

Germany Could Become Kiev's Main Strategic Partner as Ukraine-Poland "Honeymoon" In Crisis

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With Poland-Ukrainian relations [deteriorating](#), Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki is speculating whether Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is seeking a close alliance with Polish rival Germany, accusing him of being ungrateful to Poland. During a political rally, Morawiecki [said](#):

"I understand that it seems to [Zelensky] now that he will have a close alliance with Germany. Let me warn you, Germany will always want to cooperate with the Russians over the heads of Central European countries. It was Poland that welcomed a few million Ukrainians under our roofs, it was the Poles who welcomed the Ukrainians, it was we who helped the most at the time when the Germans wanted to send 5,000 helmets to besieged Kiev. It is worthwhile for you not to forget this, President Zelensky."

This is yet another development of the growing German-Polish rivalry.

In September 2021, I [wrote](#) on how Polish authorities in Warsaw had been antagonizing Berlin with nasty WWII [rhetoric](#) and [judicial campaigns](#), while trying to project Poland's influence within the European bloc through a number of ways. In short, Poland made Ukraine a top priority in foreign policy (to the point of taking steps towards a [Polish-Ukrainian confederacy](#)), as the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict served Poland's ambitions quite well: by 2020, during the "[Defender Europe 2020](#)" military drills, it had already become clear that Warsaw sought to become the main stronghold of the American growing military presence in Eastern Europe.

Such Polish plans in turn suit Washington's ones quite well too: since at least 2020, the US had been campaigning heavily against the ([now gone](#)) Nord Stream 2 Russian-German pipeline project – which in fact could have avoided the [European energy crisis](#) back then – and both Warsaw and Kiev echoed such a campaign. Moreover, in recent years, while relatively isolated within European, Poland kept paying court to the US-led West,

encouraging Washington to back the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), for instance, as a Western “counterweight” to Chinese investments in “critical infrastructure” – as Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau [wrote](#) in a June 2021 article which appeared in Francis Fukuyama’s “American Purpose”. Washington appears to have been keen to promote Poland’s aspirations towards regional hegemony as a means to counter Germany – the US having grown “fed up” with Berlin for a number of reasons, ranging from German “stubborn” insistence on advancing energy cooperation with Moscow to its more recent flirtation with the notion of “[strategic autonomy](#)”.

In fact, the aforementioned energy issue plus US President Joe Biden’s [subsidy war against Europe](#) might have been a kind of “wake up call” to many European leaders, thus having contributed to reboot talks about “strategic autonomy” more recently. Poland seemed to see things quite differently, however, as it [counted on Washington](#) for its ambitious plans to become an [European gas hub](#).

While Warsaw, which historically is no stranger to Great Power machinations, has been pursuing regional hegemony and has largely become once again an important political actor in Europe, the fact still remains that, to a large degree, it is in fact being “played” by the American foreign policy goals as a proxy. Polish projects regarding Ukrainian-Polish confederacy, for one thing, have always been bound to face great challenges with regards to Ukraine’s own anti-Polish [far-right nationalists](#) and the complicated Ukrainian-Polish history itself, as I [wrote](#) before. Polish-Ukrainian “honeymoon” always contained within itself the potential to bring to light once again Polish-Ukrainian tensions amid a migration crisis and the European economic predicaments.

In any case, the decline of Polish-Ukraine relations and the escalation of tensions between the two partners marks an interesting chapter in the saga of Polish-German competition.

While Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki announced, on September 20, that his country is no longer sending arms to Kiev (amid grain row), German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on October 5, that Germany is to supply additional Patriot air defense missiles to Ukraine. Berlin has also ordered hundreds of thousands of artillery shells to replenish Ukrainian stocks. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in turn met with Biden in Washington D.C. on October 6, urging the US to continue supporting Ukraine, after the American Congress passed a stopgap funding bill that did not include Ukraine aid. Moreover, Berlin is currently leading the European condemnation of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary’s curb on Ukrainian grain imports, which lies at the center of today’s [Polish-Ukrainian crisis](#).

Morawiecki’s concerns actually make some sense: Germany could in fact end up replacing Poland as Ukraine’s main strategic partner in Europe. In doing so, Berlin would again be playing the role of a thorn in the US side, considering Washington’s bet on Warsaw. In other words, “countering” German’s hegemony within Europe is not a simple task, at least for now – even though there are signs Germany could be on its way to becoming once again the “[sick man of Europe](#)”. For Germany itself, however, enhancing bilateral ties with Ukraine to such a degree, would not be simple either.

In June, “traces of subsea explosives were found” in a yacht [hired by a Ukrainian-owned company](#) and the Washington Post [reported](#) that US President Joe Biden “knew of the Ukrainian plan to attack Nord Stream” three months before the pipeline sabotage. Far from being mere “conspiracy theory” speculations, the pressing issue of who in fact blew up

Nord Stream pipelines is not just a police matter, but rather a hot political problem, with geoeconomic and geopolitical implications. It remains to be seen how German “strategic autonomy” will play out as Berlin keeps aiding the American proxy attrition war in Ukraine, while German authorities and opposition leaders demand that the Nord Stream criminal explosion be investigated – the US and Ukraine itself being the main suspects.

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