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Public Opinion on Poland's Aid for Less Developed Countries and Ukraine

Abstract

After Poland's accession to the EU, development aid became one of the new areas of Polish public policy. The paper serves to interpret the evolution of public opinion on the selected issues of Polish development assistance with the use of a secondary analysis of surveys conducted at the request of the MFA by Kantar Public. It proves that knowledge about this issue is niche in the Polish society, is rarely present in media, and few Poles declare any involvement in helping less developed countries. It presents the motivations of supporters and opponents of development aid, their social profiles, changes in the perception of aid, preferences for the geographical location, and the public perception of supporting Ukraine.

Keywords: Polish development aid, public opinion polls, motivations of aid supporters and opponents, social involvement in aid, war in Ukraine

JEL codes: Z18, Z13, Z19

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Opinia społeczna na temat pomocy Polski dla państw słabiej rozwiniętych oraz Ukrainy

Streszczenie

Po uzyskaniu członkostwa w UE pomoc rozwojowa stała się jedną z nowych polskich polityk publicznych. Artykuł interpretuje ewolucję opinii publicznej nt. jej wybranych zagadnień z wykorzystaniem wtórnej analizy sondaży przeprowadzonych na zlecenie MSZ przez Kantar Public. Dowodzi, że wiedza o pomocy rozwojowej jest w społeczeństwie niszowa, rzadko popularyzowana w mediach i niewielu Polaków deklaruje zaangażowanie w działania na rzecz krajów słabiej rozwiniętych. Przedstawia motywacje zwolenników i przeciwników pomocy, ich profile społeczne, zmiany w postrzeganiu prowadzonych działań, preferencje geograficzne pomocy rozwojowej, a także społeczną percepcję wspierania Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: polska pomoc rozwojowa, sondaże opinii publicznej, motywacje zwolenników i przeciwników pomocy, społeczne zaangażowanie w pomoc, wojna w Ukrainie

Kody klasyfikacji JEL: Z18, Z13, Z19

Introduction

One of the public policies implemented by the Member States of the European Union (EU) is development aid to less developed countries. The paper addresses the Polish public's perception of selected development aid issues using a secondary analysis of surveys conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) by the research agency Kantar Public (hereinafter: Kantar). The main purpose of the paper is to characterize the views of respondents from 2004 to 2022, indicating their continuity and change, provide a sociological interpretation of the issue, as well as to present conclusions and recommendations. These issues have gained new importance as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and the assistance provided to the country by the members of the Polish public and state. The text presented is descriptive as well as critical and analytical in nature. It consists of several sections. In the first section, the essential aspects of development aid, including its origins and definition, are presented. Next, the methodology and research problems, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, of the Kantar surveys are characterized. The following sections present analyses of selected research results. They include a characterization of trends in the distributions of support and motivations for development assistance, an interpretation of the low level of knowledge about

the issue and the low level of involvement in aid to less developed countries. They also present changes in aid forms and channels and their geographic directions, as well as opinions on the volume of Polish aid, and perceptions of support for Ukraine.

Political, Institutional and Theoretical Aspects of Development Aid

Foreign aid is one of the innovative public policies in the sphere of international relations introduced after World War II. The most significant inspiration for modern ideas in this area was the European recovery program announced by U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall in 1947. He extended U.S. subsidies to sixteen Western European countries and contributed to their postwar reconstruction; he significantly strengthened European integration efforts (Steil, 2020). The implementation of the Marshall Plan became the frame of reference for many subsequent development assistance programs. Globally, the Development Assistance Group was established as a forum for cooperation and coordination among donor countries. The establishment of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) by these countries in 1961 also launched the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which accelerated the process of institutionalizing international cooperation. The DAC adopted a definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA): resource flows conveying a grant element of at least 25%, directed by donors to a specific group of countries and multilateral organisations, whose source is state, local government or executive agencies. Their main purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of recipients of concessional aid, with military grants and loans not classified as ODA (Riddell, 2008: 19). Development assistance has become an integral part of UN activities, led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), established in 1965. The UNDP is the largest multilateral source of economic development funding for UN Member States, and many countries have established ministries and agencies responsible for assisting African, Hispanic and Asian countries (Symonides, 2006; Bagiński, Czaplicka & Szczyciński, 2009). Changes in theoretical approaches to development have also become a significant aspect of their activities. Among the most influential are the economic development model of linear stages of growth, i.e., the transition from traditional to post-industrial society, the concepts of the dual economy model and the bipolar world economy, dependency theories, and theories based on the neoclassical approach, especially the liberal theory of economic order (Haliżak, 2006: 263). Changes in views in this area are also considered differently, for example in terms of first-generation theories, heterodox theories

and theories seeking new concepts of development (Czaplicka, 2009). Regardless of theoretical approaches or government declarations, however, analyses of development assistance from the United States, Japan, France, Germany and Denmark demonstrate that it is primarily a tool for achieving donors' political and economic goals (Lancaster, 2007). Similar motivations were also followed after the collapse of the communist system in the sphere of aid provided by Western countries to Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Keohane, Nye & Hoffmann, 1997; Wedel, 2001).

Research Methodology and Problems

Poland's successful political and economic reforms led to its transformation from a recipient of development assistance to a donor. In such a context, surveys of Poles' knowledge of development assistance and the public's willingness to provide such assistance, initiated by the Canadian Embassy in September 2004, are being conducted. On the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), they are repeated in subsequent years, with variable frequency after 2015. The latest edition of the survey, entitled *Poles on Development Assistance*, was carried out from 2 to 7 December 2022. It was conducted by the Kantar research agency on a nationwide representative sample of 1,005 Polish residents aged 15 and older. The survey was conducted using a standardized face-to-face questionnaire interview technique in respondents' homes as part of the cyclical Omnibus multi-topic survey. According to Kantar researchers, the maximum statistical error of measurement is $\pm 3.1\%$ with a reliability of estimate of 95%. For the sake of comparability of results, successive editions of the survey contain mostly identical questions (in some cases, however, modification of their wording makes such comparison somewhat difficult). For the purpose of the paper, based on a secondary analysis of the results of surveys conducted from 2004 to 2022, some opinions have been selected on the extent of support and motivation for Poland's provision of development assistance, sources of information about such activities, forms and channels of assistance, its geographic directions, and an assessment of the amount of support and public involvement in its provision. The circumstances existing since 24 February 2022 have resulted in the survey being supplemented with questions on aid to Ukraine.

The survey questionnaire was based on a total of twenty-five questions, among which were twenty-two closed questions (nine of which were conditional) and three open questions. The two blocks of questions were preceded by short introductions to help respondents understand the questionnaire and clarify expectations of them,

limiting misinterpretation of the questions. The survey was structured in such a way that most questions allowed for up to three responses; consequently, the results of many of them did not add up to 100%. Conditional (filtering) questions were also used, selecting respondents to whom further questions applied, such as those declaring that, in the last 2–3 months, they had encountered information about Poland's assistance. This reduced the population of respondents to varying degrees, as only a portion of them responded positively.

Characterized studies on development aid have advantages as well as some limitations. Some are worth noting for their interpretive implications and possible future changes in research methods. A strength of the surveys is that they allow for making descriptive statements about Poles' opinions on the issues under analysis by using a representative group of respondents who answer standardized questions. They provide an opportunity to compare changes in views over a period of sixteen years on issues that are rarely the subject of sociological research and public debate. Surveys conducted through face-to-face interviews have the advantage of high completeness of questionnaire and high response rates. Their weakness, on the other hand, is the rather superficial treatment of the topics covered and the artificiality of the research situation. As Earl Babbie aptly notes, "people's opinions on various issues rarely take the form of strong agreement, agreement, disagreement or strong disagreement with any particular statement. Their responses to the survey questions should therefore be viewed as rough indicators of what the researchers had in mind when they arranged the questions." (Babbie, 2003: 302). Especially since respondents answering the questions may not have previously thought about the issues being addressed, and such situations are conducive to generating ill-considered or random responses. The use of different survey methods could induce respondents to give different answers beyond what the questionnaire's authors suggested. The optimal conduct of sociological research requires the use of more diverse research methods and techniques, including those that are more qualitatively, "humanistically" and "understanding" oriented. The research could be enriched by a greater number of open-ended questions allowing deeper analysis of the content of respondents' statements and their contexts (e.g., emotional associations), the implementation of unstructured interviews or the use of focus group interviews (focus groups). Modifications would provide opportunities for more multidimensional insights into the rationale of the opinions studied and their interpretation. This type of approach, however, entails changing research assumptions and higher project implementation costs, which can be a barrier to adopting it.

Survey Results and Their Interpretations

Support and Motivations for Providing Development Assistance

For a proper understanding of the content of the question on supporting less developed countries, it was preceded by a comment explaining that the purpose of assistance from many countries and international organisations to such countries is primarily to support economic growth, rule of law and self-governance, prevent internal conflicts and increase global security. Development aid is intended to permanently support the development of these countries and it is not the same as humanitarian aid provided on an ad hoc basis in case of natural disasters, famine, military conflicts, etc. In general, since Poland's accession to the EU, the net result of support for the provision of development assistance (the difference between the percentage of positive opinions and the percentage of negative opinions) has grown dynamically: from 28% in 2004, to the highest value in 2008 and 2009, when it oscillated at 72% and 71%, respectively. However, this result began to deteriorate significantly in the next period: from 63% in 2010 to 46% in 2022. Still, the prevailing view across all socio-demographic groups is that Poland should assist the development of less developed countries (65% in 2022). In the past year, this opinion was most widely accepted among those with higher education (73%) and young people aged 15–19 (72%), while those with basic vocational education declared significantly less support for such assistance (58%).

In the sphere of motivation, supporters of Poland's development assistance are increasingly less likely to point to a moral obligation to help less developed countries (63% in 2006 and 41% in 2022) and the belief that wealthier countries have helped us, so now we should help poorer ones (50% in 2010 and 29% in 2022). Slightly more frequently expressed is the view that helping others can benefit us (27% in 2004 and 29% in 2022) and the recognition that the need for assistance stems from Poland's international obligations (19% in 2004 and 28% in 2022). Although the relative significance of moral motivations – such as a sense of duty or solidarity – remains high, their importance is waning. However, the share of indications of a pragmatic nature is growing. In 2022, more than a quarter of respondents (26%) believed that illegal migration could be countered through on-the-ground assistance in less developed countries. 22% of respondents assumed that Poland should offer assistance due to the dependence of the situation in our country on what is happening in other countries (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Motivations justifying Polish assistance to less developed countries (%)

	IX 2004 (N = 634)	XII 2006 (N = 753)	XI 2007 (N = 777)	XII 2008 (N = 840)	XI 2009 (N = 838)	XI 2010 (N = 794)	XI 2011 (N = 778)	XI 2012 (N = 739)	XI 2013 (N = 678)	XII 2014 (N = 704)	XII 2015 (N = 663)	XI 2019 (N = 704)	XII 2022 (N = 642)
Since wealthier countries have helped us, now we should help less developed countries	33	49	41	47	45	50	42	45	44	42	46	27	29
We have a moral obligation to help less developed countries	55	62	60	58	56	51	52	55	47	45	44	44	41
The need for assistance stems from international obligations assumed by Poland	19	21	21	19	20	19	20	18	21	21	29	28	28
Helping others can benefit us, e.g. by increasing Poland's security and prestige in the world	27	17	25	19	22	19	23	19	17	24	23	30	29
Poland is a country wealthy enough to help others	4	8	12	10	9	10	13	10	9	12	16	15	15
For other reasons	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I don't know	1	0	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	1	2	2

Source: (Kantar, 2022: 10–11).

In contrast, a total of 19% of respondents were against Poland's 2022 aid measures. However, since they were relatively few in number, to avoid overconfidence in the informational value of a small sample (the “law of small numbers”) the statistical distributions of their opinions should be treated with great caution. Relatively more prevalent among them were rural residents (20%), young people aged 20–29 (22%) and the middle-aged 40–49 (21%). Motivationally, such a position since the beginning of the surveys is justified most by the belief that Poland is too poor a country to help others (72% in 2004 and 32% in 2019). The 2022 survey saw an 11 percentage point increase in the percentage of people agreeing with this view compared to 2019 (to 43%). Among those opposed to providing development assistance, the popular view is that we should solve our own problems first (62% in 2011 and 40% in 2022). Support for the statement that we should not help because no one helped Poland is growing (from 6% in 2004 to 24% in 2022). Such opinions are a manifestation of the growing reluctance of Poland to provide development assistance under conditions of overlapping crisis trends forcing other budget priorities (COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, etc.). This phenomenon correlates positively with the rise of national and conservative tendencies and the statements of many leading representatives of the United Right, who for political reasons, including criticism of the EU or Germany,

have since 2015 depreciated the role of foreign aid in Poland's development after 1989, contrary to the facts (Samecki, 1997; Żukrowska, 2010).

Sources of Information

Public knowledge of Poland's development assistance to less developed countries is niche in nature. As many as 87% of respondents had not heard of such activity. Only 13% of them in 2022 said they had encountered information on the subject in the last 2–3 months preceding the survey. For this population, television is the main source of information about development assistance. Although its share is steadily declining (from 93% in 2006 to 75% in 2022), it is still relatively the largest. This is followed by the increasingly cited Internet (8% in 2006, 30% in 2022), the waning influence of radio (26% and 16%, respectively), newspapers affected by the readership crisis (28% and 11% of indications), and radio (27% and 16%). Other sources of information do not play a significant role. A measure of the implications of this situation are views on the UN Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. While in 2006 80% of respondents did not hear of the Goals, the number of such opinions increased in subsequent years, reaching 94% in 2022. These results prove that international issues, such as Polish development assistance, are rarely present in the public debate. They can be considered an indicator of "sovereignist" tendencies, part of the radical turn toward national and conservative values pursued by right-wing politicians and the public media they control (Jas-Koziarkiewicz, 2023; Cekiera, 2022). The little and declining interest in Poland's development assistance is a hallmark of a broader trend, including education and upbringing subordinated to anachronistically conceived patriotic education. Its manifestation has become, among other things, the marginalization of global education and education for sustainable development in the core curriculum, curriculum content and textbooks that were introduced with the 2016 education reform (Kuleta-Hulboj, 2022).

Community Involvement in Development Assistance

Unlike Western countries with their colonial past and established ties with countries in Africa, South America and Asia, Polish society until 1989 had had no practical experience with foreign aid (except for the presence at universities of students from so-called Third World countries, such as Angola, Cuba and Vietnam). It was not until the period of systemic change following the collapse of the communist system that Poland became a significant beneficiary of aid programs supporting preparations for EU accession (Żukrowska, 2000). One manifestation of this phenomenon was the

creation of the office of the Government Plenipotentiary for European Integration and Foreign Aid operating within the structure of the Council of Ministers from 1991 to 1996, later transformed into the European Integration Committee (Samecki, 1997). However, Poland joined DAC as late as in 2013. Therefore, it is not surprising that the country's awareness of the issue is low compared to other countries that have been participating in development assistance programs for many decades (Riddell, 2008; Lancaster, 2007). Only eight out of 100 Poles say they have any involvement in helping less developed countries, according to Kantar's 2022 survey. 92% of respondents admit that they have not participated in such activities to date; with 13% considering the possibility in the future and 12% seeing no need to do so.

The most popular form of support for less developed countries involving respondents is donating money to a specific project or fund-raising (63%). It is less common for funds to be donated to the activities of international organisations, although it happens occasionally (24%), and one in seven (15%) respondents, who regularly supports aid programs, chooses initiatives carried out in less developed countries. Poles rarely participate in aid programs (9%), engage in educational or outreach activities concerning the problems of less developed countries (8%) and make ethical choices when shopping (6%). New phenomena in 2022 include respondents engaging in a specific project or fund-raising more often than in 2019 (up 10 percentage points), donating money to international organisations less often, and supporting those in need through regular aid programs. The greater mobilization for aid programs and fund-raising was likely due to the bottom-up forms of aid provided to Ukraine, as well as the high popularity and technical ease of online fund-raising for specific purposes.

Forms and Channels of Aid

Worldwide, among the most common forms of development aid are: financial aid (donations, preferential loans, debt relief), in-kind aid (food, consumer and capital goods) and technical aid: training, consulting and expertise (Czaplicka, 2009: 129). Three main channels of development aid are known: bilateral, trilateral and multilateral aid. Bilateral aid is distributed directly to individuals or organisations of the recipient country by donors through joint programs and projects, such as debt relief. Multilateral aid is provided by many donor countries through international organisations, multilateral agreements or global funds. Kantar surveys show that until 2012, the relatively largest group of respondents (above 30% or 40%) indicated, among various forms of development assistance, bilateral aid: allowing students from less developed countries to study in Poland. In the following years, the preference for this form of assistance changed significantly, and in 2022 it fell to its

lowest level of 18% (this can probably be explained by the growing fear of migrants from non-European countries, which has also intensified in Poland since the 2015–2016 EU migration crisis).

As a result, sending volunteers to less-developed countries currently has relatively the greatest support (30% in 2022). Other indications of preferred forms of aid include investments by Polish companies in these countries (19%), opening the Polish market more to products from developing countries (16%) and financing or co-financing the construction of infrastructure (15%). Support for the latter two activities is trending downward, suggesting growing public criticism of some forms of Polish aid. Changes in indications of, among other things, providing financial aid to state governments (23% in 2006, 15% in 2015) or working to resolve internal conflicts there (16% in 2006, 11% in 2022) also lead to similar conclusions. Kantar surveys of Polish aid channels show significant changes in respondents' preferences for forms of aid (see Table 2).

Table 2. Preferred forms of support for less developed countries (%)

	XI 2006	XI 2007	XII 2008	XI 2009	XI 2010	XI 2011	XI 2012	XI 2013	XII 2014	XI/XII 2015	XI 2019	XII 2022
Enabling studies in Poland	40	36	42	37	43	33	39	33	30	37	19	128
Training of administrative staff and state institutions employees and sending Polish experts and advisors	20	23	21	24	23	27	24	20	20	25	13	9
Sending volunteers	32	28	25	20	24	22	24	24	20	22	34	30
Investments of Polish companies	27	23	22	24	24	24	24	19	19	20	14	19
Opening the Polish market more to products from developing countries	25	22	17	16	16	16	17	15	17	20	11	16
Financing or co-financing of infrastructure construction (e.g., road or water and sanitation)	18	16	15	15	15	18	18	15	14	19	14	15
Supporting democratization processes	16	15	16	16	16	17	15	14	15	16	17	14
Providing financial assistance to governments	23	22	24	21	17	15	9	18	17	15	-	-
Working to resolve internal conflicts	16	12	12	13	11	10	12	12	12	14	12	11
Cancellation or reduction of debt towards Poland	7	6	8	5	6	6	8	6	6	5	-	-
Other methods	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Hard to say	9	11	11	13	13	12	7	14	16	13	10	11

Results do not add up to 100%; respondents could indicate up to 3 responses. The “-” designation refers to questions that were omitted from the 2019 and 2022 questionnaires.

Source: (Kantar, 2022: 27).

While until 2015 the prevailing belief had been that assistance should be channelled through specialized international organisations (such as the World Food Programme), the results of the 2022 survey show a shift in preferences. International organisations have received indications as high as 60% since the start of the surveys (2006). In 2022, the percentage of people specifying this way of helping fell to 42%, and for the second time, in another survey, is lower than the percentage of those preferring Polish NGOs to donate funds to less developed countries (e.g., Polish Humanitarian Action or Caritas Poland – 47%). The belief in the importance of local organisations (including NGOs) operating in recipient countries had been growing quite steadily over the period studied. In 2022, 22% of those asked appreciated their role (in 2004, it was only 5%). “These changes are triggered by the fact that Poles provided support to Ukrainians [...] mainly through local NGOs and companies, often in a bottom-up manner: international organisations did not have [...], much importance in this process.” (Kantar, 2022: 28). It is worth noting that among the desirable forms of assistance, respondents less frequently indicate activities carried out through the bilateral aid channel (e.g., Polish investments in underdeveloped countries were indicated in 2006 by 27% of respondents, and in 2022 only 19%).

Geographic Directions of Assistance

Since the beginning of research on development aid, the prevailing view has been that Poland should primarily help African countries. Such opinions settle at more than half of the indications (with the highest number of them in 2011, when 59% were recorded). In the 2022 survey, 50% of respondents expressed this belief. Nearly half as many indicated Poland's eastern neighbours (26%); with almost all respondents in this category indicating Ukraine (99%), which is probably related to the Russian aggression against the country. Belarus was preferred by only 8% of respondents. Next in line were Asian countries (Myanmar, Laos) and other countries “in the East,” formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, such as Moldova, Georgia or Armenia. In contrast, the direction of South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Macedonia, etc.), which previously received up to 11% support from respondents in some years, had disappeared in surveys conducted since 2015.

Assessing the Volume of Polish Assistance

Poland is classified as a highly developed country, and as such was admitted to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2013. The minimum value of development assistance provided by DAC countries is not formally defined.

To date, DAC members have provided Official Development Assistance (ODA) of at least 0.2% of GDP. By the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, despite a gradual increase in Polish ODA, it had not reached such a value. It ranged from 0.9% of GDP in 2012 to 0.15 of GDP in 2022. For years, the vast majority of funds transferred has been support through the multilateral channel (most recently 70%, with a volume of PLN 2.7 billion), with the remainder being bilateral aid (PLN 1.1 billion) (Zalas-Kamińska, 2022: 7–8). The prevailing view in the Kantar survey is that Poland allocates “as much as it should” to development aid relative to its capabilities. This view had oscillated around 50% since the survey began. However, in 2022, it reached the lowest number of indications (40%), with 11% of those asked declaring that the funds allocated were rather too little, 13% – too little, and 2% – definitely too little (26% in total). The opposing view that Poland spends too much on this aid was supported by a total of 34% of respondents (rather too much – 13%, too much – 17% and definitely too much – 4%). The increased percentage believing that Polish aid spending is too high – the highest since 2004 – was likely caused by the unprecedented volume of the support provided by Poles and Poland to Ukrainians in 2022, amid high inflation, an economic slowdown, and increased security spending caused by Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. Such opinions are reflected in anti-Ukrainian demonstrations, held under the slogan “stop Ukrainization of Poland” and increasing the popularity of nationalist political groups (Szyszlak, 2023).

Support for Ukraine

After the outbreak of war on 24 February 2022, many Poles and the Polish state became involved in supporting their eastern neighbours, joining activities within Ukraine itself, on the Polish-Ukrainian border or helping refugees seeking shelter in Poland. These events have made the need to help other countries take on new meanings and become more recognized also in terms of international solidarity. However, it is worth taking into account the fact that aid to Ukraine is primarily humanitarian and provided on an ad hoc basis. Development aid will only be able to be provided on a larger scale once the war is over and the reconstruction of the country begins. In the Kantar survey, 71% of the total respondents recognize that Poland should help Ukraine in a situation of war in the country (19% say this strongly and 53% rather support this option). Supporters of the aid most often present pragmatic arguments – by helping Ukraine we increase our security (56%), thanks to the support on-the-spot we will reduce the flow of refugees (34%), and the support provided can also bring benefits, such as increasing Poland’s prestige in the world or helping to introduce domestic companies to the Ukrainian market. Ethical motivations are

also significant: the moral obligation to help our neighbour (44%), but also, less frequently, legalistic ones, recognizing that the need to help stems from international obligations assumed by our country (21%). Respondents who are convinced of the benefits to Poland of supporting Ukraine are mainly the youngest 15–19-year-olds (60%), those in their twenties (59%), those with secondary and higher education (47% each) and residents of small towns (51%). Poles who see long-term benefits from helping Ukraine (54%) would like to help on the ground. 55% of both men and women prefer to donate humanitarian aid there, with residents of medium-sized cities (71%) more likely to choose this option. Diverting food aid to Ukraine is supported by 46% of respondents. Increased economic aid and support for refugees in Poland are indicated less frequently (28% each).

In contrast, opponents of assisting Ukraine during Russian aggression against the country, who are far fewer in number (18% overall), agree with the view that we should solve our own problems first (43%), and that Poland is too poor a country to help others (41%). An even smaller group of respondents believes that the aid provided to Ukraine is being misused (27%). Such a narrative echoes the arguments of “sovereigntists” proclaiming that no one is helping Poland solve its problems (22%), such as overcoming the energy crisis. We do not need to help others, and “each country should take care of itself” (21%). The relatively largest group of opponents of helping Ukrainians are middle-aged people of 30–39 years old (24%), seniors aged 70+ (22%), and people with primary (21%), basic vocational (21%) and secondary (19%) education. The largest number of respondents critical of assistance for Ukraine live in large cities (24%), where the massive influx of refugees has increased the cost of rental housing and worsened the quality of some public services, such as city transportation, health care or education. They believe that support for refugees in Poland should be reduced, and economic, food, humanitarian and medical aid should be cut.

Results of surveys later than the Kantar survey indicate that the number of people with such attitudes is increasing. For example, a May – June 2023 survey conducted by political scientists at the University of Warsaw shows that while the vast majority of respondents (85%) still believe that Poland should help Ukraine during a war on its territory started by Russia, more than half of them (55%) oppose additional aid (Staniszewski, 2023: 9). The political equivalent of this trend is the rise in support for nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Ukrainian groups (Szyszlak, 2023).

Summary and Conclusions

The Kantar research agency has been probing public opinion in our country on Polish aid to less developed countries since 2004 on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in the first year, the Canadian Embassy. In 2022, the survey separated a block of questions on a specific part of this assistance: support provided to Ukraine. The added value of the surveys conducted is that they address issues that have rarely been studied on domestic ground. Their results show that public knowledge of Poland's aid to less developed countries is very insignificant. The main source of information in this area is television, and to a lesser extent the Internet and the press. However, aid issues are rarely present in the media and public debate, which is accompanied by a very low involvement of Poles in helping less developed countries. This state of affairs, which has been intensifying in recent years, can be seen as a manifestation of "sovereignist" tendencies resulting from the radical turn to national and conservative values in Poland, promoted by the United Right governments and the institutions they control. Contrastingly different social behaviour occurred in the provision of assistance to Ukrainians and Ukraine; demonstrating the existence of a large potential of Poles for involvement, which could also be applied in other areas of the public sphere. In the case of Ukraine, however, this potential is uniquely motivated by a belief in the moral obligation to help a neighbouring country and the awareness that by helping Ukrainians we are also enhancing the security of Poles. This is a situation without parallel for any other state, and the support – reinforced by the power elite – initially took the form of actions described by Alain Touraine as a mass social movement expressing the national interest (Jasiocki, 2023).

An analysis of respondents' opinions over the 2004–2022 period leads to the conclusion that there are both elements of continuity and change in Poland's attitude toward development assistance. In terms of continuity, the specificity is defined by the persistence in all socio-demographic groups of declarations of support for the provision of aid. The war across the eastern border since February 2022 has increased the belief that Ukraine should be helped, but nevertheless has not changed the long-term preference for aid primarily to African countries. It is worth noting that although the volume of Polish aid is gradually increasing, before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine it did not reach the value of the support provided by other countries under ODA (the relatively small amount of funds allocated to this aid was also probably one of the reasons for the insignificant presence of this issue in the public debate). However, Kantar surveys show a prevailing view that Poland, in relation to its capabilities, allocates "as much as it should" for aid purposes, and an analysis

of the surveys over the period under consideration makes it possible to distinguish four trends in the sphere of public opinion on development aid:

- 1) Preferences for the scope, forms and channels of development assistance are changing. There is a growing perception that Polish expenditures are too large for this purpose, which can be explained by large outlays to support Ukraine from February 2022. Promoted by right-wing politicians, support for providing aid outside Poland, such as by sending volunteers, is increasing. At the same time, there is a marked reduction in public support for allowing young people from less developed countries to study in Poland (probably due to fears of migrants from non-European countries, which intensified after the 2015 crisis).
- 2) There is a change in the structure of aid motivations: a shift from ethical (moral obligation) and legalistic (international obligations) motives to pragmatic ones, such as countering illegal migration, increasing the prestige of the state or economic benefits. Aid motivations in Poland are becoming similar to those also found in other societies, which view such support as an instrument for achieving the political and economic goals of donors.
- 3) The positive experience of helping Ukrainian refugees in Poland has led to an increased perception of the important role of national NGOs and local organisations of less developed countries in providing assistance. Such a phenomenon can be considered one of the hallmarks of the “communitarian turn” occurring in the societies of many countries since the COVID-19 pandemic and the global financial crisis (Nölke, 2022).
- 4) There is a rather modest, but growing percentage of opponents of development aid, who (including in the case of support for Ukraine) express the belief that Poland is too poor a country to help others, we should solve our own problems first, and we should not provide aid, because Poland has not been helped by anyone, and each country should take care of itself. The political manifestation of this trend is the rise in support for nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Ukrainian groups.

Similar beliefs can be seen as stemming from Poland's reluctance to provide development assistance during a difficult period of overlapping crisis trends, forcing other budget priorities. Narratively, they are similar to the arguments of “sovereignists,” among whom there are many representatives of the ruling United Right coalition who build their political base on national and conservative, and often nationalist and chauvinist, slogans. For political reasons, including conflicts with the EU, they also devalue the role of foreign aid in Poland's development after 1989, contrary to the facts, which is not conducive to a substantive discussion of the issue.

Kantar's research on Poland's development assistance as perceived by the public also leads to several methodological and practical conclusions. In methodological

terms, they allow the formulation of descriptive statements and comparisons of changes in respondents' views over a relatively long period of time. However, due to the research assumptions made and the way they are implemented in the form of a questionnaire based on closed questions, they have some shortcomings. The most important ones concern the superficial treatment of the issues addressed, which is typical of quantitative research, especially the narrowing of respondents' answers to propositions prepared by the survey authors. To deepen the interpretation of survey results, it would also be optimal to use qualitative research methods and techniques with a "humanistic" and "understanding" orientation, which provide greater opportunities for analyses of content, as well as contexts (e.g., association) of the views considered. On a practical level, the results of the research, indicating, among other things, the growing importance of pragmatic motivations for development assistance in the perception of the public, are a useful indicator of the direction of further outreach efforts, clarifying the goals and significance of the efforts of the MFA, as well as of the media, NGOs and educational institutions. It is worth showing that this aid, in addition to ethical motivations, is also an instrument for achieving the political and economic goals of the Polish state. The effectiveness of such activities, however, requires moving away from anachronistic "patriotic education" toward showing the complexity and interdependence of the modern world, in which Poland can play an important role; including by participating in the implementation of the concept of sustainable development and global education (Kuleta-Hulboj, 2022).

Author Contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The author certifies that the research published in the text was carried out in accordance with the research ethics of the affiliated university.

Research Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are publicly available.

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