine, disinformation.

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**Introduction**

Countering terrorism is a priority area of ensuring the national security of states. The problem of terrorism is becoming increasingly relevant because of globalisation, the intensification of migration processes, and the escalation of conflicts of various origins (Ozer, 2020; Galantino, 2022; Helbling & Meierrieks, 2022). New terrorist threats, in particular, environmental terrorism (Spadaro, 2020), cyberterrorism (Backhaus et al., 2020), and biological terrorism (Tin et al., 2021), are emerging in addition to "traditional" ones. The current trends include the use of new technologies by terrorist organisations and the expansion of activity in the digital space, in particular, the spread of propaganda (Mykytenko & Horinov, 2023).

Along with the general threat of the intensification of international terrorism for the Lublin Triangle countries, which include Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, aggression from the Russian Federation (RF) appears especially dangerous (Kovtunyk et al., 2023). With the beginning of this aggression against Ukraine, the level of the terrorist threat in the world increased dramatically (Mykytenko & Horinov, 2023). The Russian Federation was recognised as a terrorist state (Jakobson et al., 2023), and the hybrid war that it has started in Ukraine is an existential threat both to Ukraine and to neighbouring states. Cooperation between countries within a regional format, such as the Lublin Triangle, can effectively counter terrorist threats. This is explained by the fact that other interests and priorities may prevail for large associations such as the EU and NATO. At the same time, neighbouring countries share common priorities and, therefore, can work to promote common interests.

The activities of the Lublin Triangle countries are aimed, first of all, at cooperation to increase the defence capabilities to counter terrorist threats from the Russian Federation. This involves the promotion of Ukraine's European integration interests, as well as support for its accession to NATO. An important area of activity is the fight against cyber-terrorism and disinformation. Cyberattacks can cause long-term disruptions to systems, which can lead not only to economic costs but also to human casualties. Cyberterrorism is an attack in cyberspace that causes real-world consequences and aims to achieve social or ideological goals (Plotnek & Slay, 2021). The Lublin Triangle countries recognise the systematic manipulation of information by the Russian Federation as one of the means of attacking Ukraine (Tolmach et al., 2024).

**Literature review**

Many researchers consider the problem of terrorism as an existential threat to many states. Because of the increasing threat from Russia, the anti-

terrorist activity of the countries close to its borders arouses the greatest interest of researchers.

Schmidt (2022) reveals some historical prerequisites for establishing the Lublin Triangle. The researcher notes that both Poland and Lithuania were interested in building relations with Ukraine and its integration into the European space. Turianytsia (2023) describes the Lublin Triangle's activities as a tripartite military-political cooperation model. The researcher emphasises the need to rebuild the security architecture in the east of the EU and NATO because of Russian aggression. Studinski (2022) notes the importance of establishing the Lublin Triangle for Ukraine, which is manifested in wider opportunities for obtaining financial and technical support. For Europe, the activities of the Lublin Triangle can contribute to solving the problems of logistics and food security, which have intensified since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Horbatenko (2023) and Fryc (2020) noted the importance of the creation of LITPOLUKRBRIG, which preceded the creation of the Lublin Triangle. This is a real help to Ukraine and a measure on the way to increasing the military competence of all participating countries.

Many researchers have noted the importance of Polish support to Ukraine since the beginning of the military invasion. Jureńczyk (2023) notes that Poland has supported the Action Plan regarding Ukraine's membership in NATO, not for the first time within the framework of the Lublin Triangle initiative. The country supports Ukraine's efforts to join the EU, has accepted a large number of refugees, and has become a central hub for the supply of weapons. Śliwa (2022) identifies Poland as a leading country in countering the recovery of Russian military aggression against Ukraine. The researcher also emphasised that countering the Russian threat is vital for Poland and noted that establishing the Lublin Triangle is a good example of cooperation and solidarity between the participating countries. Olech (2021) conducts his research before the full-scale invasion. The researcher predicts that Poland's security guarantees will depend on threats of a terrorist nature, which are developing in the east of Ukraine because of Russian aggression and propaganda. Referring to establishing the Lublin Triangle, the researcher notes that the current relations between Ukraine and Poland are positive. At the same time, the negative trends in the relations between the two countries are also noted.

Some studies focus on the cooperation of the Lublin Triangle countries in the field of countering disinformation. Pavlenko (2023) notes that the problem of the spread of Russian disinformation is of particular concern not only to the Ukrainian government but also to Poland and Lithuania. The researcher notes the countries' joint work in the fight against Russian propaganda, identifying the

sources of threats, examining the main narratives and messages, and evaluating anti-disinformation measures. Grybko (2021) reveals the significance of establishing the Lublin Triangle in the context of countering hybrid threats. The researcher places special emphasis on the problem of combating such threats in cyberspace.

The conducted literature review gives grounds to note that researchers emphasise the appropriateness of establishing the Lublin Triangle, in particular, to counter the Russian threat. At the same time, studying the current state of cooperation between countries should reveal both real and potential advantages of cooperation, as well as possible problems. Further effectiveness of cooperation will depend on solving existing problems.

**The aim and objectives of the study**

The research aims to assess the counter-terrorism activities of the Lublin Triangle countries and to identify the potential and problems in such activities.

The objectives of the study:

— Identify the prospects and problems of the Lublin Triangle;

— Describe the anti-disinformation activities of the Lublin Triangle countries;

— Generalise the potential directions of further cooperation in the field of countering terrorist threats.

**Methodology**

**Research design**

The research design involves three stages. The first stage provides for revealing the prerequisites for establishing the Lublin Triangle and outlining the prospects of activity and existing problems. At this stage, the effectiveness and advantages of the Lublin Triangle as a flexible regional format of cooperation in countering terrorist threats are explained. The second stage reveals the key areas of activity of the Lublin Triangle countries in the field of countering disinformation. Recommendations for countries in this area were summarised in the second stage, and the main principles of effective countermeasures were identified. The third stage involves an assessment of the prospects of the Lublin Triangle countries. It reveals the areas of such activities that become priorities when solving the current interaction problems.

**Sample**

The sample of countries for the study consists of the Lublin Triangle countries, which face one of the biggest terrorist threats in the modern world — Russia's armed aggression. Ukraine is a direct participant in hostilities, while

Lithuania and Poland are neighbouring countries, so the threat is also relevant to them.

The work used rankings and evaluations of the Lublin Triangle countries according to two key indicators. These are indicators of Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism: Percentile Rank and Overall Terrorism Index Score (GTI). The percentile of the first indicator determines the place of countries relative to other states, where 0 corresponds to the lowest rating. This means high political instability and the risk of terrorism. A value of 100 indicates complete political stability and the absence of threats of terrorism and politically motivated violence (The World Bank, 2022).

The Overall Terrorism Index Score is a composite indicator that includes four separate indicators: incidents, deaths, injuries, and hostages. The impact of terrorism is determined by calculating a 5-year weighted average (Vision of Humanity, 2023).

**Methods**

The research employed the doctrinal approach to study legal norms. Using this method, the content of the regulatory documents was investigated. Content analysis was useful during the study of the content of academic sources and analytical reports, particularly The Lublin Triangle joint report on countering disinformation Resilience to Disinformation. The descriptive method was used to provide a description of the activity of the Lublin Triangle and to describe existing problems. The comparison method was used when comparing the situation with terrorism in the Lublin Triangle countries.

**Results**

**The establishment, prospects, and problems of the Lublin Triangle**

The Lublin Triangle was established on July 28, 2020, as a tripartite regional alliance between Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2020). Cooperation within the Lublin Triangle is based on the dialogue between the countries' political leaders in the form of international meetings. Collaboration between the three countries is aimed at their integration in economic aspects, security issues, culture, tourism and health care.

Ensuring security is one of the priority areas of cooperation, especially because of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, which began in 2014 and later turned into a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The European Parliament recognised the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism, which uses means of terrorism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2022).

The member states of the Lublin Triangle can ensure the advancement of Ukraine's European integration interests within the European Union (EU). Furthermore, the exchange of experience within the Lublin Triangle is valuable for Ukraine. Poland and Lithuania are NATO members, and their initiatives meet the military standards of this alliance.

At the same time, the Ukrainian experience can be useful for friendly countries because it was obtained directly during the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) in the east of Ukraine and during a full-scale war. The activities of the Lublin Triangle can also have an impact on the EU and NATO and their mutual relations. As the President of Poland noted, today, the security architecture in Europe is collapsing right before our eyes, and current events are testing the strength of the relationship between the EU and NATO (President of Ukraine, 2022). In turn, the Lublin Triangle can contribute to strengthening the economic and military security structure in Europe in the face of Russian aggression. It is designed to resist the pressure exerted on the EU and NATO. Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland stand as an advanced outpost on the way to promote Russian expansion into Europe and efforts to slow down the development of European countries. The value of the activities and cooperation of these countries is explained not only by their territorial location but also by their great economic potential and participation in trade communications.

An important advantage of the Lublin Triangle is its flexibility and dynamism. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine noted at the meeting of the Lublin Triangle, it is increasingly difficult for such large international organisations as NATO, the EU, the UN, etc., to maintain international peace and security. Therefore, regional cooperation formats like the Lublin Triangle come to the fore (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021). The countries of Central and Eastern Europe share the problems of Ukraine, which are not a priority for the Western members of the alliance. Poland and Lithuania belong to the countries for which the armed aggression of the Russian Federation is an existential threat (Zavadska, 2022). Russia's occupation of territories of Ukraine means to the Allies that the aggressor is approaching their borders.

The support of Poland was of utmost importance for Ukraine since the beginning of the war. The country is one of the main suppliers of weapons to Ukraine. The established logistics between the countries made it possible to ensure the supply of weapons to Ukraine through Poland. Poland also accepted a large number of Ukrainian refugees. At the same time, the relations between Ukraine and Poland have been worsening recently. The blocking of the Ukrainian border by Polish transporters and farmers and the dumping of Ukrainian grain on the ground became events that caused outrage among Ukrainians. Such behavior

about a country that is at war for the values of the entire democratic world is not adequate. The most obvious reasons are the fears of Polish farmers for their business, but other opinions are also expressed in the press. This may be the omnipresent "hand of the Kremlin", but they also note the chauvinistic attitude of some Poles (including the political elite) towards Ukrainians (Herasymenko, 2024).

So, the countries' cooperation within the Lublin Triangle at the current stage has both great prospects and problems. Further cooperation, particularly in combating terrorist threats, depends on the effective solution of problems. At the same time, Ukraine should be guided not only by common interests but also by its national interests. Effective cooperation is possible only for equal partners.

**Activities in the field of combating disinformation**

An important area of activity in the Lublin Triangle is anti-disinformation activity. Disinformation campaigns can spread in the physical world, but threats are often generated in the digital environment. Cyberterrorism is one of the leading tools of Russian propaganda and can have consequences as grave as conventional terrorism.

At the meeting held on December 6 in Brussels, representatives of non-governmental organisations of the Lublin Triangle countries presented a joint report (hereinafter — the Report) on countering disinformation from the Russian Federation (Detector Media, 2022). The Report noted that the goals of Russian propaganda are:

-        distribution of pessimistic messages among the population to undermine faith in a better future.

-        undermining trust between countries and groups of countries;

-        compromising international cooperation (Lublin Triangle Perspective, 2022).

In addition to identifying the threat, the Report contained several recommendations, divided by purpose for different actors. Figure 1 presents a generalised list of recommendations that can be useful for any country to counter disinformation.

The recommendations can be defined as guidelines for countering disinformation and manifestations of terrorism in the digital environment. So, the approach proposed by the representatives of non-governmental organisations of the countries of the Lublin Triangle is based on several basic principles:

-        a comprehensive approach to monitoring, detecting, and countering threats;

-        joint participation of the state, non-governmental organisations, citizens, mass media, international partners in countering disinformation;

-        continuous work on identifying and refuting misinformation and maintaining the relevance of the issue;

-        combining direct countermeasures (e.g. blocking propaganda websites) with "soft" power (e.g. raising awareness and media literacy).

**Potential areas of further cooperation in countering terrorist threats**

Provided the resolution of the current problems developing within the Lublin Triangle, this format of cooperation can continue to be of significant benefit in countering terrorist threats. This is especially relevant for Ukraine, in which, against the background of the Russian invasion, the problems of ensuring political stability and the fight against brutality and terrorism have significantly deepened. This is evidenced by the data of reputable indexes and ratings (Figures 2-3).

**1) The following recommendations were made for all interested parties:**

- ensure an understanding of the threat and its sources;
- develop a comprehensive approach to combating disinformation, which will take into account not only information and communication challenges, but also consider the threat from the perspective of cyber security, information, communication, and cognitive security;
- achieve synergy at all levels of cooperation between interested parties;
- conduct proper research on the most effective methods of countering disinformation;
- implement a comprehensive approach to the consideration of the information environment - both disinformation messages and truthful ones.

**2) Recommendations for governments and public institutions:**

- appoint a coordinating body to ensure strategic communication in the country and beyond; provide a comprehensive real-time monitoring system;
- implement a protocol of cooperation between state bodies related to the fight against disinformation;
- ensure prosecution of those who violate national legislation regarding the dissemination of propaganda;
- implement the method of collecting evidence of the manipulations by other states;
- ensure dialogue with society, representatives of mass media, business, etc. stakeholders to track and implement countermeasures against hybrid threats;
- develop a method of collecting systematic evidence of foreign information;
- develop media and information literacy among the population;
- implement appropriate training programmes for civil servants;
- use legislative and tax tools to encourage technology companies to participate in countering disinformation campaigns;
- adapt the EU Law on Digital Markets;
- exchange experience, practical approaches, and know-how.

**3) Recommendations for international organizations:**

- maintain the topicality of the topic of combating disinformation;
- combine and synchronize international efforts;
- implement appropriate international rules and regulations;
- build the capacity of state bodies, mass media, and society to detect and respond to disinformation;
- ensure the flexibility of mass media and non-governmental organizations;
- provide institutional and financial support for projects dedicated to the fight against disinformation;
- encourage the development of relevant networks, forums, platforms;
- allocate funds for evaluating the effectiveness of implemented measures;
- support innovative projects in the field of combating disinformation;
- encourage governmental and non-governmental media literacy campaigns;
- imrove the quality and independence of journalism;
- encourage the creation of socially important entertaining content.

**4) Recommendations for society:**

- implement monitoring of the impact of disinformation with preliminary refutation of false information;
- cooperate with the state, business, etc. participants;
- reduce the economic incentives that contribute to the spread of misinformation;
- conduct effective discussions in the information environment;
- implement a transparent system for assessing resistance to disinformation;
- participate in a dialogue with large technology companies, in particular, to express requirements regarding the need for increased transparency in the fight against disinformation;
- contribute to the joint regulation of mass media and the preservation of the status of independent journalism;
- promote citizens' awareness of journalistic ethics, etc.

**Figure 1.** Recommendations of non-governmental organisations of the Lublin Triangle member states on countering disinformation (summarised by the author based on (Lublin Triangle Perspective, 2022))
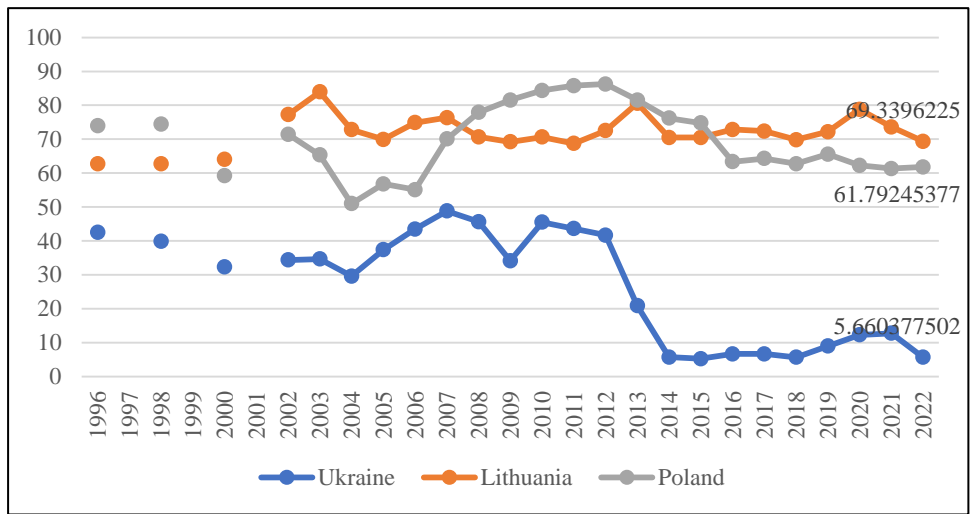
**Figure 2.** Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism: Percentile Rank for the Lublin Triangle countries (built by the author based on (The World Bank, 2022))
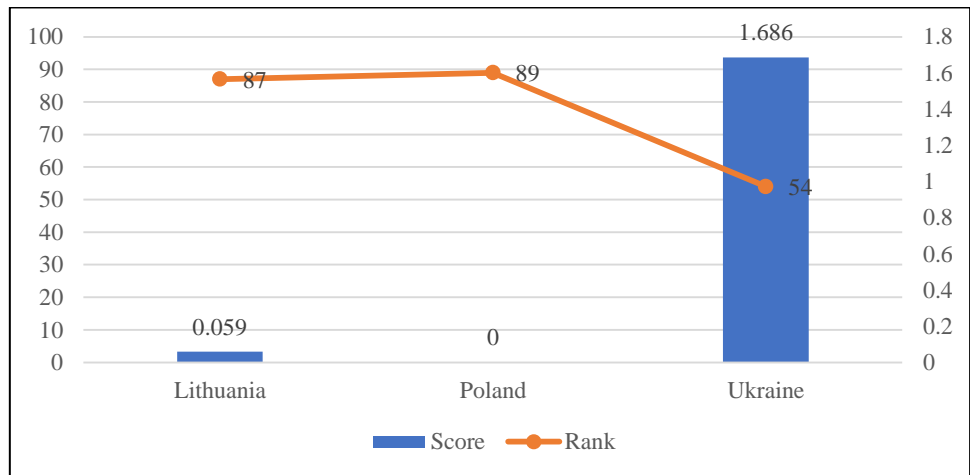


**Figure 3.** 2023 Global Terrorism Index for the Lublin Triangle countries (built by the author based on (Vision of Humanity, 2023))

Figure 3 shows that the indicators of Poland and Lithuania range within 60-70 points. This indicates a sufficiently high level of political stability. In turn, the indicator of Ukraine is very low — since the beginning of Russia's military aggression in the east of Ukraine, its value does not exceed 10 points (except 2020-2021). As of 2022, the indicator is 5.66, showing high political instability and a high risk of terrorist threats.

As already noted, the greatest terrorist danger for Ukraine is currently caused by the actions of the Russian Federation. The manifestations of terrorism include the use of "classic" means (sabotage, explosions, intimidation, etc.), the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population, the use of the population as a "human shield", persecution of citizens for political reasons, cruel treatment of prisoners of war, obstruction of the activities of international organisations. As confirmed by the above report, these threats are relevant to all Lublin Triangle countries. Therefore, further cooperation between the Lublin Triangle countries should include the following areas of countering terrorist threats:

-       activation of cooperation in the field of information exchange on terrorism issues;

-       prevention of terrorist activity;

-       use of innovative means;

-       implementation of anti-terrorism measures in the financial sphere with the aim of countering the financing of terrorist activities;

-       implementation of proper control over migration processes;

-       improvement and harmonisation of national legislation with international norms (Reznikova et al., 2017).

It is important to maintain communication with citizens and conduct training on how to act when a terrorist threat is detected or implemented during the elimination of the consequences of terrorist acts. Planning for actions in the event of a terrorist attack can improve the response to such incidents. It is also necessary to provide local communities with the necessary information and means for countering and eliminating the consequences of terrorism.

Ukraine has bitter but valuable experience in responding to and eliminating the consequences of terrorist acts. The rescue operations that are carried out after drones or missiles are hit, especially at civilian objects, are worth noting. However, it is possible to stop a terrorist state only with joint efforts. Ukraine's closest neighbours, in particular, the states of the Lublin Triangle, must realise that the threat that is a reality for Ukraine today is approaching them with every kilometre of occupied Ukrainian territory.

**Discussion**

The analysis proves that the current priority area of activity of the Lublin Triangle is the strengthening of defence capabilities and joint countermeasures against terrorist threats. In the study by Turianytsia (2023), this view is confirmed by the thesis of the priority of strengthening the defence capabilities of the Lublin Triangle countries as the main sphere of interaction. One of the declared provisions of the alliance's activities is restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The author's research also repeatedly emphasised that the joint activity of the Lublin Triangle countries in the defence field is important not only for Ukraine but also for Poland and Lithuania. In this regard, Fryc (2020) notes the importance of the Ukrainian experience, which can be transferred to Lithuania and Poland within the framework of the work of LITPOLUKRBRYG. Schmidt (2022) cites the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland regarding the fact that Ukraine is not treated "as a problem". At the same time, there is a problem with Russian aggression, and, accordingly, the strengthening of Ukraine is a common interest of the EU countries and Poland. This will contribute to strengthening their security. Śliwa (2022) notes that the Defense Concept of the Republic of Poland predicted a Russian threat, which would be followed by destabilisation in the Middle East and North Africa. This would cause a migration crisis and an intensification of terrorist activity. Thus, Russia's threat extends beyond the Lublin Triangle and requires a coordinated international response.

Hence, helping Ukraine fight against Russian aggression is a common interest of modern democratic states. Horbatenko (2023) considers Ukraine as "an outpost for the protection of European values". The researcher reveals the directions for further cooperation in the Lublin Triangle; however, it does not emphasise the importance of cybersecurity. Grybko (2021) states that the main direction of Ukraine's security integration should be participation in the European system for countering global threats. One of the main threats is the possibility of a cyber security breach. Pavlenko (2023) notes the most common Russian disinformation messages about Ukraine and European countries: such as "Ukraine is under the foreign influence", "Ukraine is a Nazi country", "EU and NATO are collapsing", etc. Among the important measures, the researcher notes the blocking of 175 pro-Russian channels in the Lublin Triangle countries. The paper notes that the Lublin Triangle countries have their unique methods of combating disinformation. The study of this experience can become a promising direction for further research because this issue was not covered in the author's research.

Poland's military aid, which the author considered, is also noted in other studies. Jureńczyk (2023) notes Poland's support for Ukraine's accession to NATO when Western partners were more skeptical of this initiative. As noted in the author's work, this can be explained by the different priorities of international partners. The Russian threat is more urgent for Poland because of its territorial position. The expansion of NATO's borders thanks to Ukraine's entry into the alliance, can bring immediate advantages to the country.

The study of Studinski (2022) is useful in considering the existing problems in the relations between Ukraine and Poland. The researcher emphasises the possibilities of cooperation between Ukraine and other members of the Lublin

Triangle on logistics issues and notes the significant length of railway tracks in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. At the same time, the author's research emphasises the problems created by Polish carriers and farmers on the Ukrainian-Polish border. This creates serious obstacles to the development of logistics between the countries and the development of mutual relations.

The author of this study made assumptions regarding the reasons for the deterioration of relations between the two countries. This issue was also raised by Olech (2021), who predicted that the Russian Federation might try to influence the relationship between Ukraine and Poland. In the author's opinion, the struggle that Ukraine is waging for a common better future should be a strong argument for abandoning.

**Conclusions**

The anti-terrorist activities of the Lublin Triangle countries are primarily aimed at increasing the defence capabilities of the countries against threats posed by the Russian Federation. Specific measures include traditional, for example, conducting joint exercises, and non-traditional measures, particularly measures to counter cyberterrorism. In the context of the spread of disinformation, propaganda, and manipulation of the Russian Federation within the Lublin Triangle countries, this direction of cooperation becomes particularly relevant.

The study revealed certain problems and characteristic interactions of countries within the Lublin Triangle. These problems are primarily related to the aggravation of relations between Ukraine and Poland. It was noted that the further effectiveness of cooperation between the Lublin Triangle countries depends on resolving existing contradictions. Further research areas may include the study and comparison of the effectiveness of national approaches to combating disinformation for each of the Lublin Triangle countries.

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations can be singled out regarding the prospects of cooperation between the countries of the Lublin Triangle to counter terrorist threats:

- ensure effective information exchange;
- implement preventive measures to prevent terrorism;
- apply innovative means of combating terrorism;
- implement counter-terrorism measures in the financial sphere;
- implement appropriate control over migration processes;
- improve and harmonise national legislation with international norms.

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