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**The Influence of the European Union on democratic
transformations in Poland and Ukraine: the role of
elite perceptions**

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Declaration of originality

This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Nataliya Muzyka 03.31.2019

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Abbreviations used in this thesis

AA	Association Agreement
AWS	Social Movement Solidarity, Poland
AWS-UW	Coalition of Social Movement Solidarity and Freedom Movement, Poland
CE	Central Europe
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CIB	Comprehensive Institutional Building
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CORDIS	Community Research and Development Service
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPU	Communist Party of Ukraine
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Community
EE	Eastern Europe
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighborhood Policy Instrument
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FSR	Former Soviet Union
IGO	International Governmental Organization
KOR	Workers' Defense Committee, Poland
LA	Latin America
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PSL	Polish Peasant Party
PZPR	Polish United Workers Party
SLD	Democratic Left Alliance, Poland
SPU	Socialist Party of Ukraine
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nation
US	United States of America
USSR	Soviet Union
UW	Freedom Movement, Poland
V4	Visegrad Four
WWII	Second World War

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Abstract

Despite the attractiveness of closer relations with the European Union, some European countries have been more open to the external influence of the EU than others. The EU experienced both success and failure in promoting democracy in East-Central Europe during the post-communist transition. This research will seek to answer the question ‘why’ by comparing the EU’s influence on democratization in two countries: Poland and Ukraine. This thesis analyzes how EU political elites’ perception of political elites in Poland and Ukraine affected the EU’s ability to influence the democratization process. The analysis investigates how the historical, economic, social, institutional, and political background of each country at the beginning and during the post-communist transition affected elites’ ability to implement needed changes. Additionally, varying motivations behind political elites’ decisions regarding domestic and foreign policy can explain differences in the results of post-communist transitions. Russia’s presence in this region also offering a potentially attractive alternative or forcing neighbors to cooperate. But in the end, national elites and people are the main creators of their countries’ fortunes and outsiders are restricted to reacting appropriately.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Perestroika, or restructuring, initiated by Michael Gorbachev in the USSR in the late 1980s gave former Eastern Bloc countries freedom in developing their domestic and foreign policies and opened communication channels and borders with the West. Western European states, and more so the European Union (since 1992), were able to use this opportunity to influence democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe that yielded various results in different countries. The result of post-communist transformations can be analyzed by using several different methodologies that emerged over the last decades. The Democracy Index and Freedom House reports are just a few examples of different techniques used to measure democracy. Although it is not a standard measurement for the level of democratic freedom in any given country, the EU membership can also be employed as the measure of democratization success due to the strict political conditionality imposed on potential members that is widely known as the Copenhagen criteria, which required (inter alia) prospective states to have stable domestic institutions that could guarantee the rule of law, human rights, protection for minorities and – above all - democracy.

Even though currently there are questions about the status of democracy in East European EU member states including Poland, the EU membership is still a useful indicator to evaluate the status of democracy in East-Central Europe from the early 1990s to mid-2000s. Also, the fact that the EU is currently applying sanctions to Poland as a reaction to their judicial reforms (that made the judiciary less autonomous) shows the continuity of high political standards in the EU. The application of EU membership status to countries in Central and Eastern Europe divides them into two groups, one consisting of current EU member states and the other consisting of the rest of countries in the region. More importantly, these two groups can be divided into former Eastern Bloc countries and former Soviet Republics (apart from the Baltic states, which were able to achieve EU membership by 2004).

Certain reasons are often named for this discrepancy in the post-communist transition in this region. The most obvious one is the existence of statehood before the fall of communism (Johansson, 2011; Kuzio, 2000; Gherghina, 2009). Statehood status affected the international perception of all countries in the region simply by making other international actors aware of their existence in addition to allowing a country to develop institutions needed for governing. At the same time, it cannot alone and by itself explain why some states were more successful during transformation, especially when looking into the post-communist transition in the Baltic states that were part of the Soviet Union.

Other reasons often used to explain this differentiation include ‘identity’ (Prizel, 2009; Bergbauer, 2018; Szporluk, 2000). The identity division between Eastern European countries was clear from the beginning of the post-communist transition when the Warsaw Bloc countries and the majority of former Soviet Republic were divided into two groups on the international arena. One group consisted of Central European countries that successfully consolidated democracy and are now members of the EU. The second group consisted of the remaining post-communist states in Eastern Europe. This division influenced Western powers’ approach to building external relations with these countries. It also at times gets blamed for prolonged political and economic transitions in the Eastern part of Eastern Europe.

But, there are other reasons used to explain this difference. They include internal and external influences on democratization and the commitment of national elites to the reformation process (Tolstrup, 2014; Morlino 2011; Vachudova 2002, 2005; Przeworski, 1991, 1995;

Whitehead, 2001 and 2002; Stroschein, 2012; Collier, 1999; Moser, 2001; Markoff, 1996; Seim and Parente, 2013; Mahr and Nagle 1999; Etzioni-Halevy 1993; Higley 1992, 1995, 2012; Priban, 2012; and Easter, 1997). The analysis of these two factors is the main subject of this research. Specifically, this thesis investigates how the EU's perception of national elites in Central and Eastern Europe affected the European Union's democratization promotion efforts. It is important to understand the underlining reasons behind these two factors because we live in a well-connected world. Modern interdependence makes it almost impossible for a country to protect itself from outside influence.

Why were the EU and other Western powers not able to use successfully their window of opportunity to influence the democratic change in the entire region? - This question is an important one that still needs to be answered. Some scholars have argued that the EU's external influence, as well as an external influence of any force, is limited by the level of internal acceptance (Tolstrup, 2014; Morlino 2011; Vachudova, 2002, 2005). Especially important is the acceptance of external influence by elite groups in society. Political, economic, cultural, and civil society elites use their internal influence to promote or block the spread of external ideas. The application of this principle to the European Union's influence on democratization in Eastern Europe shows that elites in some countries, like Poland, welcomed European ideas and wanted to learn from the West. Others, such as those of Ukraine and Russia, resisted Western external influence. Another reason that explains the different levels of influence that the EU has had in the post-communist countries is the level of interest in these countries by the EU itself (Flockhart, 2001). Especially, this preference was easy to observe in terms of business support for Polish accession (Interview B, EP) and official goals of the EU (Los-Nowak, 2000), as well as strong support for 'Russia first' foreign policy approach until the mid-2000s (Flockhart, 2001; Solonenko, 2011; Youngs, 2008).

The analysis of the EU's relations with its neighbors makes it hard to overlook the importance of perceptions of national elites by Western Europeans. Political elites as leaders of any given country have an important role to implement needed political and economic reforms in addition to their role as representatives of their countries. The inability to do so by these in power may discourage international partners from building close relations with a country that has a seemingly weak political elite. The main aim of this thesis is to understand how the EU elite's views of national political elites in Central and Eastern Europe affected the EU's attitude towards these states. Poland and Ukraine are used as examples. The analysis of these two countries provides an outlook into the relationship between the European Union and two groups of post-communist states mentioned above and represented by Poland and Ukraine.

Poland's and Ukraine's political elites have been perceived differently from the start of their countries' post-communist transitions. Poland seems to have had political elites united behind the idea of the 'return to Europe', democratization, and market reforms (Interview C, EU; Interview A, EP; Interview C, EP; Interview B, EU; Los-Nowak, 2000; Stadtmüller, 2000; Terry, 2000, Higley and Pakulski, 1992, 1995, 1999). At the same time, Ukraine has been having more divided political elites with three competing views on Ukraine's place in the region (Higley and Pakulski, 1995). One group advocate for European integration, another group advocate for neutrality that would allow Ukraine to keep good relations with both influential neighbors, and the third group advocate for keeping close ties with Russia. The first two groups have been most influential since Ukraine's independence in 1991. While it is more common to divide the views of Ukrainian political elites into two groups with the division between the West

and the East, I argue that the majority of supporters of a closer union with Russia have been trying to keep Ukraine friendly with both powers (the EU and Russia) at the same time.

The difference in international perceptions of political elites in Poland and Ukraine can be explained by three factors. One is a geographic location, with Poland being closer to Western Europe and Ukraine being Russian neighbor. Due to this difference, the Polish elite has been traditionally perceived as part of wider Europe. The anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment present in Poland during the Cold War reinforced this perception (Petrovic, 2017). The Ukrainian elite, on the other hand, has been perceived for a long time as a close associate of Russia, up until the current fallout that sometimes called the ‘divorce of a century’.¹ The second factor that separates the perception of these two elites is an elite composition (Interview A, EP, Interview C, EU). Polish political elites’ structure has been closer to these in Western Europe with the majority of its members coming from intellectual circles, such as academia, civil society, and other non-business spheres. In Ukraine, the majority of political elite members have been traditionally recruited from the old nomenklatura and business circles. The close connectives between political and business elites create a favorable environment for corruption, one of the major problems that have been slowing the Ukrainian post-communist transition for decades. The third factor that affected international perceptions of national political elites in post-communist states is their commitment to reforms (Interview A, EP; Interview C, EP; and Interview C, EU). As this thesis will show, the lack of reformation progress in Ukraine negatively affected relations between Ukraine and the EU.

The main argument of this thesis is that the European Union elite’s perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian political elites contributed significantly to the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion efforts in these states. Perception is a very important part of any relations, although it does change with time. Changes usually occur when actions of political leaders cause new aspects of social and political life to come to light. At times, it is hard to separate how the perception and action of perceived interact because perception is usually based on the information available, including past actions of actors in question. One exception to his rule can be found in the international perception of Ukrainian political elites in the early 1990s that was based on the perception of the Soviet political elite. Because of it, during the first decade since the post-communist transition started, the European Union and Ukraine were going through the process of getting to know each other. As Leonid Kravchuk (the first president of Ukraine 1991-1994) recalled, Europeans did not know Ukrainians and Ukrainians did not know Europeans, and both needed time to get to know each other before building a productive partnership (cited in Vlashenko, 2015). This was one of the justifications of Western powers’ approach to Ukraine through the prism of their relations with Russia. This situation changed in the mid-2000s, after the Orange Revolution of 2004.

Orange Revolution, one of the major events in contemporary Ukrainian history changed the international perception of Ukraine, its people, and its leadership. But, within a couple of years following 2004, then active Ukrainian political elites started to fall short on delivering on their promises to reform. This abandonment of reforms forced the EU to question the sincerity of the Ukrainian political elite’s commitment and/or ability to pursue declared pro-European goals. The declarative character of Ukrainian political elites created a situation in which, one party was not able to completely trust others to complete their part of the agreement. The refusal of the former Ukrainian president, Victor Yanukovych, to sign the Association Agreement (AA) that his government was negotiating with the EU is one of the best examples to illustrate the

¹ Due to continued armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Russia’s occupation of Crimea

Ukrainian problem with commitments. While the new Ukrainian government signed the AA and is currently building a productive relationship with the EU, for many years Ukrainian political elites have not been able to achieve the same type of relationship that the EU had with Central European states.

Poland, on the other hand, was better known in Western Europe at the end of the 1980s (Dobbs, Karol, and Trevisan, 1981). This knowledge comes from Poland's success in obtaining independence as the outcome of World War I. Regardless of Poland's past as a socialist country with strong oversight from Moscow, it has been known as a country that wanted to be more independent in its domestic and foreign policy developments (Curry, 1996; Posnanski, 1997). Additionally, Poland had strong anti-communist opposition since the beginning of the 1980s (Koczanowicz, 2005). The presence of strong opposition forced the Polish communist to negotiate the transition to democratic rule during the widely publicized Roundtable negotiations of 1989 (Kennedy, 1990; Bobinski, 2009). The success of these negotiations followed by successful market reforms, known as the shock therapy, created a positive image of the then-new Polish political elite. The positivity of this image was greatly influenced by a visible commitment to reforms and democratization. The same can be said about the commitment of Polish political elites to the pursuit of the 'return to Europe'. At the same time, not every member of Poland's political establishment had a stellar reputation. One example is the international (and domestic) perception of Lech Walesa (first freely elected president of Poland, 1990-1995) that was not too favorable by the end of this presidential term, with some domestic and international opponents associating his rule with dictatorship and authoritarianism (Kaminski and Kurczewska, 1991). But the general perception of the Polish political elite was still positive overall.

Despite the importance of elites' perceptions of each other on the development of international relations, there are not many scholarly works that analyse how perceptions affect international relations. This gap in literature can be explained by the fact that benefits from cooperation overshadow negative perceptions between different elites. One of the major scholarly works on the perception and misperception in international politics was written by Robert Jervis (1976). In this work, Jervis notice that while perception is widely studied in many disciplines including psychology, but it is understudied in the context of international politics. Most following works on the perception in international politics concentrate on the perception as the reason for wars and conflicts and the balancing act between great powers (Stein, 1988; Duelfer and Dyson, 2011; Jervis, 1976; Krieglmeier and Sherman, 2012; Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, 2013; Kurizaki, 2016; Stein, 1982; Canan-Sokullu, 2011; Gaufman, 2017; Rothman and Lichter, 1987). But the study of perception is also important for our understanding of other aspects of international relations. This study is intended to fill this gap in the academic literature by investigating the role of elites' perception of the development of productive relations between the EU and transforming post-communist states that effected their democratization process.

Overview of the research question

While searching for possible explanations for different degrees of European Union's influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine, I concentrate on the study of elites in those two countries and their relations with the European Union's representatives (including EU officials and other members of EU political elites). Specifically, I focus my analysis on elites' decisions and practices to learn what impacted them and how it affected the relations with the EU and the

democratization process in their countries. It is hard to underestimate the importance of Polish and Ukrainian political elites in the transformation process after the fall of communist regimes, especially because the transformations in both states were largely initiated by the old leadership. While the democratic transformations were initiated by the elites in all post-communist states, not all of them were able to make necessary changes to classify their countries as democracies by scholars and well trusted international organizations like the Freedom House. Also, the rationale for the concentration of this research on elites and their perceptions justified by the limited political possibilities of society that are often restricted by powerful forces represented by elites (Higley and Burton, 2006).

Another prominent characteristic of democratic transformation in CEE is the strong external influences on the reformation with the EU playing the most significant role. Investigations into the EU's impact on democratization in this region have not provided clear answers as to why it was not able to make a strong connection with all national elites that would help bring successful political and economic transformations. Existing literature provides us with several competing explanations. One view is that strong leadership of the EU during democratization in a country was/is determined by the attitudes of local political leaders (Tolstrup, 2014; Morlino 2011, Vachudova 2002, 2005). Other scholars indicated this is not true for all states and that many states in Eastern Europe were and still are viewed through the 'Russia first' approach that made the EU less 'interested' in developing closer relations with the second group of states (Flockhart, 2001). This research will enrich the discussion of these factors by adding the analysis of how the international perceptions of national elites affected this process. In summary, I research the relations between Polish, Ukrainian, and European Union elites, specifically how their connections developed over time and how the quality of these connections affected the European Union's impact on democratization in these two states.

An examination of international relations theories shows that most states act in their self-interest (Lebow, 2018; Kittel, Kanitsar, and Traub, 2017; LeVeck et al., 2014). Similar logic can be applied to elite behavior, especially when we look at the post-communist leaders (Newswander, Matson and Newswander, 2017; Simral, 2009; Anderson and Grofman, 1997). For example, old communist elites used their political power to acquire former state companies and to ensure that the loss of political power will not affect their elitist status thanks to newly acquired economic power (Hanley 2000). More so, the studies of Eastern European elites showed that most members of old nomenklatura were looking forward to democratic change in some Eastern European states, like Poland (Wiatr, 2003). In Ukraine, on the other hand, old elites only switched to the nationalist agenda to keep the power (Higley and Pakulski, 1995) due to external and internal forces. Also, the role of elites in democratization processes in Poland and Ukraine is evaluated by looking at the elite consensus, or how united are political elites behind achieving specific developmental goals in those two states and how the unity helped or harmed the transformation (Baylis, 2012).

To find explanations for the varied success of the European Union in affecting democratic transformation in Poland and Ukraine, I look for the answers to the following research questions:

- Why did the European Union have a different level of influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine and what role the EU's, Polish and Ukrainian elites played in this process?
 - o How the EU's, Polish, and Ukrainian elite contributed to those results?

- What determined the difference in the EU's elite attitude toward Ukrainian and Polish elites?
 - How the structure/divisions of the EU's elite affected its relations with Poland and Ukraine?
 - What were the main differences between Polish and Ukrainian elites that prevented the European Union elite to develop similar relations with these two countries?
- Why the democratic transformation initiated and supported by elites did not lead to similar outcomes in Poland and Ukraine?

In order to answer these questions, it is beneficial to start the discussion with democratization theories because democratization is the main and broader subject of this study. Then the theoretical discussion will narrow down to elite theories, external influence on democratization, and the elite perception theories.

Overall, answering the questions raised by this research will help us understand how the international perception of national political elites contributes to the ability of major democratic powers, such as the European Union, to influence positive changes in the democratizing world. From now on, this chapter will continue by defining the problem of this study and how it contributes to the field.

Definitions: elites and perception

At the start, it is helpful to develop working definitions of democracy and democratization and identify the differences between the two. The first key term is democratization that is a transition to a new political regime that allows the holding of clean elections, the introduction of liberal individual rights, or the creation of polyarchic order (Grugel, 2002, p.4). Jiri Priban defines democratic transition 'as the political process of establishing or enlarging the possibility of democratic participation and liberalization' (2012, p. 107). The author also indicates that this process is not unique to the states that go through the transformation from non-democratic regimes, but it can also occur in a regime that is viewed as democratic. Robert Dahl (1956) provides a fuller description of conditions that are essential for the establishment of democracy. These conditions are public control of government decisions; fair election; the right to vote and to run for a public office for practically all adults; the right of citizens to express themselves without fear of punishment and have the access to alternative information sources; citizens' right to organize relatively independent organizations; among others. (Whitehead, 2002, p.10).

Before looking into the role of elites during democratic transformation in Poland and Ukraine it would also be beneficial to define the term "elite". Lasswell, Lerner, and Rothwell indicate that to label people as 'elite' we need to check what attributes can be used as indications of this status (1971, p.16). The authors recommend starting with people who have power, and at the definition of power itself. For this research, I use political and economic power as the basis for the definition of power and political and economic elites as the elites of interest. The main attribute of political power is the ability to make a decision that has the potential to change all aspects of life in society, including political, economic, and social spheres.

While looking closer into elites, we can determine two main elite types: active and passive. Active elites make the majority of decisions and are in charge. Passive elites are often in the opposition to a government and do not have too much influence on the political process in a

country. At the same time, we need to be careful to not automatically identify governing elites as active and opposition elites as passive because the only way for the opposition to change its status is to be active. This change in active/passives status can be observed during the change in the composition of elites that often happens after elections. This differentiation of two types can be found in the example of Poland in the 1980s: members of the communist party during that time can be defined as an active elite and members of the Solidarity as a passive elite. Continuing with this example, the communists can be labeled as the political elites as classified by Lasswell, Lerner, and Rothwell as the top power class (1971, p. 25). There is more scholarly classification of elites not mentioned above, but most of the alternative elite definitions do not apply to this research.

While not many would argue against the importance of political elites during democratic transitions, Higley strengthens this argument by stating that “attempts to achieve liberal democracy merely by institution democratic suffrage and holding elections are almost certain to be unsuccessful” (2009, p. 360). He provides examples of Latin American countries that showed this tendency by having military coups shortly after the installation of democratic regimes. The Latin American countries are not unique, and Ukraine had somehow similar experience. Even though Ukraine never had military coups, the country experienced the return to power of political elites previously outcasted by mass protests. For example, after Viktor Yushchenko became Ukrainian president during the Orange Revolution, his opponent, Viktor Yanukovych, was able to win the next presidential elections and undo some democratic achievements of Yushchenko’s governments. And then the process repeated itself when Victor Yanukovych was forced out of power by mass protests in 2014.

The Ukrainian example may prove that having some working democratic institutions, like free elections, will not necessarily bring democratic rule to a country and that only democratic consolidation within the national elite can help a country build a strong democratic state. While political elites in any country are expected to have different political goals and programs, as long as all of them are committed to the rule of law, the country should not experience any significant instability. A similar argument on the importance of elite consensus can be found in the works of Szelenyi and Szelenyi (1995), Engelstad (2009), Baylis (2012), Vachudova (2002, 2005), Easter (1997) with further discussion of these works to follow in the upcoming chapter.

The last, but not least important definition for this research is the definition of perception. This thesis uses Reis and Moore’s definition of perception as ‘a mixture of evaluative and non-evaluative understanding of the situation. They are a combination of cognitions (non-evaluative understandings); norms (internalized ideas about appropriate roles); and values (ideas about what might be)’ (2005, p. 3). The importance of the study of elite perceptions in the context of decision-making has been stressed out before, mostly by American scholars studying regional political elites in the US (Sabatier and Hunter, 1989; Costantini and Hanf, 1972; Grupp and Richards, 1975; Skrentny, 2006). Additionally, there have been several studies of elite perceptions’ role in the development of foreign policy (Novotny, 2015) and regional integrations (Vigevani and Ramanzini, 2011; Canan-Sokullu, 2011). All those works in combination with the theoretical background for the study of perception done by Jervis in 1976 create a theoretical base for this research.

Definition of the problem

It is more traditional to analyze the external influence on democratization by studying the receiving side of the country that is undergoing a transition. This thesis employs a reverse strategy by analyzing the influencer side by concentrating on one aspect – the perception of national elites in receiving countries (Poland and Ukraine).

Several studies were conducted on the elite's role in the democratic transformation process and the changes within national elites in the post-communist states. In one of them, Szelenyi and Szelenyi (1995) argue that revolutionary changes, which affected political transformation in Eastern Europe, did not cause similarly revolutionary change in elites' composition. Yet, the investigation of political elites in Poland and Ukraine shows a very different picture of elite actions. Engelstad (2009) and Higley and Pakulski (2012) analyze the post-communist changes in elites using a more theoretical approach by analyzing elite consensus and its contribution to democratization. Similarly, Baylis (2012) looks at the elite consensus and its contribution to democratic consolidation in the region while providing some criticism of Higley and his coauthors.

Despite providing a good analysis of political elites' role in democratization, these works do not supply enough information for an in-depth understanding of the reasoning behind specific elite's decisions that affected the democratization process in general and the relations with the European Union in particular. For example, all studies mentioned above only analyze elites in domestic settings. A compelling explanation to this question offered by Sautman (1995) and Roeder (2001), who argue that existent or non-existent popular support for reforms during the post-communist transition was among the justifications behind political elites' preference for slow democratization in many former Soviet Republics or FSRs.

One way to evaluate the role of elites in democratization processes in Poland and Ukraine is to look at elite consensus (Baylis' 2012) in those two states and how the level of elite unity affected the transformation process. In my research, I use John Higley's definition of elite consensus where elites are the necessary condition for the development of stable liberal democracy. This definition is useful because it explains the importance of unity between different elite factions in achieving political and economic goals with strategic importance. Examination of current studies of leadership in CEE shows that Poland had one of the most consensual elites in this region in the 1990s in contrast to the highly divided Ukrainian elite. Etzioni-Halevy's (1990) autonomic elite theory can be used to test why the Ukrainian democratization process and the European integration wasn't successful in comparison to Poland (Engelstad, 2009). This elite theory states that the autonomy of elites in a state with multiple and/or fragmented elites prevent one elite from making executive decisions.

The application of this theory could explain why Ukrainian foreign policy was concentrated toward Eastern and Western integrations at the same time. It can also explain the lack of real reformation progress inside the country. But the application of this theory still needs to be re-tested empirically due to recent changes in regional geopolitics that affected Ukraine.² This empirical test will be conducted in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Another way to explain what role political elites play in democratization is to analyze elites' place within the political regime in a country. More importantly, while the role of leadership is important in the initial stages of any transition, Levitsky and Way (2010) argue that this importance diminished

² Wars in Georgia and Ukraine

with time. While this statement may be true for many states, it is hard to apply it to Poland and Ukraine, where political elites still play a significant role. While elites are always playing a significant role in society, their role may diminish with the establishment of strong institutions. Although, other attributes of governance became more prominent with time, such as the ability of a president or other political leader to consolidate power by using a political party or another power base for political support (Levitsky and Way, 2010).

The combination of political theories that study the role of elites in democracies can also be applied to the analysis of the European Union's contrasting views on Poland and Ukraine. The main argument for the democratic-elite theory was created by Eva Etzioni-Halevy (1990, 1993), who indicated that the relative autonomy of political elites is an integral part of the successful stabilization of Western-style democratic regime even though they do not always pursue the society's interests instead of their own. For example, when the autonomic elite theory (Etzioni-Halevy, 1993) is applied to the EU's elite, it highlights the development of an intriguing tendency after the last two enlargements. The elites from old member states of the EU mostly saw Ukraine through the 'Russia first' approach (Flockhart, 2001; Solonenko, 2011; Youngs, 2008) and only after Poland and other CEE states joined the union in 2004 the official EU's policy towards Ukraine turned to the 'Ukraine first' (Giusti and Penkova, 2010, Youngs, 2008). The validity of the statement that new Eastern European member states' elites were the most influential in the change of EU's foreign policy towards Ukraine needs to be verified by conducting an empirical study due to recent changes in EU-Ukraine relations. The 'Russia first' approach toward Ukraine can be viewed as a simple economic benefit of the EU-Russia trade, with great dependence of some EU countries on Russian energy supply. The security concern is an additional reason behind the 'Russia first' approach because Russia has one of the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. These facts may help us to rationalize the preference for good relations with Russia instead of Ukraine, as the later does not have nuclear weapons anymore.

The application of elite theories to empirical evidence provides theoretical awareness of the limitations of the EU's authority in Ukraine in comparison to the increased influence in Poland. Scholars like Vachudova (2005), Higley and Pakulski (1992, 1995, 1999) among others, indicated the importance of elites' consolidation around democratization goals for the success of the transformation process in any country. The same principle can be applied to the level of European Union influence in different countries. Polish post-communist transition shows that the consolidation of political elites with opposing ideological views around the Europeanization goals made both, the post-communists and post-Solidarity elites seek and accept international help during Poland's democratization. The Ukrainian political elites did not show the same level of unity in Europeanization and reformation goals. All Ukrainian elites were declaring goals to reform the political and economic spheres, but, the only fraction of them was willing and ready to act on these declarations. This lack of action has been making it harder for the European Union's elites to work with Ukrainians and help them in their post-communist development.

Overall, most scholars of democratization acknowledge the importance of elites during democratization and in established democracies (Morlino, 2011; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Przeworski, 1991, 1995; Whitehead, 2001 and 2002; Stroschein, 2012; Collier, 1999; Moser, 2001; Markoff, 1996; Seim and Parente, 2013 and others). With some of them placing political elites in the centre of democratic developments and others analysing elites' actions by researching links between these actions and mass opinion. Elite roles in democratic transitions are usually placed as one of the factors indicating the success, failure, or another outcome of this process. Other factors include the external and internal influence on democratization. For example, Vachudova (2005) uncovered the high importance of domestic factors; Gherghina

(2009) stressed the significance of statehood before the democratization process, while Fish (2001) and Roeder (2001) argue that existing institutions at the beginning of democratization determine how successful the process may be. While all democratization theories contribute to our comprehension of the democratization process, they cannot fully explain what the most crucial factors are to the success and/or failure of democratization. The comparison of democratic processes with a close study of ruling elites in countries like Poland and Ukraine that combine, analyze and compare all factors mentioned above will grant a better understanding of the democratization process by illustrating the differences and similarities between two countries with different outcome of post-communist transitions.

While all theories and studies mentioned so far contribute to our knowledge of democratization in post-communist Europe and the role of the EU in it, they don't provide us a complete picture because they are missing the analysis of elite perception. The majority of works discussed in previous paragraphs are only applicable to the study of internal developments in a country without analyzing how these developments were perceived from outside. The detailed study of elite perception will add to our understanding of other important factors contributing to external democracy promotion. Additionally, answering the question about what differences between Polish and Ukrainian political elites affected European Union's decisions regarding its policy towards these countries. The answer will help analyze not only what elite actions made the difference in domestic settings, but also how it was perceived on the international level. Acquiring this knowledge will improve our analysis of the external influence on democratization by a major international organization like the EU.

Contribution to the field

The European Union as an external democracy promotion actor in post-communist Europe has been the subject of numerous academic studies. Most of these works analyze factors that are often restricted by space and time, such as democratic waves and geography including the neighboring effect and different aspects that accompany it (Berg-Schlosser, 2009; Schimmelfennig, 2001; Vachudova, 2002 and 2005; Przeworski, 1991). Most of the current analysis view this role of the EU through the prism of EU's attractiveness. Especially effective are the studies of leverage and linkages in different forms including conditionalities imposed on potential member states (Vachudova, 2002 and 2005; Levitsky and Way, 2005 and 2010; Mendelski, 2009). In summary, these studies investigate what makes the EU most appealing and how the EU can use it to achieve its goals in its neighborhood. While this literature provides considerable insights into the tools that the EU has at its disposal to influence democratic change, it does not explain why the EU does not always employ these tools efficiently. This research attempts to answer this question by investigating the role of elite perceptions. More importantly, this research looks at the process from the EU perspective by analyzing how the European view of national elites in the region affected the process.

Overall, this research makes an original contribution to the study of elites, international relations, comparative politics and democratization, and the European Union's studies. Firstly, it adds to our knowledge of the democratization process, specifically how the elite perceptions affect external influence on democratization. Secondly, this research contributes to elite studies by illustrating how elites' perceptions of each other affect their ability to build productive relations between their nations. Similarly, this research will enrich our knowledge of international relations by analyzing how the international perceptions of national political elites

affect a country's ability to build productive relations with international organizations. This research also contributes to the study of the European Union by providing an analysis of the EU's political elites, their origin, and the decision-making process.

The main finding of this research is that the EU's elite perception of national elites in Eastern Europe (using Poland and Ukraine as examples) contributed significantly to the EU's ability to promote democracy and build strong relations in the region. The contribution to the elite studies includes the analysis of decision-making in supranational elites in the EU. Specifically, how national elites and politicians in different branches of the EU (mostly the Commission and the European Parliament) contribute to the process. Additionally, this research illustrates the importance of elite perceptions in the international arena with the inclusion of a supranational organization that has not been studied before. As well as the contribution of elite perceptions to the success of the European Union's democracy promotion efforts.

Secondly, this research provides an analysis of how the personal economic interest of political elite members affects the development of a foreign policy of a state and how it affects political elites' ability to implement political and economic reforms during transitions. The comparison of Polish and Ukrainian political elites that were in power during the transition illustrates two different approaches to this process and the results that followed. While existing literature provides a good overview of the subject, the Ukrainian case provides challenges in the applications of these theories due to several political developments that changed the country's political life. The recent event in Ukraine, including the armed conflict in the East and annexation of Crimea by Russia that occurred a decade after the Orange Revolution, which changed Ukraine and affected regional political development. These experiences make this country a unique case for the analysis of political elites in post-communist Eastern Europe.

This research also shows how origin, reproduction, and elite networks affect countries' political development. And how the international perception of this process affected the country's ability to develop productive relations with outsiders. Finally, this thesis tests two theories of elite role during political transformation: the autonomic elite theory developed by Etzioni-Halevy's (1990), mostly applying it to Ukrainian political elites; and the theories of elite consolidation developed by Higley and his coauthors (Higley and Pakulski, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2012; and Higley and Burton, 2006, 2012). The result shows that the EU's elite perceptions of national elites in Poland and Ukraine were greatly affected by the origin, composition, and commitment to reforms. The application of the above theories shows that the lack of unity within Ukrainian political elites had both, positive and negative effects, the positive effect was the prevention of consolidation of power by anti-democratic forces and the negative effect was the lack of democratic consolidation.

This research's contribution to the field of international relations shows how the perceptions of different national and supranational elites are affecting the development of efficient relations between parties. Similarly, this research shows how domestic success in reforming political and economic systems, helps a country achieve international recognition and makes it easier to join influential international organizations like the EU and NATO. More so, this thesis employs Jervis's (1976) theory of perception to test its relevance to the post-Cold war Europe and shows at the end that perceptions are an important part of the international relations that should not be neglected by scholars and practitioners.

The last, but not least, this research contributes to our knowledge of comparative politics by providing an analysis of political developments in two post-communist countries that apply to two regional groups of states: former Warsaw Bloc countries and former Soviet Republics

except for Balkan states. The contribution to comparative politics includes the analysis of geopolitical competition between the European Union and Russia in Eastern Europe. This thesis shows how democracy promotion efforts can be undermined by the presence of strong regional power that willing to attest it. Although the study of national (Polish and Ukrainian) elite perceptions of two major regional powers are not directly studied in this thesis, we can conclude dominant views from their foreign policy decisions. More specifically, this thesis contributes to the field of comparative democratization by illustrating how different elite approaches to post-communist transition resulted in successful and unsuccessful consolidation of democracy in two neighboring countries. Especially, this contributes to the study of Ukrainian democratization, the country that has been balancing between different regime types for the last twenty years. Similarly, this research shows how and why the last democratization wave produced a different result in Central and Eastern Europe.

The contribution to the field of EU studies includes the analysis of identity politics during enlargement, the difference between old and new member states' view on European integration, EU's role in Eastern Europe, and the effectiveness of EU's neighborhood-oriented external policy. Specifically, this thesis investigates how the perceptions and preferences of different elite groups within the EU, such as members of the European Parliament, bureaucratic elite (European Commission), and national elites, affect the quality of EU's relations with neighbors.

Chapter overview

This thesis has eight chapters that discuss the following: Chapter 2 provides an overview of current scholarship on the democratization process in Eastern Europe, the role of the European Union as an external democracy promoter, and what role elite and elite perception played and still plays in this process. In more detail, this chapter will discuss different waves of democratization and how current elite theories can explain it. The second part of this chapter synthesizes the theoretical base of this research by building it up on current literature. Chapter 3 continues with the thesis background by discussing the research design and methodology used. This chapter will justify the case selection, sources, and the method of analysis used and will discuss the application of the theoretical framework discussed in chapters one and two.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the democratization process in Eastern Europe since the fall of communism in 1989-1991. It will start with a historic review of events in the last two decades in Eastern Europe with the following survey of Polish and Ukrainian transitions. In the end, this chapter will also describe the role of the European Union in the Eastern European transition in general and Polish and Ukrainian transitions in particular. At the same time, this chapter will not provide an analysis of the elite role in the democratic transition that will be investigated in detail in the following chapters. The main contribution of this chapter to the thesis is to provide the background needed to understand under which conditions democratization occurred and how the EU was able to influence it. These conditions can be briefly summarized as the national elite's acceptance of the external influence and commitment to reforms, as well as the domestic push for change.

Chapter 5 traces the origin of power elites in Poland, Ukraine, and the European Union. An elite in any given country or place has a different origin, including different socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Especially it is true for three elites studied in this thesis. The difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites mentioned by European Politicians lead me to

question what caused it and how tracing each elite origin will help me answer the main question of this research. To understand the difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites and perception of them by Western Europeans, I will review the historical creation of these elites with an additional look into the European Union's elite. It is important to include the study of the EU's elite origin to understand how and why they have seen political elites in two neighboring states as different. The main contribution of the chapter is to show how the historical origin, elite composition, and geographic locations of Poland and Ukraine contributed to EU elites' perception of these national elites.

Chapters 6 and 7 provide the analysis of the role of Polish and Ukrainian elites in the corresponding country's post-communist transition. The main aim of these two chapters is to understand how much of this transformation was influenced by the elite in the first place. Additionally, these chapters analyze how much of elite decisions during the transition were influenced by external forces. In this case, it will be the European Union's and Russia's influence in each country, with a discussion of how old ties with post-soviet states versus a new connection with the West influenced elite decisions during the transformation. Last, but not least, these chapters analyze the role of economic and security issues that affected elite led post-communist transitions. The main input of these chapters is to illustrate which actions of national political elites in Poland and Ukraine affected the international perception of them. Additionally, these chapters investigate political elites' role as an agent of change in comparison to other factors that affected the democratization process in Poland and Ukraine.

Chapter 8 analyzes the perception of Polish and Ukrainian elites from Western European (European Union's) view. The main aim of this chapter is to understand how different views within the European Union's political elites on national elites in two countries affected the EU's relations with corresponding countries. This chapter also examines national elites within the European Union and tries to determine if there is a significant difference between their view on potential members of the European Union and how it affects the EU's foreign policy. The last chapter of this thesis analyses one of the main obstacle that the European Union faces in Eastern Europe now – Russian imperial ambition and how successful is the alternative offered by Russia in attracting states in the shared neighborhood. It also studies the separation between Eastern Europe and Eurasia that divided former Warsaw Pact countries from former Soviet Republics that may be perceived as an unofficial division of spheres of influence between two dominant regional powers. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of this research. It illustrates this thesis's limitations and contribution to the field in addition to indicating potential new research.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced my research by laying out the argument of how the EU elite perception of national elites in Eastern Europe affected the EU's ability to influence democratization in its neighborhood. A brief discussion of the shortcoming of current knowledge on the subject showed the need for this research. This chapter also indicated the main argument of this research and the research questions. It also highlighted the need to explain why countries like Ukraine, have problems to reproduce their neighbor's success. More so, this chapter indicated why this research was conducted and how it contributes to our knowledge of the subject. That last section of the introduction provided an overview of this thesis's chapters. In summary, this chapter provided background information needed for understanding this research, its main argument, research questions, and its contribution to the literature.

Chapter 2: Theorising Democratic Transition in Eastern Europe

The question of why the European Union had different success in promoting democracy east of its borders was researched by many scholars but despite numerous works produced there still some gaps that need to be filled. This chapter provides the overview of current scholarship on the democratization process in Eastern Europe, the role of the European Union as an external democracy promoter, and the role of elites in this process to find theoretical gaps and synthesize a theory that can explain the impact of elite perceptions on the EU's influence on democratization. The main intention of this chapter is to situate this research and its theoretical contribution to existing academic debate and construct the theoretical base.

In more detail, this chapter will start with the discussion of different waves of democratization and how democratization in this European neighborhood affected Poland and Ukraine. The scholarship on the EU as an external democracy promoter concentrates on the EU's role in this region and local conditions that affect it. The middle part of this chapter concentrates on democratic elite theories. This section provides an overview of different theories and empirical studies that investigate what role national elites played in transformation in Eastern European countries and how the structural diversity of national elites affected political transformation. Also, this chapter provides a theoretical base for the use of perception in international relations. After analyzing the current theoretical literature, this chapter will indicate the theoretical base of this thesis. More importantly, it will illustrate how the blend of the theories of perception and the elites' theories is used to analyze the data collected.

While providing analysis of current literature on the external influence on democratization, this chapter will illustrate the need for additional study of perceptions and misperceptions of national elites that effects the development of relations between international actors. More importantly, filling the gap in our knowledge of how the European Union political elite's perceptions affected the EU's relations with neighboring states helps us understand how this process can be improved. Another reason for this research illustrated in this chapter is the fact that many existing theories cannot explain Ukrainian development since 1991. While many theories are applicable for some periods, overall, they fall short of explaining why Ukraine struggled between democracy and authoritarianism for the last twenty-five years.

Democratization theories

Learning more about how the European Union influences the democratization process in Eastern Europe by using examples of Poland and Ukraine helps us understand which processes are working and which are not for external democracy promotion efforts. Looking into the role of elites during the democratic transformation is one way to strengthen the knowledge of this process and the role of the EU in it. The following discussion will evaluate the current literature on the subject and identify existing gaps.

The democratization process and its prerequisites have been puzzling scholars for many years resulting in the creation of many different theories with some uniquely responding to different time frames of its occurrence on the global scale often identified as democratization waves. Many scholars indicate three major waves of democratization in the world while placing Eastern European democratization in the third and/or the fourth waves (Huntington, 1991;

Markoff 1996). Before going into the details of Eastern European democratization there is a need to define the ‘democratization wave’ and the period associated with each wave. John Markoff defines a democratic wave as a time when “the organization of governments is altered – sometimes by peaceful reform, sometimes by dramatic overthrow – in ways that are widely held to be more democratic” (1996, p.1). The traditional identification of democratic waves was done by Huntington, who placed the first one between 1828 and 1926 and the second one between 1943 and 1962. The third democratic wave started in 1974 and finished in the 1990s (Fraser, 2001). Also, Markoff (1996) noted that democratic waves are usually followed by opposite antidemocratic waves.

The theory of democratization waves shows how interconnected political and economic processes are in different places and especially in the same geographic neighbourhoods. Central and Eastern Europe is not an exception³. This region’s political and economic transformation since the fall of communism was strongly influenced by external forces with the European Union playing the most significant role. Strong European Union’s influence on the democratization process in this region can be explained by the fact that democracy promotion is understood by the EU as a process through which different instruments and forms of assistance are used to advocate, support, or bring pressure to secure policy changes aiming at democratic development (Buscaneanu, 2016). Investigations into the EU’s impact on democratization in this region have not provided clear answers as to why it was not able to make a strong connection with all national elites of this region that would help bring about successful political and economic transformations. The examples of this differentiation can be found by comparing external influence on democratization in Central and Eastern Europe (Vachudova, 2002 and 2005).

The overview of general democratization theories that analyse how and why democratization occurs and what makes it successful may be divided into several groups by their subject of analysis. These groups include theories that study institutional change (Moser, 2001, Morlino, 2011) and elite roles in democratization (Moser, 2001, Morlino, 2011, Higley and Burton, 2012, Etzioni-Halevy, 1993). Both of which are part of the international influence on democratization. Internal influence on democratization is often initiated by mass protest, some time in a form of a long-term movement, like Solidarity in Poland, some time in a form of revolution (peaceful or violent), like the Orange Revolution and the Maidan in Ukraine.

For quite some time now, since the 1990s, many scholars have been evaluating the relations between democratization and the economic situation in a country. Many argue that economic development is needed for the successful development of democracy. Adam Przeworski (2005) indicate that democracy is impregnable in economically developed countries and very fragile in poor ones by analysing income data from world countries and comparing them to regime types. At the same time, it is hard to make a clear conclusion about the role of economic development during the consolidation of democracy. Many examples around the world would suggest that democratization or democracy may prevent economic development due to the inability of elected elites to enforce needed reforms, as in Latin American countries (Grosjean and Senik, 2011). Another example that challenges the assumption that economic development leads to democracy can be found in China, the communist country that recently experienced tremendous economic growth, but still show no indication of democratization. India

³ Countries located West of Ukraine

provides one more example that challenges this assumption, by having established democracy since the 1950s, alongside low economic development.

Previous works of Przeworski (1991, 1995) have investigated the relationship between economic and democratic transitions. In the analysis of democratic transitions in Latin America and Europe (1991), the author highlights roles that different parts of the ruling elite play in the political and economic reformation by dividing them into moderate (more liberal), radicals, reformers, and hardliners (more conservative). The success of both, political and economic transitions would rely on the ability of these groups to find equilibrium with democracy as the outcome. Under these conditions, it is important that ruling elites can establish appropriate democratic institutions and effective mechanism that would enforce the results of democratic rule that always have winners and losers. In addition to political winners and losers, democratic transformation is often accompanied by economic reforms that create larger groups of losers than political changes.

Przeworski's work can be applied to both cases studied in this thesis: first, we have Poland, the country experiencing hard economic times before the start of the post-communist transition in 1989 and is a real need to introduce swift economic reforms. This can explain why after the first economic reforms Poles still voted for the Solidarity leadership and only with time, reformed communists were able to win elections using democratic platforms. At the same time, Ukraine, the country that experienced no significant economic troubles before 1991 with almost a hundred percent stable employment, had a very hard time to embrace new democratic values that were linked to the harsh economic situation. While the combination of economic and political developments in a country can explain some cases of successful or unsuccessful democratization, overall it has many shortcomings that need to be analyzed from a different perspective.

Goran Therborn (1980) investigated the emergence of democratic regimes in the countries classified as democracies at the time. His approach was to investigate what was the main force that initiated the democratization and where it came from. Therborn divided these forces into two categories: external and internal using mainly the twentieth century to show the historical process behind it. At the beginning of the post-communist transition, Hermansson (1992), applied the same analysis to Eastern Europe, indicating a strong presence of external factors that show a lack of direct correlation between capitalism and democratization (p.222). Fraser (2001) provides evidence of economic waves that correspond with Huntington's democratic waves and uses Latin American democratization as an example. In his article, Huntington shows the existing link between economic and democratic and reverse democratic waves, which is especially significant with the analyses of the effect of economic crises. This theory can partially explain the outcome of the 2010s presidential elections in Ukraine, in which Yanukovich won even though his 'victory' during the previous election was annulled.

External influencers on democratization employ several different ways to achieve positive results. One of them is norm diffusion that can only be understood from a historical perspective. Flockhart (2001) uses this approach to analyze democratization on the European continent since the early twentieth century by applying the 'democratic zone of peace' concept (p.28) to show how the democratic regime type took over the continent during the last century by creating new democratic institutions that became a new normal among European states and constructing new attractive reality in which other regimes are perceived negatively. This social construction of acceptable regimes significantly influenced and is still influencing political development on the continent. The same principle applies to other regions, especially the

Americas, where the strong influence of the United States had a similar effect on democratization. Although, we need to mention the great role that the US played in establishing European democracies after WWII with economic support to post-war nations and creating of strong Euro-Atlantic alliance, including the creation of NATO. Empirical chapters of this thesis will show the further role of the US that helped Poland's successful Euro-Atlantic integration.

Current scholarship on the European Union's influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine mostly investigates EU presence in each country separately or among a bigger group of states (Vachudova, 2002, 2005 and 2009). Although, there is one recent book comparing the post-communist transition in Poland and Ukraine (Hartwell, 2016) there has yet to be a direct comparison of the two regarding the EU's impact that is the intent and one of the main contributions of this research to the field. Hartwell's book is looking into Poland's unexpected successful post-communist transition and analyzes why Ukraine was not able to do the same, especially due to its stronger economic position before the fall of communism. The main emphasis of this book is placed on the institutional change in both states and its influence on the economic outcome of the post-communist transition in Poland and Ukraine (Hartwell, 2016, p. 471). At the same time, this book lacks an analysis of how political and economic elites influenced the outcome of post-communist transitions in these two countries. The other study that directly compared Poland and Ukraine has been done by Copsey (2013) who investigated the influence of public opinion on the creation of foreign policy in Poland and Ukraine. Although the author briefly looks into Euro integration, the book mostly concentrates on the Poland-Ukraine relations.

There is also a lack of comparison between the countries that belong to two groups of East European states represented by Poland and Ukraine: one group that successfully democratized, members of which now are members of the EU, and the second group consisting of other countries in wider Eastern Europe. Berg-Schlosser (2008) concentrates his analysis of democratization in Europe, by studying the neighboring effect on this process by analyzing several waves of democratization on the continent. In his conclusion, democratization in post-communist states was largely influenced by outside while comparing to democratization in Southern Europe in the 1970s. At the same time, the external influence originated from the East, where the Soviet Union started reforms and gave a green light to do the same to all other states in Warsaw Pact. And only after the initial democratic transition, Western Europe became directly involved in this process by using different approaches and programs like Eastern Partnership (EaP).

Solonenko (2011) studied the EU's EaP by analysing its positive and negative effects on Ukraine's European integration. The author acknowledges the visible lack of real commitment to European integration on the Ukrainian side. This lack of commitment can be explained by limited knowledge about the EaP amongst the political elites in partner countries like Ukraine (Wolczuk, 2011). At the same time, Solonenko indicates that the EaP was not perceived by Ukrainian political elites as a major improvement in relations with the EU simply because Ukraine was already working on the development of all of the opportunities included in it. According to the author, the main positive development of EaP for Ukraine was the ability to deepen its cooperation with European Union member states by using institutions created by this partnership. The Ukrainian civil society had a different attitude towards the EaP due to its ability to widen cooperation with civil societies in other EaP states and the European Union. At the same time, Ukrainian civil society similarly to political elites did not show too much interest in this new European Union's policy in Eastern Europe. As it was mentioned above many of those works provide an analysis of specific policy and/or a specific period, like Shapovalova (2008),

who provides a survey of the EU democratization effort in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution in 2004 by analyzing the negotiation of a new cooperation agreement between the European Union and Ukraine; or Balfour (2012) who focused on aspects of human rights in EU-Ukraine relations. While all these scholarly works contribute to our understanding of EU-Ukraine relations, they don't provide a comprehensive overview of this process.

The question of the European Union's leadership during democratization in Poland was researched by Vachudova (2002, 2005), who studied Poland among other countries in East-Central Europe. Her works indicate that the European Union (among other international actors) started strongly influencing democratic transition in this region only after 1994. Additionally, Vachudova investigated how the external influencers achieve their goals through passive and active leverage on transforming regimes. Anna Wagner-Findeisen (1992) provided a legal assessment of Poland's aspirations toward full membership in the EU. Wagner-Findeisen concentrated her work on analysing the first years of Polish political and economic transition and illustrates how this process affected Poland's relationship with the European Community. Additionally, Wagner-Findeisen (1992) highlights that Poland did not have the same level of support in Brussels as it has been having in Washington, where a strong Poland-American lobby has been able to influence American policy towards this state. This lack of a strong lobby in Brussels made it harder for Warsaw to work with European bureaucrats, but the Polish elite was able to enlist the support of the US in achieving its goals of Euro-Atlantic integration. Millard has also studied Poland-EU pre-accession relations focusing on Polish domestic politics, especially election results and the relations between the executive and legislative branches of government (1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009).

Steves (2001), on the other hand, looks at a broader external influence on Polish democratic transformation and indicates a strong role of the local elite in this process. He also stresses the importance of prospective EU and NATO memberships for Polish acceptance of external influence. Poland's Euro-Atlantic integration project was supported by the majority of local elites with some exception of former communists who worried about the destabilization in Central Europe. Generally, Steves agrees with other scholars in the determination of the EU's external influence on the democratization process and the important role of national (local) political elites in making this transition a success. Piort Buras (2005), in comparison to Steves, studies how external political forces influenced transition within Polish political parties, like the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland. Buras' study provides a narrower example of external influence on a political transition that helps complete the whole picture and shows the development of networks between political parties in different countries. Additionally, this study shows the importance of national or local elites' commitment to the transformation process by creating favorable ground for policy transfer from the EU to Poland.

The neighborhood effect's idea mentioned above was used by the European Union to guide democratic changes in its neighborhood through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Schimmelfennig (2001) indicates three ways the EU uses this policy to promote democracy: political conditionality, economic development, and transnational exchange. He also indicated that these three ways are interrelated. Schimmelfennig correctly noticed that the EU would be more successful in its democracy promotion efforts if the union offered more memberships in the region. For example, the Ukrainian elite's view on EU's relations with their state, demonstrate that they have insufficient reason to transform their country to European standards because it won't be able to join the European Community in the view of the European Union's foreign policy towards this country.

The major problem with using the neighborhood effect to explain the democratization processes in Eastern Europe occurs within the attempt to explain why it varies among countries within the same region. Mendelski (2009) indicated that the European Union has the most effective conditionality system among the world's IGOs, but as was mentioned before, the conditionality works only if there is a strong incentive for a country to comply. In Ukraine, the lack of strong signals from the EU about potential membership has stopped this country's political elites from taking conditionality more seriously. The other reason why the conditionality does not always work (Vachudova, 2002) is that the EU's conditionality has had the most definite effect on stronger and more developed countries and lesser effect on states that are perceived by the international community as weak. There still needs to be empirically determined if this explains the reason why in the examples of Poland and Ukraine, Poland with its stronger state institutions and more consolidated political elites was able to fulfill the EU accession requirements much faster than other states in the region and Ukraine.

Vachudova, similarly to Mendelski (2009), in her work on regional transformation in CEE, has tried to learn why the EU was more successful in promoting democracy among the countries that joined the union first. Vachudova argues that passive leverage is the first step in the process and it has transpired for most of the CEE states during 1989-1994 and that it is only after a country applies for a membership that the active leverage comes into play. To determine why the EU had a different level of significance during democratization in different states the author investigated geographic location, specifically how the proximity to the EU affected transformation, and concluded that it had no notable effect on it. I agree that there is no clear evidence supporting the importance of geographic location on democratic transformation in the CEE countries, but if we consider broader Eastern Europe, we can see that it does. Even, before enough time passed to make any conclusions about the outcome of the post-communist transition in this region, Przeworski (1991) predicted that these democratic transitions are likely to be successful because Central and Eastern European states are located close the Western European democracies. Ukraine can be a great example of the significance of geographic location on the prospects of the EU membership because since the start of a transformation in Eastern Europe this country was placed among Eurasian states that utilized the 'Russia first' approach by the EU.

Vachudova (2002) also argues that the success of external influence on democratic transformation depended mostly on domestic politics in each state. Although Vachudova's writing provided some pertinent answers to the question why some states responded more favorably to EU's leadership during democratization, she concentrated only on CEE states and left out Eastern European states like Ukraine, Belarus, etc. The lack of inclusion of former Soviet Republics in her study provided only a partial picture of this process. Additionally, most of the countries east of the current EU border 'have a choice' to join the European organizations, like the EU and NATO, or Eurasian organizations, like the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Union (Cadier, 2014; Korosteleva, 2016; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013). While the integration into the European Union seems very attractive, Russia, the leader of the Eurasian Union, usually makes a counteroffer that a country cannot refuse. Kuzio (2008) compared Ukraine and Belarus and showed that geopolitics and proximity to Russia may be a strong factor that prevents democratization. The main problem for countries that are close to Russia, especially for Ukraine, is that Russia sees them as part of its zone of domination. It is a well-known fact that many Russians, including the elite, were surprised by Ukrainian independence in 1991 (Tolz, 2002, p. 236). The current Ukrainian crisis arguably demonstrates that Russia will do everything in its power to keep Ukraine under its control (Larson and

Shevchenko 2014). That is and has been affecting the ability of the Ukrainian elite to build stronger relations with the European Union.

The external influence on a process inside any country is not possible without help from somebody inside that country who will provide the platform needed for the external actor to carry on the message to the local population. Jakob Tolstrup (2014) and Morlino (2011), similarly to Vachudova, allocated this role to gatekeepers in each country who give external influencers the ability to participate in local political life by using local actors. Those gatekeepers are usually consisting of three types of the national elite: ruling political elites, opposition elites, and economic elites. The external actor can work with one or more of these elites at the same time. According to Tolstrup, the gatekeeper elite can greatly affect the density of ties to an external actor and will determine whether these elites will mainly want to open gates or close them to the outsiders (2014, p. 128). The willingness of the gatekeeping elite to allow an external actor to influence the local population will greatly depend on the benefits that this elite will gain from it and the external alternatives. We can see the example of external alternatives in former Soviet Republics (FSRs), which have an option of Western (EU) or Eastern (Eurasian Union) integration. The gatekeeping role of the national elite provides us one more reason for the deeper study of elite roles during the democratization process.

Another way to look at the EU's role in Eastern Europe is to investigate the economic benefits that the integration brings not only to the new member state but to the union as well. John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr (1999) looked at the importance of economic reasoning behind the European Union's influence on democratization in this region. They argued that most of Eastern and Central European states needed Western financial help to transform due to the loss of support from the USSR. The authors also noted the general tendency of economic pressure on democratization globally and the high price of being excluded from major international organizations and markets (Nagle and Mahr, 1999). The possible reasons behind the EU's path to enlargement highlight that for most old members states it was more about moral duties than purely rational and economic rewards as argued by Schimmelfennig (2003) and Sjursen (2002, 2012).

Looking further into the subject, Roeder, Fish, Anderson, and Hanson (2001) investigated the EU's influence on democratization in CEE through various theoretical viewpoints. Roeder, for example, concluded that the democratization theories that existed before the early 1990s cannot be applied in Eastern Europe because of this region's unique history. Moser (2001) indicated that the assumption that countries going through post-communist transition faced more challenges than other democratizing states before them may not be accurate. These challenges included: 'the simultaneous challenge of democratization and introduction of a free-market economy, greater ethnic diversity and conflict, weaker civil societies, weak or absent democratic traditions, and a less hospitable international environment (p. 3).

For another example, we can apply "Barrington Moore's hypothesis 'no bourgeois, no democracy'" to Ukraine (1966, p. 418). The application of this concept states that Ukraine will never be able to democratize because the bourgeois class was mostly destroyed during the communist rule. Later, Philip G. Roeder hypothesized that "the least favorable condition for the authoritarian option and the most favorable for the democratic option has been institutional pluralism within the authoritarian state" (2001, p.12). It seems to be true for most states in the region, but some examples may disprove it. One of the examples is that the Baltic States' lack of institutional pluralism in the early 1990s did not stop them from a successful democratic

transformation. By indicating the importance of institutional pluralism, the author stresses the need for the presence of different institutions within a state if the state wants to successfully transform into democracy.

M. Steven Fish (2001) agrees with Roeder that employing classic democracy theories in Central and Eastern Europe is problematic and that this region is unique due to its communist past. One of the reasons for this uniqueness is the fact that most of these states are newly independent and the post-communist leaders are viewed as the founders of the nation-states. The continuance of old elites slowed down democratic transformations in many former Soviet states. Fish's argument is similar to Gherghina's (2009) argument on the significances of statehood at the beginning of a democratic transformation. While pre-existing statehood and plural institutions in democratizing states are important when comparing the Baltic States to Ukraine, it is noticeable that they had similar institutions at the time when they were part of the Soviet Union, but the Baltic States were able to transform more successfully than Ukraine did. The known facts of different transitions between countries with similar political conditions at the start will state that there is a need to look at a broader picture than just institutional pluralism or the existence of nationhood to get an understanding of why different states transformed differently after the fall of communism.

The overview of the above scholarship showed that the literature on the European Union's influence on democratization has a lack of clear explanation of why the external leadership during democratization produced different results among states, including Poland and Ukraine. Most current theories highlight the importance of geographical location and timing for democratization. This importance is shown by the theories of democratic waves (Huntington, 1991; Markoff 1996; Fraser, 2001), the neighbourhood effect (Flockhart 2001; Berg-Schlosser, 2008; Schimmelfennig, 2001), and was shown in works by Przeworski (1991, 1995, 2005). Further, this argument was strengthened by the analysis of European Union conditionalities, their types, and different success for the democracy promotion. The analysis of conditionalities shows that countries located in Central Europe, like Poland, which were seen as potential members of the EU from the early 1990s can illustrate the efficiency of passive and active conditionalities (Vachudova, 2002, 2005). At the same time, this analysis can only partially be applied to Ukraine because this country still has not being recognized by all European elites as a potential member of the EU.

A similar type of agreement in the literature discussed above, made regarding the importance of national elites that play the role of gatekeepers. It has been noted by Vachudova (2002, 2005), Tolstrup (2014), Morlino (2011), Stevens (2001), and others that the acceptance of national elites (political, economic, cultural, and civil society) will help spread influential ideas from abroad in any given country. This importance of the national elite provides bases for deeper study of the elite's role in the external influence on democratization that can be done after a deeper analysis of current literature on the subject.

Elite role in democratic societies

The review of current literature on the role of political elites in the post-communist world illustrates how national elites shaped the democratization process in different states by providing several theories to explain it. These are works by Vachudova (2002, 2005), Mahr and Nagle (1999), Etzioni-Halevy (1993), Higley (1992, 1995, 2012), Priban, (2012), and Easter (1997) among others. Bandeli and Radu (2006) also indicate that the democratic transformation in

Central and Eastern Europe was based on the political commitment of the national elite to the creation of democratic institutions and learning by the corresponding citizenry how these institutions operate. Although most of the authors mentioned developed varied theories to explain the role of elites in the post-communist transformation, they all indicated the continuity of the same elites from communism to post-communism (Mahr and Nagle, 1999). Engelstad provides an overview of the current take on the elite role and the differences between the new and classic elite theories (2009, p. 384). He indicates that the duality of citizens and elites is a source of constant and probably unsolvable tensions in modern democracies. Semantically, it warrants the oxymoron 'democratic elitism', which, despite its contradictory character, is essential for understanding how modern democracies function.

Pridham (2000) notes the important role of political elites and parties during transformation because they perform important roles during the democratic transition, specifically, they formulate the rules and structures of liberal democracy through assemblies, setting up the government, and determine the course of policy direction. If we take for example empirical data on changes in the Polish elite provided by Wiatr (2003), the evidence indicates more than half of the former communist elite members kept their powerful position under a new democratic government. The following paragraphs will review the current theoretical and empirical literature on national leaderships in Central and Eastern Europe, specifically how the elite changed with time and how they affected the transition from communism to democracy.

There are numerous references in academic literature specifying the significant role of elites in democratic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, but limited analysis of the role of elites in the context of relations with the EU⁴. Similarly, several studies were conducted to determine the elite's role in democratic transformation processes and on the changes within national elites in post-communist states, but they do not provide sufficient information for an in-depth understanding of the reasoning behind specific elite's decisions that affected the democratization process in general and the relations with the European Union in particular. Szelenyi and Szelenyi (1995) provide the analysis of a study of elite recruitment in the region by analyzing how two different techniques - elite circulation and reproduction affected the elite composition. In the end, the authors argue that elite circulation is a dominant way of recruitment in the region. The elite circulation means that one elite is always replaced by another because it is a way society works (Pareto, 1968). This can explain the outcome of political and economic reforms. Engelstad (2009) argues that the study of elites in democratic settings always needs to be conducted in combinations with the study of the public sphere because they both affect each other.

Baylis (2012), similarly to Engelstad, analyses existing works on elites and democratization and investigates the effect elite consensus and elite settlements had on the development of political polarization in Central Europe. Higley and his coauthors provide a good argument for the importance of elite consensus for democratic consolidation (Higley, 1992, 2009; Higley and Burton, 2006 and 2012; Higley and Pakulski, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2012a, 2012b), but at the same time, their analysis only investigates one side of the democratization process. Easter (1997), on the other hand, analyses the regime preferences by political elites in transitional societies by arguing that preference for presidentialism is an indicator of weak consolidation of democracy. As with other theories, this theory can only explain some cases of post-communist transitions. A good example of how national political leadership affected Polish European integration is described by Anna Pluta (2004) who found that the ideological

⁴ Before the accession of Central European countries to the EU

differences inside Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) were one of the main factors for the development of a successful plan for the EU integration. While currently, we have a good body of literature that analyses the role of political elites during transitions, there is no examination of how national elites were affected by the EU.

One way to evaluate the role of elites in democratization processes in Poland and Ukraine is to look at elite consensus (Baylis, 2012) in those two states and how the level of elites' unity affected the transformation process. The elite consensus is used as another way to portrait the consensual elites that work in unity to achieve common goals. According to Higley and Burton (2006), a consensually united elite is an elite in which 'factions and sector elite regularly and publicly oppose each other on ideological and policy matters, their activity over time suggest an underlying consensus about most norms of political behavior and the worth of existing political institutions' (p.14).

To further explore the issue Smith (2000) quotes Weiler and Wesseles (1988, pp. 243-8) who have suggested that the most appropriate theory for political co-operation is the consolidation model, where a 'cartel' of elites regularly co-operates to preserve functionality and stability. The application of this model to elites specify that they must: 1) share a commitment to the maintenance of the system and the improvement of its cohesion, functionality, and stability; and 2) understand the dangers of political fragmentation. Since this form of political co-operation has never suffered a major institutional crisis during the history of its use, it certainly seems that political co-operation of different elites that tend to share similar values or simply have the same goals will be able to create and sustain political order they desire.

Levitsky and Way (2010) also indicated the importance of the united elites and the ability of the ruling party to consolidate power. More precisely, they notice that where organizational power is low, transitions are easy, but democratization is difficult. This can be explained by the fact that where state and/or governing party organizations are weak, regimes may be toppled with relative ease allowing the new ruling party to come to power. The main problem with these 'easy' transitions is that if the new party is not capable of consolidating power, it can be as easily overturned by other powerful groups. Levitsky and Way call this type of transition a 'rotten-door' transition, in which protesters essentially knock down a door that has already rotted from within and they require little opposition mobilization. The authors state that rotten-door transitions frequently do not lead to democracy due to a lack of powerful forces to keep it safe and stable (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p. 354-5). The concept of rotten-door transition cannot be applied to Ukraine in the 2000s because according to the authors, their prediction of continued weak competitive authoritarianism in this country did not come to pass after Ukraine democratized in 2005. This surprising development supports the case for additional research on post-communist political development in Ukraine.

Etzioni-Halevy's autonomic elite theory can also be used to test why the Ukrainian democratization process and European integration were not successful in comparison to Poland (Etzioni-Halevy, 1990, 1993). Etzioni-Halevy in this elite theory states that the autonomy of elites in a state with multiple and/or fragmental elites prevents one elite from making executive decisions on behalf of all. Application of this theory could explain why Ukrainian foreign policy was concentrated towards Eastern and Western integration at the same time and the lack of real reformation progress inside the country, but the application of this theory still needs to be tested empirically regarding cases studies in this research. Higley and Pakulski correctly noted that "the Ukrainian national elite was born divided" (1995, p. 426) meaning that Ukrainian elites were and

still are representing many different groups inside the country with different political, economic, and social views.

Anna Larsson Seim and Stephen L. Parente theorize that ‘elite, who controls the nation’s polity... eventually democratize society because they expect a higher income net of taxes under democracy than autocracy once the economy becomes sufficiently industrialized’ (2013, p. 36). Their main argument is that democratization is rational for the ruling elite in societies where most of the population can make money and pay their taxes. Also, in capitalist societies, the material empowerment of economic elites and not just the political ones comes from people’s ability to pay for merchandise and services offered. This is an appealing theory, but it doesn’t seem to work well in real life. While it did work in some Western countries, Eastern Asia with many rich countries that still have not democratized yet shows a different picture. Ahlquist and Wibbels (2012) propose different scenarios that indicate that elites currently in charge of authoritarian regimes would pursue trade policies in their own interest and have no need for democracy. This scenario can be applied to many regimes, not only un-democratic ones. This generality makes it hard to use this theory to explain the troubled democratic transition in post-communist Europe.

While it is logical to assume that elites in any given country would pursue their interest at the expense of public interest, democratic societies developed to check and balance mechanisms to prevent usurpation of this power by one elite group. The opposite situation can be observed in many former Soviet Republics. In some cases, where political elites control major state enterprises, especially once involved in the sale of natural resources, the elite has little incentive to open their countries to the world trading systems. In such cases, the combination of factors with protectionist trade policy can generate unrealized gains from trade for regime insiders and can prevent the development of beneficial relations with the EU. Fraser (2001) also indicates that sometimes political elites have a rational interest in implementing democratic rule while most of the time the elite will start the changes due to strong pressure from the masses. A similar argument was also raised by Albertus and Menaldo (2014) who indicate that during political transformation, elites often support democratization to prevent their complete economic and political demise.

The rational interest of old elites during the political transition can also be used to analyze the institutional choice of new rulers. Gerald Easter (1997) indicates that when old political elites held on to power after the initial transition, they are more likely to choose a presidential republic as a new regime type, and when old elites are removed from power, new elites prefer parliamentary republics. The logic behind these choices is based on the way political power is distributed, the presidential allows one person or small group of people hold most of the political power in a nation. As result, this regime type can lead to usurpation of power and move to authoritarianism, as happened in many former Soviet Republics. In other cases, where the political change was negotiated, like in Poland, new political elites usually adopt the parliamentarism. This regime type allows several different elite groups to hold political power. As result, the adaption of parliamentarism often leads to the consolidation of democracy, as it happened in many Central European states.

To summarise, the role of elites in democratic transition has been studied by many scholars as shown by the section above. While these works provide good insights for the study of the elite’ role in democratization, the application of them to case studies in this research-proven to be difficult. The major difficulties with the application of these theories arise in the case of Ukraine. While most of the elite theories above, can be applied to some period of

Ukraine's post-communist transition, they are not applicable for the whole process. A good example is provided by Levitsky and Way (2010) who clearly state that Ukraine is an exception to the general rule of political developments in the post-Soviet region. The authors state that the establishment of democratic rule after the Orange Revolution (2004) does not fit their model that predicts political regime development.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the application of Easter's (1997) theory for the preference of presidential and parliamentarism because, in Ukraine, political elites tried to implement both with different results. Although, these developments can be explained by the fact that Ukrainian political elites were not united around the same political ideas that prevented democratic consolidation. At the same time, this division in ideological views of political elites prevented Ukraine from consolidating authoritarianism. Additional study of political elites in Ukraine since independence will help us find the answer unique to this country's development by asking the question of why the elites were not able to unite on political grounds similarity to their Western neighbours.

The study of political elites during the post-communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe only represents part of the elites studied in this MPhil thesis. The second part of this elite study is concentrated on the European Union's political elites and how the relationship between national political elites of member states affected the European Union's ability to influence positive changes in its Eastern neighborhood. The majority of European Union elite studies concentrate on relations between elite and masses in the questions of foreign policy (Hooghe, 2003; Sanders and Toka, 2013; Cotta, 2012; and Wood, 2002). These scholars noted existing gaps between the public and elites' opinions in the EU. Sanders and Toka (2013) use a survey that investigates how the EU should develop in the future. This survey was conducted among the elites and the masses simultaneously in sixteen EU countries in 2007. Then the authors used the responses obtained from these two social groups to analyze how the opinions of these groups affect each other. The result showed that although elites and masses notice each others' opinions it is hard to completely understand how these opinions act in different domains of political life (Sanders and Toka, 2013). Wood (2002) in his article also investigates how the masses and elites view the European Union's enlargement and how it is similar and different from other states in the EU.

Most importantly for this research, most scholars agree that the European Union's elite support the enlargement process and development of good relations with neighbours that may join the union one day. This elite support for enlargement can be as high as 90 percent with lesser support from the masses, somewhere around 50-60 percent in favor of the enlargement (Hooghe, 2003). Hooghe also notices different support for the European Union's official foreign policy between European Commission political elite and national elites with the first one supporting it in an overwhelming majority – 92.4 percent and only 64.3 percent of national elites support the same (2003, p. 284). While Eastern enlargement was also named as an “elite project” by the researchers mentioned above, Hooghe's research shows the need to evaluate how different the views of European and national political elites are on this issue.

Fredrik Engelstad (2009) adds to the above discussion by noticing that when one political elite cooperates with another elite in a democracy, they must mutually recognize each other to pursue their own distinctive goals. A similar approach can be used in the international arena. For example, when one elite (Ukrainian) notice that the European Union's elite does not recognize them in the same way as it does Ukrainian neighbors it probably will result in a breakdown of mutual recognition and worsen the relationship. The other reaction to this

differentiation in the neighbor treatment by the EU or other international organizations may be the self-evaluation by political elites in the overlooked country to find a way to improve their international standing. Ukrainian political elites in the 1990s and early 2000s may provide an example that illustrates how it works. The analysis of Leonid Kuchma's (president of Ukraine during 1994-2005) actions during his second term, designed to achieve international recognition may have prevented him from consolidating his presidential power and run for a third presidential term as did many presidents in the former Soviet republic, including Russia.

Also, the lack of mutual recognition between different elites may result in the breakdown of democracy and the usurpation of power by one of them. It is also important that partner elites show a tacit acknowledgment of their mutual dependency (Engelstad, 2009) that corresponds to better cooperation and will help the EU increase its influence in countries like Ukraine. One of greatest ways to show mutual respect between different elites is by using media because 'in modern societies elites to a large extent communicate via media, and their opinions are shaped, and personal evaluations are made based on reports and statements that other elite people make in the press, public debates, and official documents' (Engelstad, 2009, p. 391). The use of media as an elite communication tool is very useful for foreign relations, in a situation where members of different elites do not interact with each other daily.

Now, almost ten years after Engelstad's (2009) article was published, when almost everybody uses social media, we need to add social media posts as a new way of media communication. While some social media accounts represent private views of their account holders, some accounts are representing public institutions and may be treated as official statements. This public context of elite communication brings attention to the importance of elite narrative while addressing domestic and external policy issues and creating a clear message that won't get misunderstood by others. While narratives often simplify complex, conditional, and excessively contextualized stories, they still allow the trace of its authors' intention towards other groups. In sum, narratives are the articulation of identity that is derived from the general discourse of an elite (Tonra, 2011, p. 194).

Overall, this section reviewed and analyzed current literature on the elite role in democracies, democratization, European Union decision-making, and international relations. It illustrated that despite numerous studies of political elites, there still a need to learn more to understand why the European Union had had different successes in promoting democratic change in Eastern Europe. Especially it is true for countries like Ukraine, which do not fit many dominant theoretical approaches. It is also important to update our empirical knowledge of political elites in Eastern Europe after the Ukrainian Euromaidan, the event that changed elites' attitudes in Ukraine and the European Union. Additionally, the last several paragraphs showed the lack of our understanding of elite interaction on an international level and what affects these interactions.

Theories of political perception

Although the study of elites continues to have stable attention with the recent publication of the Handbook on Elites (2018) that features many current scholars of the subject, it is still understudied how perceptions and misperceptions between different political elites in the international arena affect relations between countries and major international organizations, like the EU. It may sound like a self-explanatory statement that elites' perceptions of each other affect their relationships, as well as the relations between organizations and/or states they

represent. But this visible simplicity does not always have a base because we have too many examples when the benefits from cooperation overshadow negative perception between elites.

One example of this type of relationship is the successful relations between economic and/or trade partners which bring significant benefits for both parties involved. The other situation that creates the situation when the negative perception of the ruling elite is overlooked on the international level is the relationship between the buyer and seller of valuable and/or rare commodity. One of the best cases to illustrate it is the good relations between oil producers and sellers in the Middle East and political elites in the democratic West. In this situation, the relations between countries stay stable and productive despite the missteps of ruling elites in sellers' countries, that would be received negatively from ruling elites in resource-poor countries. While the situation discussed above is more or less predictable, in my research I investigate how the perceptions of national elites in democratizing post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (that have no significant natural resources to sell) affected the effectiveness of democracy promotion efforts of the European Union.

The relevance of perceptions in international politics has been mostly studied in the context of wars and the perception of great powers, like China, the Soviet Union (Russia), and the US (Taras, 2013; Novotny, 2015), the powers closely associated with the Cold War. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, images became regarded more powerful in international relations than ideology, which prevailed during the Cold War, although this situation may change if Russia continues its current foreign policy trajectory. The study of perception is a part of broader constructivism theory widely used in international relations. This theory is mostly used to explain how socially constructed reality affects developments in the international system. The application of constructivism uses a comparative study of perceptions to example why two similar countries may be perceived as a friend and a foe by a third party. Because of these developments, the study of perception in the international relations is often concentrated on the analysis of a threat perception (Stein, 1988; Duelfer and Dyson, 2011; Jervis, 1976; Krieglmeier and Sherman, 2012; Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, 2013; Kurizaki, 2016; Stein, 1982; Canan-Sokullu, 2011; Gaufman, 2017; Rothman and Lichter, 1987). Overall these studies can be divided into two major groups, one related to the Cold War (Stein, 1988; Jervis, 1976; Stein, 1982) and the second to the US – Iraq War (Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, 2013; Duelfer and Dyson, 2011).

The leading work on the role of perception in international relations was conducted in the 1970s by Robert Jervis. In his book, Jervis (1976) creates a theoretical background of the study of perception and misperception and applies it to the study of international politics. This study provides a theoretical base for any political study of perception including elite perceptions. Jervis identifies several major factors that influence the perception of foreign policy decision-makers that include domestic and external factors. These factors are compatible with other theoretical works used in this research that study democratization and political elites. In addition to these indicators, the author investigates the political elites' composition and how it affects the decision-making process. His observation on the importance of generational change explains changes in elite perception also observed in this study. Overall, this study corresponds with other theoretical and empirical works used in this thesis.

Among all studies of political and elite perceptions, one study of the threat perception is somehow analogous to the subject of this research. This study investigates the perception of threat that influences Turcoscepticism in the European Union (Canan-Sokullu, 2011). The analysis of elites' and mass perception of Turkey as 'a poor and populous Islamic country with

economic, social, cultural and political problems' (p. 483) created dominating views that it would be really hard to incorporate this country into political, economic and social systems of the European Union. A similar analysis can be applied to the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbors. While one of the major reasons for Turcoscepticism is the religion that differentiates this country from other potential members of the EU, other factors mentioned above can be applied to countries like Ukraine.

Another study of elite perception's influence on the development of foreign policy has been done by Daniel Novotny (2015). In this study, the author analyses how the perception of Indonesian political elites influences their foreign policy's balancing act to keep good relations with two major powers – the United States and China. Novotny uses the balance-of-power theory as a base for the analysis of elite perceptions that illustrates how foreign policy elites in smaller states are perceiving major powers and in which way they are trying to achieve their goals. The situation in which Indonesia finds itself between two major powers is similar to Ukraine's that has been trying to balance between the East (Russia) and the West (the EU) since its independence in 1991.

There is one more study of the elite's perception effect on regional integration. This study concentrates on how the perceptions of Brazilian political elites affected regional integration in South America (Vigevani & Ramanzini, 2011). While the region analysed located far away from Europe, some principles used in it can be applied to the perception of national political elites in Europe. One of the examples that shows the applicability of these principles is the author's analysis of universalism's ideological influence on regional integration. More importantly, it shows the 'plurality of the interests of state and society and historical and political affinities; it symbolises the concern with maximum diversification of the country's foreign relations, i.e., enlarging, enhancing and making more plural the channels of dialogue with the world' (Vigevani and Ramanzini, 2011, p. 450).

Up to date there has been conducted several studies of elite's perceptions (Mir, Dato and Garcia, 2010; Reis and Moore, 2005; Grodeland, 2010; Endersby and Towle, 2003; Canan-Sokullu, 2011; Broockman and Skovron, 2018; Luong, 2002; Wolczuk, 2011). Most of these studies concentrate on studying how elites perceive

- mass opinion (Broockman and Skovron, 2018)
- socio-economic problems (Reis and Moore, 2005; Grodeland 2011; Clark and Sison, 2003; Teigen and Wangnerud, 2009)
- foreign policy issues (Mir, Dato, and Garcia, 2010, Novotny, 2015; Wolczuk, 2011; Jervis, 1976)
- the perception of past elites or historical figures (Endersby and Towle, 2003)
- the perception of power and power shifts (Luong, 2002; Novotny, 2015)

At the same time, we don't currently have a study that shows how the EU elite's perception of other elites affects the development of international relations. In addition to studies of political elites' perception, we can use the study done by Bertelli and Whitford (2009), in which the authors illustrate the high importance of elites' perception of the successful development of international trade.

The analysis of what affects the elite perception is based on the same principals as the general study of perception. It includes stereotypes (Krieglmeyer and Sherman, 2012; Golubev, 2013), media influence (Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, 2013; Kepplinger, 2000), identity (Mir, Dato, and Garcia, 2010), and elite's influence (Endersby and Towle, 2003). Often our perception of others is based on the stereotypes we have. These stereotypes can be derived from the individual's social group, ethnicity, and other personal factors (Krieglmeyer and Sherman, 2012).

A good account of how stereotypes based on history affect international politics in present illustrated an example of Russian and European mutual perceptions presented by Golubev (2013). In this work, the author analyses how the past stereotypes (from the Cold War) were affecting the development of relations between two European major powers, Russia and the EU during the 2008 Georgia Crisis. An interesting fact is that the development of negative stereotypes of Russia in the West can be traced back to the fifteenth century (Golubev, 2013). This example shows the great importance of historical perception in the evolution of pan-European relations. Identity also has been classified as an important factor that influences the perception in international politics by many scholars including Jervis (1976), and Mir, Dato, and Garcia (2010). Especially important for the study of external influence on democratization is the concept of shared identity (Jervis, 1976; Mir, Dato, and Garcia, 2010). Shared European identity helped the EU influence democratic changes on the continent for decades. Examples of this can be found in many cases including Central and Southern European countries like Spain, Poland, Portugal, and others.

The visible understudy of elite perceptions over the years may raise the question if there is a need to allocate time for it. While many factors influence the development of international relations and external influence on democratization, this research will show that the elite perception is playing an important role too. Previously, the importance of the study of elite perception has been highlighted by Sabatier and Hunter (1989). The authors argue that although the study of how the elite perception affects' decision-making is often overlooked by scholars, the evidence suggests that it is an important factor in the decision-making process. The authors use an example of the documents concerning the discussion of environmental issues around Lake Tahoe (California and Nevada, US).

This example was also used by Costantini and Hanf (1972) in their study of elite perception, background, and attitudes' effect on decision-making. Grupp and Richards (1975) also investigated the subject. In their study, they look at how top administrative elites in the majority of American states adopt policies from the states that are perceived (by administrative elites) to do it best. These states include California, New York, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota, and is sometimes called the 'national league' (Grupp and Richards, 1975, p. 851). Similarly, the importance of elite perception has been studied by Skrentny (2006) by analysing how the policy elite perception affects the success or failure of social movements. In conclusion, Skrentny indicates that social movements that are perceived more favorable by the policy elite are more likely to become successful and be included in the policy making process.

This section provided an overview of current scholarship on the role of perceptions in international relations and the role of elite perceptions on the decision-making process. It also showed the strength and shortcomings of current literature on the subject by illustrating a limited number of studies conducted on this topic with only several studies done in the last decade. Additionally, most of the studies of elite perceptions' effect on the decision-making are concentrated on the US (Grupp and Richards, 1975; Skrentny, 2006; Costantini and Hanf, 1972;

and Sabatier and Hunter, 1989) or other regions located far from Europe (Novotny, 2015; Vigevani and Ramanzini, 2011), with one exception provided by Canan-Sokullu's (2011) study of the perception of Turkey in the EU that explains delay in the accession process. The major strength of current literature on political elite perception is the theoretical base that can be used to build on new studies like this research.

The need for additional research

Although current academic literature provides a valuable overview of the democratization process including the external influence and the importance of elite consensus, there are not any studies that investigate how the EU elites' perceptions affected European Union's ability to influence positive change in Eastern Europe. Additionally, while elites are imperative players during any transition, most of the existing studies on the subject are outdated or can only provide limited information. All the theories and studies mentioned above are concentrating on democratization in general; democratization in a particular region and/or country; or a study of national elites or political elite perception in a more general way. These academic works mostly case studies that investigate or compare different countries. In addition to works analyzed above, there are several studies of national elites, mostly Polish, by Hanley (2000), Ornebring (2012), Tittenbrun (1997-98), Gwiazda (2009), and Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski (1995) were done during the 1990s and early 2000s and this time restriction limit our knowledge of current elite developments in Eastern Europe. The literature on European Union leadership provided information about the division between elites and mass opinions on foreign policy but lacks detailed analysis of why and how different foreign policy decisions were made.

In one of these studies, Hanley critiques a wide-spread assumption that old communist elites supported democratization to secure their elite status by conducting 'nomenklatura privatization' (2000, p.143) and as a result, they became an economic elite. Hanley argues that this is mostly not true because political elites that lead the post-communist transitions in Central Europe were able to put in place different mechanisms to prevent it from happening. This strategy had different results in different states with being more successful in Poland, where Solidarity elites were stronger than former opposition leaders. The application of the 'nomenklatura privatization' to Eastern Europe does not hold either because most of the communist elites in the former Soviet Republic did not lose their political power after the initial transition.

Ornebring's (2012) work is more recent, but while it is a study of elites in Central Europe, including Poland, it investigates political elite in the 2010s, years after these countries became members of the EU. At the same time, this work's analysis of clientelism and elite-to-elite communication creates a good framework for analysing the interaction between different national and international elite groups. Tittenbrun (1997) analyses elite-class relations in general without looking into this relation during democratic transitions. Gwiazda (2009) analyses how elite behaviour and institutionalization (1991-2007) affected party development in Poland. Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski (1995) as well as Szelenyi and Szelenyi (1995) analyze the issue of circulation vs. reproduction of elites in Poland by analysing historical development in elite recruitment practices in this country. They make a convincing argument for the creation of post-communism and post-Solidarity elite in Poland that although can be traced back to communist and Solidarity, are different from their origin. Overall, this approach is useful when applied to a

historical overview of elite development in a country throughout history and can be applied to Ukraine too.

The above discussion provides an overview of current scholarship on the role of elites during the democratic transformation process concentrating on Eastern European countries. It also showed the shortcomings of current scholarship in providing an explanation to the main research question of this thesis that is – Why the European Union had a different level of influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine and what role elite perception played in it? The need for additional research showed above will be addressed in the following sections and chapters. The next section will construct the theoretical base for this research with the following chapter justifying the research design and methodology used.

Theorising elite perceptions

This research employs several theories to explain how elites' perception contributed to the EU's influence on transformation in Poland and Ukraine. As such, any work that studies elites would be incomplete without looking into John Higley's collaborations with several scholars on the subject and works by Etzioni-Halevy (1990, 1993). Higley and Pakulski (1992, 1995, 1999, 2012) investigated national leaderships in Eastern Europe during the transformation period of 1989-1994 and after. Their major contribution to the understanding of the unique role of elites during this time was in developing the ideas of 'consensual elite' (Higley & Pakulski, 1999) and its significance for successful democratic transformation. The other theoretical work used to analyze the role of elites' perception was written by Jervis. In this work, the author provides a theoretical framework for the analysis of perception in the IR.

The presence of the consensual elite, or elite that is in consensus about achieving the same goals to reform their country and join the Euro-Atlantic international organization, is, they argue, the main reason behind Poland's success in both: the reforms and EU and NATO accessions. Higley and Pakulski (1999) provided empirical data to show how this theory works in practice. For example, Poland, according to the authors, had one of the most consensual political elites in this region and Ukraine had very fragmented political elites. The high unity of the Polish elite towards the goals to democratize and join the European Union helped this country to achieve successful transformation. In Ukraine, on the other hand, diversified fragments of the national elite were trying to achieve different goals, with one part aiming for Western integration and reforms and other aiming for keeping close ties with Russia and getting more involved in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Union. This discord possibly stopped Ukraine from achieving a similar level of success in reformation and prevented this country from becoming a serious candidate for memberships in Western IGOs (mostly NATO and the EU).

Additionally, this research investigates the role of elites in the European Union's impact on democratization in Poland and Ukraine that will add to the knowledge in the areas of elites and democratization studies. This study also provides an up-to-date picture of elites in the European Union and Ukraine and will indicate how the connection between those elites contributed to the course of democratization. The elite approach to democratization shows how influential a small group within society can be determining its future success or failure if it has the needed power. Therefore, it is important to study the conduct of elite group members by answering the questions of how these groups contributed to the democratization in Poland and Ukraine and the European Union's influence on these processes.

The analysis of perception in this thesis is based on Jervis's (1976) work that illustrates how the perceptions and misperceptions in international politics affect relations between different states. He also indicates that we all have a different perception of the same situation. Individual perception is the sum of personal surroundings and experiences. The same can be said about the perception of a group of people. If members of a group have a similar background (as it often is) then their perception of the problem most likely to be similar. Additionally, we perceive people with a similar background or similar actions more favorable than others. A good example of this application to international politics can be found in Jervis's book, which illustrates the change in American perception of Russia in the 1970s and the 1950s. Russian policies in the 1970s started looking more analogous to American, which created a more favorable view of Russia among American elites (p. 121).

A similar analysis can be applied to the European Union's relations with Eastern European countries. As this thesis will show, the EU's political elites had a more favorable view of Poland because they could see similarities between them and Polish political elites and because Poland started to adopt policies similar or identical to EU's own policies. At the same time, the EU did not notice comparable familiarity with Ukraine up until the Orange Revolution in 2004. Although countries and international organizations cannot maneuver as well as individuals do because they are restricted by accepted rules of engagement, they still have some flexibility in the way they conduct business with their counterparts. Additionally, the states are more predisposed to rely on past experiences when considering foreign policy approach since they are less flexible than individuals who can make fast decisions. This inflexibility comes from the need to include many groups in the decision-making process. More important, states and international organizations usually have lesser knowledge of their counterparts than individuals do.

Jervis (1976) also makes an interesting observation about the change of perception among different generations by indicating that younger generations of politicians are usually less hostile towards their opposition (p. 256). Corresponding analysis can be applied to this research. As the following chapters will show, generational changes significantly affected external policy orientation in many post-communist states. Ukraine is one of the best examples to illustrate this change, with younger politicians making stronger connections with Western Europeans and better mutual relations as the result. This development can be explained by growing interconnectedness on the European continent and in the world.

Overall, this research uses Jervis (1976) to work on perception as the theoretical base to analyse the perceptions of EU political elites' and its effect on the EU's democracy promotion efforts. This research also uses the consensual elite theory (Higley and Pakulski, 1999 and Baylis, 2012) and the autonomic elite theory (Etzioni-Halevy, 1990, 1993) to analyse the role of political elites during post-communist transformation in Poland and Ukraine. This thesis application of these theories can be extended to two groups of post-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe, one that consists of current EU member states and the other consisting of former Soviet Republics (excluding Baltics states). The next chapter will provide more detailed information about the application of these theories in analysing data collected for this research.

Conclusion

This chapter overviewed current political theories of democratization, the EU's role as a democracy promotion actor, democratic elite theories, and political perception theories. Each

group of theories mentioned above contributes to our understanding of conditions leading to the success or failure of the EU as a democracy promotion actor. This chapter illustrated that use of each theory or theoretical group separately only provides a partial picture of this complex process and the use of all groups of political theories will allow the construction of a complex and full picture of the European Union influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine and what role elites played in it.

This thesis researches the relations between Polish, Ukrainian, and European Union elites. Specifically, it looks at how the connections developed over time and how the quality of these connections affected the European Union's impact on democratization in those two states. This research provides additional information needed for a better understanding of how national elites respond to external influences and may help in the establishment of future foreign policy towards states that develop. The study of external influence on democratization would not be complete without the identification of prerequisites or factors that may help this process. While all democratization theories contribute to the comprehension of the democratization process, they cannot fully explain what the most crucial factors are to the success and failure of democratization.

The examination of current studies of leadership in CEE above shows that Poland had one of the most consensual elites in this region in the 1990s in contrast to the highly divided Ukrainian elite. Empirical data on the formation of the European Union's foreign policy will also indicate the significance of elites and justifies my choice to concentrate on the study of elites to answer the question 'why the European Union had a different level of influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine'. The example provided by Higley and Pakulski shows how the fragmentation or consolidation of the elite in a country can make significant differences in slowing or speeding up the reformation process. The fact that Higley and Pakulski's study was done some time ago, shows the need for more current study that will reflect the current situation in Eastern European neighborhood.

This chapter also specifies the theoretical base of this thesis by concentrating on works by Etzioni-Halevy (1990, 1993), Higley and Pakulski (1992, 1995, 1999, 2012), and Higley and Burton (2006, 2012), and Jervis (1976). It illustrated how the use of these theoretical groups, the analysis of elites, and the analysis of perception in international relations help us understand the differences between the EU's influence in Poland and Ukraine. The use of these theories provides great insight into the psychological factors that affect the development of international relations and depict how different physical and non-physical aspects contribute to the creation of external policy in the European Union.

This chapter presented the current scholarship that can be used to answer why the European Union had a different level of influence in democratic transformation in Poland and Ukraine and what was the role of elites in it. While several works can provide some clarification on the subject, the literature overview in this chapter showed that there still is a strong need for further research. Especially, there is a need to research elite behavior during transformation on the international level and the ability of national elites in Poland and Ukraine and supranational elite in the EU to make high-quality connections with each other. Further, this thesis will analyze details of different aspects of the European Union's role as an external democracy promoter in the Eastern Union and will determine the reasons behind the different successes of EU's democracy promotion in Poland and Ukraine with concentrating on the role of elites.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology adopted to investigate the research questions of this thesis and the application of the theoretical framework outlined in previous chapters. The study of external influence on democratization by the European Union greatly benefits from using a comparative approach. As this chapter will show, this technique is a great way to highlight the difference between contracting attitudes to democratization employed by political elites in post-communist states. This chapter provides a detailed overview of this research process by starting with the overview and justification of case selection by indicating why the comparative case study is the most appropriate research design for answering the questions asked in this thesis. Then this chapter will overview the data collection and end with an overview of the methods and theory used to analyze the data.

Comparative case study

The research design for this project consists of an explanatory comparative case study. It includes primary data with additional searches through secondary data to prevent duplication. The case study is an appropriate research design because it provides flexibility to research without many constrictions that may be imposed by other research methodologies. The case study methodology is also widely preferable for studying contemporary events and includes many different research methods to choose from (Yin, 2013) and therefore is a great fit for this research project. During the case selection process, I was looking to compare the European Union's influence on the democratization process on two groups of countries, one with a successful post-communist transition and one that still struggles to develop an effective democratic system. Poland and Ukraine were selected as representatives of the corresponding group of countries due to their unique positions as neighbors with one being highly praised for its success in economic and political transformation (Poland) and others falling behind for many reasons (Ukraine).

This research compares the EU's leadership role in two countries, Poland and Ukraine. It explores Poland's transformation from communism to democracy starting in 1989, the year of initial transition, to 2004, the year of Poland accession to the EU. In the case of Ukraine, it considers changes that occurred since this country achieved independence in 1991 up to 2018. The selection of these specific time frames for Poland and Ukraine was based on the history of those countries relations with the European Union: Poland started its partnership with the EU in 1989⁵ and joined it in 2004; Ukraine started its partnership with the EU in 1991 and continues it to present (2018). It is worth noticing that Poland, as an independent country had official relations with Western European states before the start of the post-communist transition and Ukraine, did not have this kind of relations before 1991.

Now, looking back to the beginning of the post-communist transition and analyzing its results, it is hard to believe that the prediction for Polish and Ukrainian transitions was opposite to the outcomes. The prediction made for Poland was not as good as the results (Hartwell, 2016). While Ukraine shows the opposite – Ukraine had a favorable prediction for a successful transition, but, it still struggles with the remnants of its communist past. It is also beneficial to

⁵ European Economic Community before 1992

compare those two countries because they represent two different groups of Eastern European states, one consists of current EU members (represented by Poland) and the second represents countries in the European region without European Union membership (represented by Ukraine). Also, those two countries are neighbors that share many characteristics and have many differences that will allow me to indicate what features were more or less dominant during the democratization process.

The employment of a comparative case study in this research allows me to compare the European Union's influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine through cross-comparison of the same criteria. Those two cases provide a great opportunity to investigate different degrees of EU's impact in two Eastern European states due to different results regarding EU membership. Also, the fact that these two cases represent two groups of Eastern European countries (members and non-members of the EU) allows the result of this study to be applicable to other countries within each group. Additional benefits for using the case study approach according to Yin (2013, p. 4) is that a case study allows investigators to focus on a 'case' that also allows retaining a holistic and real-world perspective with the ability to deal with a full range of evidence: documents, artifacts, interviews, etc. I used the relativist perspective that acknowledges multiple realities having numerous meanings as applied to each case study while designing and conducting this research. The relativist perspective is appropriate because it has been noted in previous studies on the European Union influence on democratization and the EU's enlargement that sometimes there is a misunderstanding between what the EU says and what national elites in European neighborhood are understanding or interpreting (Bogutcaia, Bosse, and Schmidt-Felzmann, 2006).

Generally, this comparative case study design is based on Yin's work. It uses five components of research design that are: the case study question, propositions, unit of analysis, the logic linking the data to propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Defining and explaining where the proposition used in this research come from help illustrate how the comparative case study design is used in this thesis and for what were the reasons for selecting it. My research question is: why the European Union had a different level of influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine and how the EU's, Polish, and Ukrainian elite contributed to those results. My initial propositions or expected findings of this research design were:

- national elites in Poland and Ukraine had a different level of interest in joining the EU and in democratizing their countries. This proposition comes from analyzing the current literature on each country's reformation process. A good example that shows the difference between Polish and Ukrainian political elites' efforts to reform is the comparison of economic reforms – with Poland going through shock therapy at the beginning of the 1990s and continues the struggle of economic reforms in Ukraine.
- the European Union's elite was more interested in Poland as a potential member of the Union. This expectation is based on economic, geographic, and geopolitical reasons. For starters, Poland was able to achieve the status of the market economy much faster than Ukraine did that make it more attractive for European businesses and it made it ready to join the European single market. Poland is also located closer to former EU borders that made it logical to start Eastward expansion with the closest neighbor. The last and very important reason is the fact that Ukraine for a long time was perceived as a close partner of Russia that would make it harder for this country to join the EU.
- the economic interests of national elites in Poland and Ukraine influenced their foreign policy priorities. It is hard to underestimate the importance of economics in the

determination of foreign policy. While Poland's economic development priorities were clearly aligned with the West, Ukraine had to be careful in maneuvering its economic policy to keep its economy afloat after the fall of the USSR. Historical economic connection to former Soviet Republics made it harder for Ukraine to reform its economy because it meant more economic hardship for its people.

- the level of consolidation of political elites around strategic goals determined their commitment to democratic reforms and the stability of the political and economic lives of a country. It has been clear in the 1990s that the majority of Polish political elites were consolidated around the idea of democratization, reforms, and return to Europe. The opposite can be observed in Ukraine. This difference in national elites' attitude towards the post-communist transition may explain the difference in the EU's perception of both national elites.

In addition to the propositions that identify the expected outcome of this research, the unit of analysis below indicates how the analysis was conducted. The units of analysis for this research are:

- a general overview of each elite;
- national elites' attitudes towards European integration and democratization;
- European Union elites' position toward Poland and Ukraine;
- European Union elites' perception of Polish and Ukrainian national elites;
- economic incentives for the national elite in developing their foreign policy.

During the state of linking the findings to the propositions, I located appropriate data for each hypothesis and then used the pattern-matching technique as described by Yin (1994, p. 25-26), and Almutairi, Gardner, and McCarthy (2014). Both are using the technique as a way to analyze collected data by using the case appropriate comparative methods to assess the dependent variable. The dependent variable or variables is derived from theory, the literature, and/or researcher's experience (Almutairi, Gardner and McCarthy, 2014, p. 240). The dependent variable for this research is the European Union's influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine.

Data collection

Document search

This research is mostly based on a document search that was done through several sources including the search of internet databases and printed materials. I started my inquiry by checking the availability of relevant documents, including official paperwork produced by national governments and EU officials, news reports and articles, and archival documentation from online sources. Specifically, I looked at documents that contain information about the relationship between the EU and national elites and what affected them. These records included transcripts of meetings between government officials during formal and informal visits between national and the EU's elites. Documents helped to jump-start my study and determine which additional research methods I may need to incorporate. Before discussing which sources I used for my data collection I want to indicate what I mean by the word 'document'. For the purposes of this research, I used the definition of a document as a written text (Gaborone, 2006), published by the European Union, the Ukrainian and Polish governments.

The official documents reviewed in this project originated from the public records on the webpages of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers, President of Ukraine, President of Poland, Sejm, Senate and prime minister of Poland. The mix of news information and official documents were collected from the following websites: CORDIS (Community Research and Development Information Service), LexisNexis, Nexis, and ProQuest news archives. The CORDIS website was used for the search and download of official reports including news, events, and programs information. The selection of articles was automatic from the LexisNexis website, all articles generated by the system were downloaded and analyzed. In the case of Nexis, ProQuest, and CORDIS, I manually selected the most relevant articles. Concerning the balance of information between the EU-Poland and EU-Ukraine data, two databases provided about the same number of relevant results (CORDIS and ProQuest), and two databases provided significantly higher numbers for EU-Ukraine relations. To make the data more balanced I excluded most of the data on gas and energy issues involving the EU, Ukraine, and Russia.

In addition to the official documents, I searched for other types of documents that have information relevant to this study. Those additional documents are news articles, blogs, tweets, photographs, diaries, and bibliographies. For instance, I reviewed the European Union's archives that hold minutes and other documents produced in relevant meetings. The other source of document information that this research uses are auto/bibliographies of elite members that were involved in the democratization process, like works by former presidents and political leaders. Some of the were more useful, some less. For instance, Yushchenko's book (2014) provides his view on the causes of division in the Orange elite.

Documents are important for my research because, as May (1995) mentioned, documents do not stand on their own, but they are situated within a theoretical frame of reference so that its content is understood. Dibble added to the importance of documents in social science research by indicating that documents can take on the task of 'social bookkeeping'. May (1995) also mentioned that documents read as the sedimentations of social practices and have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and long-term basis. Documents also constitute a particular reading of social events. This definition and use of the documents are very helpful in my research as the collection and analysis of documents provided by officials of the European Union regarding its relationship with Ukraine and Poland will help understand the events that happened and how different officials may interpret them and make decisions.

Other online content

Aside from searching for documents and news articles online, I searched for video sharing platforms like youtube.com for relevant videos. The video collection used in this research includes numerous interviews, news clips, political talk shows, and recording of conferences, forums, and other events that host members of political elites. Especially useful were interviews with current and former government officials, like former president of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma. The youtube.com also provides access to official videos from the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe (via official portals). In

addition to youtube.com, I searched the news webpages including the European News Room⁶, official webpages of the European Union, Poland, and Ukraine for their video content.

The use of video content proven to be useful in the study of elite perceptions because, in addition to written text, it shows the speaker. The most invaluable part of using videos in addition to written documents is the ability to see the speaker's demeanor. Also, the recordings of conferences and public appearances of elite members provide information about public acceptance of a leader and/or her ideas. the combination of written text and video recording provides a fuller picture of perceptions.

Elite interviews

The other source of my data is semi-structured interviews with the members of corresponding elites. A series of elite interviews were constructed to see how members of the elite perceived the democratization process and its participants. I started my field work in Brussels, where I interviewed seven representatives of European political elites including members of the European Parliament (four MEPs from Poland, Estonia, and the Netherlands), European Commission (two officials), and European Foreign Policy Think Tanks (one senior researcher). Then I traveled to Poland, where I was only able to talk to only one person from academia. In Ukraine, I spoke to two people, one former high-ranking official in Yushchenko's government and one representative of the European Union, who wished to stay anonymous. While I was only able to interview small groups of people, they were able to provide a significant amount of information that I used as a base for my online document search. Due to the limited number of interviews conducted, I only used data from them as an additional source to the documents and as a guide for the document search.

Since this research is the study of why the European Union had different success in guiding democratic changes in Poland and Ukraine, the EU's elite members were asked to indicate what were the reasons behind the variations in results, or how the general perception of specific national elite affected their decision regarding EU's external policy toward a country. Specifically, I looked for the answers that will provide me the details about which national characteristics, elite decisions, or personal attitudes of Polish and Ukrainian elites have determined how the EU looked at these states. The example of the evidence that I argue had swayed the EU's attitudes towards these two states is the elite consolidation regarding European integration, the elite efforts toward democratic, economic, and other reforms, and elite composition. While speaking with national elites' representatives, I looked for answers to determine which actions or statement of the EU's elite altered their decisions concerning democratization. Those may include, the real possibility of EU membership, how the EU officially classified the country, how the EU's elite's attitude toward national elites determined the former, etc. Or maybe manifold reasons are affecting the EU's effect on democratization that I have not to think of yet. Here is the list of questions I asked during the interviews:

⁶ https://europa.eu/newsroom/home_en

Interview questions for the European Union's elite:

- 1 - What were the determining factors influencing different levels of European Union influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine?
- 2 - What role Polish and Ukrainian elites played in democratization in these states?
- 3 - How did the overall impression of national elites in Poland and Ukraine affect their relations with the union?
- 4 - Were there any particular characteristics of Polish and Ukrainian elites that became dominant factors influencing EU's policy towards these two states?
- 5 - How the EU relations with Russia affected its role in the Eastern European democratic transition, especially concerning Poland and Ukraine?
- 6 - What role did economic and business elites played in developing the EU's relationship with Poland and Ukraine?
- 7 - Is there a significant difference between the European Union national elites' perception of Ukrainian leadership? Was it similar with Poland (before 2004)?
- 8 - Many people perceive the Ukrainian elite to be more corrupt than the Polish elite – do you think this perception played a significant role development of relations between the EU and each state?

Interview questions for Ukrainian/ Polish elites:

- 1 - What role Polish/Ukrainian elite played in the democratic transition?
- 2 - What role did the European Union play in Poland's/Ukrainian post-communist transition?
- 3 - What role did the European Union's elite play in democratization in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland/Ukraine?
- 4 - Did the change of the European Union's leadership play a significant role in the EU's relations with Poland/Ukraine?
- 5 - What role did economic and business elites played in developing Poland's/ Ukraine's relationship with the European Union?
- 6 - How the EU relations with Russia affected its role in the Eastern European democratic transition, especially in relation to Poland/Ukraine?
- 7 - Was there a noticeable difference between the European Union's national elites' attitude towards Poland before 2004/ Ukraine?

8 - What were the determining factors influencing different levels of European Union influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine?

The decision to conduct elite interviews was based on David Richards' (1996) identification of advantages of this type of data collection that include:

- help in understanding different documents,
- help in understanding how the personalities involved in making a relevant decision involving foreign policy questions in the EU, Poland, and Ukraine
- help receive information that was not recorded in the official documents

The data collection based on elite interviews provides numerous advantages by allowing direct access to people who were making decisions or participating in the implementations of them. Also, better availability of information from the European side helped me narrow my research to the European Union's point of view.

The data collection for this research resulted in the collection of numerous materials including news articles and videos, printed and recorded interviews, official documents, and analytical materials. The next section will illustrate how this information was analyzed using analytical tools and applying existing theories discussed in previous chapters. But before moving on to the data analysis, several things stand out during the data collection and they are: 1) there is more material available on the EU-Ukraine relations because of the longer period studies, and 2) there is stronger Russia's presence in EU-Ukraine relations. One of the reasons for the differences of available information on EU-Poland and EU-Ukraine relations is the fast growth of information technology and the internet in the 2000s. The information boom led to the creation of a large amount of information that in time hard to analyze in full. The other highlights of the data collection were the visible correlation between interviews and news data on the factors that differentiate the international perception of Poland's and Ukraine's political elite, and they are the perceived level of corruption, the commitment to reforms, and the role of Russia. This analogy strengthens the reliability of the data.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is used in this research to accommodate this research's numerous cultural and social issues that may not be included if I use only the quantitative methods. Additionally, this research uses R software (R Studio) to analyze data collected from internet sources, such as the online database of articles on the topic of EU's relations with Poland and Ukraine and the elites' acting during the post-communist transition in both countries. Specifically, I run the sentiment analysis of the documents that showed the positivity and negativity in elite perception.

Text analysis with R

R was chosen for this project because it can analyze different types of data, such as written text, audio, and video, but most importantly because it also provides a great tool for online data mining. In addition to R's data mining functions, I downloaded a series of news articles from

different news websites and online archives including Lexus-Nexis, Nexis services to download news articles. For the analysis of EU-Poland relations, I used the 1994-2004 time-frame. For the analysis of EU-Ukraine relations, I used the August 1991- June 2018 time-frame. Collected sets of articles were downloaded and cleared from unimportant words, like 'to', 'and', 'in', etc. After the clearing of the text, I run the sentiment analysis that identified the major words indicating the sentiment towards Poland and Ukraine. While this technique has room for errors, it mostly corresponds with other methods of analysis.

Application of existing theories of perception and elite role in democratic societies

Up to date, scholars have analyzed both, political elites in democracies and political perceptions. This research will employ these theories to analyze the role of elite perceptions in the European Union's efforts to promote democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. As it was showed in Jervis' (1976) book, people tend to favor others that resemble them. Positive perception of political counterparts in domestic or international situations makes cooperation more successful as it was shown by Skrentny (2006) in the analysis of relations between government officials and civil society in the US. The analysis of the elite's role during the post-communist transition employs the consensual elite theory formulated by Higley and his co-authors (Higley and Pakulski, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2012; and Higley and Burton, 2006, 2012) and Baylis (2012). Additionally, I apply Etzioni-Halevy's (1990, 1993) autonomic elite theory to illustrate how the presence of autonomous or semi-autonomous groups within the national political elite affects the decision-making process.

The analysis of Polish and Ukrainian political elites during the post-communist transformation is concentrated on the review of continuity of declared reformation and Euro-Atlantic integration agenda. This continuity is clearly visible in Poland in the 1990s where each new government was continuing the work of the previous government towards the goal of joining the European Union and NATO. More importantly, this continuity was possible only due to the consolidation of politicians with different ideologies towards the same goals. In the case of Ukraine, the application of this framework will show that each president was making his own changes while trying to keep the goals of reformation and Euro-Atlantic integration alive.⁷ This lack of continuity in Ukraine is illustrated by the tendency of each new president to amend the Constitution.

Additionally, the presence of semi-autonomous political and business elites in Ukraine prevented the country from consolidating autocratic or totalitarian rule. While the lack of elite consolidation prevented Ukraine from establishing a democratic country, it also gave Ukraine the chance to do so in the future by stopping antidemocratic elite groups from assuming total political power. The other way to measure the commitment of national political elites to pursue the reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration is the analysis of the actual implementation of changes. For example, in Poland, political elites started the economic transition with a series of harsh reforms called 'shock therapy' in 1989. In Ukraine, on the other hand, the old planned economy has not been completely reformed for decades. The same analysis applies to other areas in need of reforms.

⁷ The changes implemented by each Ukrainian president influenced my decision to concentrate the analysis of post-communist transition studied countries on presidents

A similar framework was used to analyze political elites in the European Union. The EU's elite consists of several different groups, including members for the European Parliament, members of the European Council, and the officials from the European Commission in addition to the group of influential civil society members. The autonomous elite theory helps analyze how different groups within the EU's elite prevent one group from making an executive decision on behalf of the union. Furthermore, the consensual elite and the autonomous elite theories used to analyse the differences between national elites' views on the common foreign policy and the enlargement. This scheme used to check how the views of national elites on potential members, such as Poland and Ukraine affect the EU's ability to influence positive changes in its Eastern neighborhood. Especially, this differentiation comes to light in the case of EU-Ukraine relations due to Russia's interference.

After the analysis of elites' actions completes, this research applies the theory of political perceptions. Firstly, this research will analyse how the visible similarities and differences between the European Union and national elites in Poland and Ukraine affected the development of productive relations between parties. Secondly, this thesis will analyse how the actions of political elites in Poland and Ukraine during the post-communist transition affected their international image. And how this image affected the EU's interest in developing closer relations with a country. In the last chapter, this thesis will analyse how the presence of the 'other' affects the European Union's democracy promotion methods by analysing the mutual perceptions of the EU, Russia, and nations in between. The analysis of the European Union's perception of Russia's willingness to protect its interests is present throughout all empirical chapters and in the last chapter, it comes to a logical conclusion by evaluating the real and perceived effect of Russian geopolitics on the EU's role as external democracy promoter.

Limitations of this research

Overall, this research uses a combination of existing frameworks on the analysis of political perceptions and political elites. The qualitative analysis of documents, elite interviews, and media materials allows this thesis to identify elites' perceptions of each other and how these perceptions affected EU's relations with states in East-Central Europe and its ability to influence the consolidation of democracy in the region. This research analyzed combinations of documents, media, and news sources with elite interviews. The information obtained from these sources in combination with existing academic literature presents a good examination of the elite's role in the democratization process and the international perceptions created by it. At the same time, this research has several limitations. Firstly, I was able to conduct only nine interviews that really limit my ability to use the data collected from interviews to create a generalized picture of elites' views. To overcome this problem, I researched publicly available interviews of the European Union's, Poland's and Ukraine's political elites to fill up gaps. Additionally, the use of online databases and archives limits the data to only archived documents. This limitation was addressed by searching for printed materials and other media sources.

Most importantly, this research has theoretical limitations by only looking into the perceptions of European Union political elites. While it did contribute significantly to the EU's ability to affect democratic change in the regions, it is also limited by other factors including the internal problems within the EU, the geopolitical situation, and the resistance of internal forces. The geopolitical reality with the strong interest of Russia in EU-Ukraine relations is discussed to

some extent in the last chapter, but there are still are unanalyzed factors like the internal situation in Ukraine. The internal forces in Poland and Ukraine need additional analysis as well.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how the use of comparative case analysis provides numerous benefits for this research by allowing clear structural organization by concentrating on identifying and analyzing the same units of analysis applicable to both cases. This chapter also justified the case selection by indicating how the analysis of EU-Poland and EU-Ukraine relations can explain the effectiveness of the European Union as a democracy promoter in post-communist Europe. Additionally, the comparative analysis is a practical way to assess the difference between different cases by applying the same criteria to both by using the same units of analysis. This chapter also indicated the prepositions or the predicted outcome of this research.

The combination of documents with the data from elite interviews and media sources provided the information needed to identify European Union political elite perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian political elite and how these perceptions affected the development of relations between them. Further, the quality of relations between the EU and these two countries affected the ability of the EU to influence democratic changes in its eastern neighborhood. The application of a theoretical framework that combined existing theories of political perception and elitism to this research illustrates how the data collected was analyzed.

Chapter 4: The European Union and Democratization in Eastern Europe

Political changes in the USSR in the late 1980s gave the former Eastern Bloc states freedom in developing their own domestic and foreign policies that resulted in the mass democratization of Central and Eastern Europe. The western European community, and more so the European Union (since 1992), we're able to use this opportunity to influence democratic changes in Central and Eastern Europe that yielded various results in different countries. This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the democratization process in this region since the fall of communism in 1989-1991. It will start with a historic review of events in the last two decades in CEE with the following review of Polish and Ukrainian transitions. In the end, this chapter will also describe the role of the European Union in the Eastern European transition in general and Polish and Ukrainian transitions in particular. At the same time, this chapter will not provide an analysis of the elite role in the democratic transition that will be investigated in detail in the following chapters. Instead, this chapter will test existing theories and expectations used to explain the difference between the European Union's influence on democratization on different states in Central and Eastern Europe.

The main contribution of this chapter to the thesis is to provide empirical and theoretical backgrounds needed to understand under which conditions democratization occurred and how the EU was able to influence it. It will also show the need for additional research that adds more to our understanding of the EU's presence in this region. Additionally, this chapter will show how the geography influenced post-communist transition by setting up the historical background for further discussion of the argument that geographic location was one of the factors that affected the European Union elite's perception of national elites in the region.

Eastern Europe since 1989

Eastern European transition has one unique detail – political and economic reforms came from the above (Offe, 1991) and were pioneered by then ruling communist parties. While many other political and economic transitions were influenced and led by the elites, the post-communist transformation is unique due to its past with planned economies. In comparison to Latin America and Southern European democratic transitions, Central and Eastern Europe needed to liberalize the economy in addition to liberalizing political life. Former Soviet Republics, such as Ukraine, also did not inherit modern state as other countries included by Huntington (1991) in the third wave of democratization. The reformist initiatives brought by local communist parties in some Eastern European states gave them the ability to stay in power as a party or for its leader to retain power under new democratic political umbrellas.⁸ Communist parties were also better organized while compared to the democratic opposition that allowed them to use existing channels for coopting and training cadres in political and administrative skills (McHalle, 1995). This fact is especially important in countries, like Ukraine, that had weak and mostly unorganized political opposition to the communism during 1945-1980s while compared with countries such as Poland that had strong social movements like Solidarity.

⁸ It often meant that a politician would change it party or create a new political party using different political ideology

Looking into the historical legacies of different states can also explain local variations in democratization. The historical legacies can be understood in two main ways. One theory of historical legacies would regard them as the fundamental conditions of democratization. In this perspective, the demise of communism and the end of Soviet hegemony removed the main obstacle for deeply-rooted historical predispositions and trends to unfold and shape the subsequent trajectory of social and political change (Motyl, 2010; Hagen, 1995; Wolczuk, 2000). What is more, such historical legacies may also condition the instruments the EU uses to promote democracy in its neighborhood. In this view, a close relationship from the pre-communist period, as well as historical membership in the European system of states, predisposed the EU towards offering membership rather than lesser forms of association to Central European states. In another version, historical legacies do not drive democratization and democracy promotion as such but facilitate or impede their effectiveness. Favorable legacies facilitate economic development, transnational exchanges as well as conditionality.

An application of historical legacies' approach to states in Eastern Europe, especially the comparison of countries located in its eastern and western parts may provide us some answers to the question of why the EU had different results in promoting democracy in Poland and Ukraine. History does play an important part in Ukraine's uncertainty about its preferences between developing close relations with Western Europe or Russia and other former Soviet Republics. A study of Ukrainian history shows numerous wars between Ukraine and its western neighbors, mostly Poland that used to rule over Ukraine for centuries. These wars were the major factors that allowed Russia to rule over Ukraine for several centuries too. The Russian rule was a little different in these two states because the majority of Russians and Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians that united them over time until now⁹. Currently, in the lights of conflict with Russia, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church started to push more actively for official separation from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Before analyzing the EU's presence in the Polish and Ukrainian transition, it is beneficial to review the short history of Eastern European transformation and the EU contribution to it. Table 1 shows the time-table of the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. Some other post-communist countries are excluded from this data table, like former Yugoslavia because they were not under the same political and economic control from Moscow as Warsaw Pact's countries. Included former Soviet republics have the year they became independent as the starting point of transition.

Table 1. Fall of communism in Eastern Europe 1989-1991

<u>Country</u>	<u>Fall of communism (year)</u>	<u>First free democratic elections</u>	<u>Adoption of a new democratic constitution</u>
Belarus	1991	1994	1994
Bulgaria	1989	1990	1991
Czech Republic	1989	1990	1992
Estonia	1990	1990	1992
Hungary	1989	1990	2011

⁹ Ukrainian president Poroshenko made it his political goal to separate Ukrainian Orthodox Church from Russian

Latvia	1991	1993	1992 (reinforced in 1993)
Lithuania	1991	1992	1992
Moldova	1991	1994	1994
Poland	1989	1989	1997
Romania	1989	1990	1991
Russia	1991	1990	1993
Slovakia	1989	1990	1992
Ukraine	1990	1990	1996

Data from official countries' websites

This table includes widely known historical data and shows that the official fall of communism in this region occurred and now after over twenty-five years of transition we are capable to evaluate its results. Table 2 shows the current government system, political regime type, international membership of each country mentioned above that will show the current political situation in Eastern Europe.

Table 2 - Political regime type, the status of democracy and international memberships of Eastern European states

<u>Country</u>	<u>Government system</u>	<u>Political regime (Freedom House)</u>	<u>Democracy index ranking/overall score (2014)</u>	<u>European international organizations membership</u>
Belarus	Presidential	Consolidated Authoritarian	125 / 3.69	Eurasian Union, CIS
Bulgaria	Parliamentary	Semi-Consolidated democracy	55 / 6.73	EU, NATO
Czech Rep.	Parliamentary	Consolidated democracy	25 / 7.94	EU, NATO
Estonia	Parliamentary	Consolidated democracy	34 / 7.74	EU, NATO
Hungary	Parliamentary	Semi-consolidated democracy	51 / 6.90	EU, NATO
Latvia	Parliamentary	Consolidated democracy	39 / 7.48	EU, NATO
Lithuania	Semi-Presidential	Consolidated democracy	38 / 7.54	EU, NATO
Moldova	Mixed	Transitional Government or Hybrid	69 / 6.32	CIS
Poland	Mixed	Consolidated democracy	40 / 7.47	EU, NATO

Romania	Semi-Presidential	Semi-consolidated democracy	57 / 6.68	EU, NATO
Russia	Presidential	Consolidated authoritarian	132 / 3.39	Eurasian Union, CIS
Slovakia	Parliamentary	Consolidated democracy	45 / 7.35	EU, NATO
Ukraine	Mixed	Transitional Government or Hybrid	92 / 5.42	CIS

The data in this table was collected from the Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org>), countries' official webpages, and the democracy index website.

Table 2 shows that countries with a strong presidential system of government are more likely to be classified as consolidated authoritarian regimes while countries with parliamentary systems more often have consolidated democracies. This development creates an important question - why countries with parliamentary systems are more likely to democratize faster? The possible answer to this question is that parliamentary republics are often more decentralized than presidential republics. The application of decentralization theory to Poland and Ukraine indicates that successful decentralization in Poland helped this country to establish liberal democracy and helped its relations with the EU (Sadurski, 2006). The decentralization theory states that giving more power to regional/local governments will help consolidate democracy that can be observed in Poland. Ukraine, on the other hand, is still a highly centralized country with a hybrid regime type that includes some characteristics of democracy and autocracy. The democratic side of the Ukrainian regime is relatively free elections that often bring change in political power and allow the change of ruling political elites. The autocratic side of the Ukrainian regime is the type of presidential power. While the level of democratic freedoms varied during different presidencies, for about twenty years, presidential rule in this country was far from democratic.

Additionally, parliamentary republics have political power spread out among different political figures in comparison to having it concentrated in the hand of one person – a president. Good analysis of how the choice of regime type between presidentialism and parliamentarism is provided by Easter (1997). The author analyzed how the changes in ruling political elites resulted in the adaption of one of these political regime types. The example of Poland, where the old communist elite was partially replaced by a new democratic elite, choose parliamentarism, the choice that helped them consolidate democracy. Ukraine shows the opposite; old communist elites preserved their political power by choosing presidentialism that led to authoritarianism, but at the same time, this regime type did not consolidate. Ukraine's post-communist regime types have been changing with occurrences of both, authoritarianism and democracy often taking the form of hybrid.

Overall, this section analyzed the major political changes that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting with the political changes in the Soviet Union and ending with how the selection of regime types in new democracies affected their ability to consolidate a new regime. The following section will analyze what role did the European Union plays in the democratization of this region.

European Union in Eastern Europe

Although the European Parliament established a political requirement for membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) back in 1962 (Baracani, 2010), the European Union is a relatively new democracy promotion actor when compared to other international organizations. This can be explained by the fact that before the 1990s there were not many possibilities for this organization to promote democracy because most of its members were democracies themselves and the Eastern neighbors had strong communist regimes that left no hope for Western European countries of influencing successful change from the outside before 1989. And only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, the European Union got new neighbors that were transforming from communism to democracy and from planned economies to free markets. One of the most important factors of transformation in this region was the need for those countries to help with the transformation process. The European Union with its long tradition of democracy and its geographic location was perfect for this job. The EU was able to influence relatively fast transformation by creating a strong incentive for some Eastern European countries to reform by inviting them to join the union. The success of democracy promotion among current Eastern European members of the EU is yet to be repeated among its current neighbors that will be clear after the analysis of the EU's influence on Ukraine's democratization.

The ideas of future enlargement of the European Union created the need for regulations of the accession process that started with the Treaty on the European Union in November 1992. This treaty and other documents adopted later were seeking to develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights that with time rose to a dominating position on the EU's external policy agenda. It has become accepted wisdom that it was through the enlargement policy that the EU established its role as one of most successful international democracy promotion actors (Seeberg, 2016; Kurki, 2011; Panchu and Bossuyt, 2014; Kotthaus, 2015; Schmidt, 2003; Kotzian, Knodt, and Urdze, 2011; Dimitrova and Pridham, 2004; Sasse, 2013; Warkotsch, 2008).

In the beginning, the EU used to allow some members to enter the Union based mostly upon political decisions because the first three countries to join in 1973 (Ireland, the UK, and Denmark), did not sign the Treaty of Rome due to pre-existing economic ties (Gilland and Chari, 2001). More importantly, most countries that joined before 1995, such as the UK, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, and Finland raised no questions about the status of their democracy (Gilland and Chari, 2001). These countries also did not belong to the communist/socialist bloc and had pre-existing market economies. Some countries that joined the European Economic Community in the 1980s (Spain, Portugal, and Greece), were former dictatorships that applied for membership during the 1960s that was declined due to their internal political situations. And only after the establishment of democracy these countries were admitted with the hope that economic ties with the rest of democratic Europe would help consolidate democracy in South Europe (Gilland and Chari, 2001). With time it became clear that potential new members need to have actual skills to keep up with the long-established EU's political and economic values, as well as essential democratic practices. And now, as mentioned before, the European Union membership criteria are based on the country's performance in the economic sector and the status of its democracy. To make the process clearer and easier to understand and use, the European Union accession criteria is defined by three main documents (Tamazian and Melekyan, 2010, p.1932):

- the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht or the Treaty on European Union defining geographical criteria and general policy criteria;¹⁰
- the declaration of the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen¹¹ introducing the political and economic criteria of accession;
- the Madrid European Council in December 1995¹² requiring transporting European Community legislation into national legislation and its effective implementation through appropriate administrative and judicial structures.

All those documents were drafted and ratified in the early-mid 1990s that made it easier for the future members to have a clear idea of how to reform their countries and how they are going to be judged upon their application to the union. The complexity of the European Union accession process included the benefits and the requirements of membership, with three main characteristics of the pre-accession process – of the way that the EU ‘delivers’ political and economic conditionality – that have made the EU’s leverage effective, which are: asymmetric interdependence, enforcement, and meritocracy (Vachudova, 2002, 2005). These characteristics amplify the incentives to comply with the EU’s membership requirements because they make the EU’s threat of exclusion as well as its promises of membership more credible. Power in an interdependent relationship flows from asymmetry, and the CEE states have much more to gain from the relationship than the EU. Such patterns of ‘asymmetrical interdependence’ have determined relations between the EU and candidate states in the past – and among EU member states during major treaty negotiations. Meanwhile, the monitoring of the progress of candidates in satisfying EU requirements through annual reports and through chapter by chapter negotiations on the *acquis communautaire* has built an imperfect but high level of enforcement into the pre-accession process.

As in the case with other international organizations that successfully used political conditionality tool, the effectiveness of the European Union’s political conditionality depends on three core conditions: the size of rewards, the size of domestic adoption costs, and the credibility of political conditionality (Vachudova, 2005; Kurki, 2011; Dimitrova and Pridham, 2004; Wetzel, Orbie and Bossuyt, 2015). The explanation of how the core conditions work is as follows: first and foremost, the size of the international rewards must exceed the costs that the target government incurs in fulfilling the international conditions. Second, political conditionality must be credible. The conditions of the international community must be clear, determined, and consistent across target states and international organizations. Most importantly, the target government must be certain that the reward will be paid when the political conditions are fulfilled and withheld otherwise. The negative conditionality or sanctions (Baracani, 2010) are used in democracy promotion as well, and their use can be observed in Belarus and Ukraine (during Kuchma’s presidency).

The EU’s leverage is animated by the fact that the substantial benefits of EU membership – and the costs of exclusion – create incentives for states to satisfy the entry requirements. Following this logic alone, we may conclude that the benefits of EU membership for post-communist states must be immense: at no time in history have sovereign states voluntarily agreed to meet such vast domestic requirements and then subjected themselves to such intrusive verification procedures to enter an international organization. For states that fail to

¹⁰ Full text at https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf

¹¹ Full text at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21225/72921.pdf>

¹² Full text at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/mad1_en.htm

enter an enlarging EU along with their neighbors, a steady flow of aid, expertise, trade, and foreign direct investment is diverted away. The European Union became a major source of external influence in East and Central European countries because it was able to provide an outstanding reward – membership – to offer states that establish a functioning liberal democracy and market economy, as well as the most valuable intermediate rewards to offer along the way. In comparison, other international organizations and other external actors have, individually, much less to offer – and have asked for much less in return (Vachudova, 2005). This situation left many of the otherwise influential international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations with lesser influence in this region.

The European Union also provides access to major European markets that is desirable to many neighbors. The ENP program includes the possibility of different treaties with a specific country that would allow easier movement of persons and goods across the borders. Under the ENP, the European Union is offering ‘privileged relations’ outside the possibility of membership (Casier, 2010). While the ENP covers all neighboring countries, it has region-specific programs in it, like Eastern Partnership for six former Soviet Republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The participation of undemocratic countries in the European Union’s neighborhood programs shows great significance in their relations to the Union. The role of political and economic elites is very important in those countries because most of them do not have strong democracies that allow ordinary citizens to express their opinion. So, if the elites are interested in a closer relationship with the EU, the masses would likely experience economic and political improvements.

Some scholars indicate that “Eastern Europeans were accustomed to government assuming responsibility for their economic well-being and therefore held the old regimes accountable for their economic failures. It is likely, then, that dissatisfaction with the old regime led some citizens to support democratic institutions and processes” (Waldron-Moore, 1999, p.38). This simply means that individuals would prefer and support democratic changes if they satisfy their economic and political interests. Even more, the disarray of the economy and deprivation of basic economic needs may have caused some individuals to seek a political solution to national economic problems and in some cases caused mass support for old leadership to stay in power. Additionally, the attraction of the new regime may simply be an opportunity to experience a different economic and political system copied from more successful Western European neighbors.

Waldron-Moore (1999) provides one more explanation of the possible massive support of the elite’s decision on democratic and economic changes that uses the ideas of self-interest. Although the concept of self-interest generally applies to the individual, in societies in which people have learned to believe that society’s welfare is more important than the individual’s, self-interest may extend beyond the personal to the national interest. As such, a general concern for the nation’s well-being may also have influenced attitudes toward political reform. Empirical analysis should clarify whether individuals’ support for democracy is influenced by the approval of national political and economic change as well as the desire for personal economic improvement. This idea can be successfully applied to many Eastern European countries that have a strong collective and communal identity. Even in Ukraine with its divided society successful economic and democratic changes that improve the lives of ordinary citizens will get massive support for the ruling elite.

The other important tool that the European Union has in promoting democracy in its neighboring region is its financial aid since most of this aid goes together with democracy

promotion and/or economic reforms programs (Kubicek, 2005). For example, most of the European Union aid to Ukraine is tied up to successful reformation in the specific area discussed in the agreement. If the aid receiving country wants to continue receiving the money it will have to comply with terms and show the results. Although, the European Union does not clearly state the outcome when the financed program is considered a failure (Kubicek, 2005). The financial aid maybe sometimes even more pervasive for democratization and economic reforms than the possibility of future economic gains from treaties, because the aid money coming right away, and the country can use them to make positive changes faster. Although there is not enough evidence to support the claim that financial aid helps consolidate democracy (Kubicek, 2005) as conditionalities did in the cases of current EU members.

In addition to the financial support, the European Union can use non-monetary conditionality to convince Ukrainian political elites to speed up the reformation process. One of the best examples of the non-monetary means was and still is the abolition of the visa regime between the European Union countries (ones that are part of the Schengen zone) and Ukraine. Since the start of negotiation of new border crossing rules, the European Union indicated several conditions that needed to be met before it can go into force, one of these conditions was the mandatory financial declarations for everybody entering the EU including elite members. The passing of the corresponding law in the Ukrainian Parliament was a long and painful process, but it was passed before the visa liberalization went into force in 2017.

Socialization is another important instrument of the European Union in terms of democracy promotion (Pridham, 2005, Morlino, 2011, Smith, 2000). It can also take more than one form (Morlino, 2011). Generally, it implies ‘multiple personal and institutional contacts, which inevitably serve as a mechanism of ‘Europeanization’. Unlike conditionality, which implies rational choice and is predominantly targeted at political elites, socialization in the long-term results in the penetration of EU norms and values into society (Vachudova, 2009). However, such ‘social learning’ implies that domestic actors perceive EU rules and norms as legitimate and appropriate. The most successful use of socialization can be observed in CEE countries that were originally classified by the EU as ‘Eastern Europe’ and had a strong political campaign under the ‘Return to Europe’ slogan. There have been studies done on the socialization and its importance in the increased European cooperation. For example, Smith (2000) identify elite socialization as the most important prerequisite for the domestic adaptation of European policies, especially in the context of external relations. His argument can be applied to the European Union’s democracy promotion efforts in Central and Eastern Europe and it will show that the countries whose political elites have higher levels of socialization with the European Union’s elites are more susceptible to the external democracy promotion efforts.

The first wave of Eastern European countries was considered for the EU membership in the mid 1990s. In 1997 Commission determined that some countries had already fulfilled the democracy criterion (Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic), others were on the way to meeting this criterion (Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, and Latvia), while one had not fulfilled this condition (Slovakia) and was therefore excluded from accession negotiations (Sadurski, 2006). Most of these countries were offered membership and joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Poland joined in 2004 along with Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic. The European Union was helping CEE pre-accession countries to achieve needed political and economic transformation by creating PHARE in 1990 – the Programme of Community financial aid to these countries (Grabbe, and Hughes, 1998; Ham, 1993). With time PHARE was restructured to provide financial help to

West Balkans as well.¹³ The only region left out of this program is the European neighborhood located east of current EU borders that consist of former Soviet Republics including Ukraine.

The lack of accession perspective is insufficient to explain the rise of hybrid or authoritarian regimes in European post-Soviet countries. Other elements matter too. Post-Soviet countries lack self-motivation in addition to the EU accession perspective, and the lack of these factors has thus far been the main obstacle that prevented the full transition to democracy. For example, former Soviet Republics lack important actors that supported the democratic foundation in the Western world. One example is the lack of pre-existing economic actors or bourgeoisie that were present during the establishment of the first modern democracies (Moore, 1966). The same idea is applied to economic systems, the need to transform all aspects of political, economic, social institutions, and build a new state in a country makes it hard to achieve. Additionally, former Soviet Republics have not experienced mass opposition movements against the communist rule as did Central European states, led by Hungary and Poland. Moreover, the support for democracy and free-market values was much less popular than had been the case in other countries en-route to democracy as times goes by. Some scholars, like Gel'man (2017), argue that the rise of bad governance in post-Soviet countries is not rooted in the communist past, but it is rather the way of the rent-seeking elite to create an environment favorable for them. The lack of international or domestic resistance makes it possible. While comparing the situation with bad governance in Ukraine to Poland, it is easy to see how the difference in political elites' goals resulted in very different outcomes of post-communist transition in the two countries.

To summarize, this section showed how the European Union has been able to influence positive political and economic change in Central and Eastern Europe. It also provides a brief overview of all enlargements of this organization by identifying different approaches made to different waves over the last five decades. This brief overview in combination with a list of major treaties that made the EU (as it is known today) shows how the evolvement from an economic organization with the addition of new members influenced the changes in membership criteria used today. Secondly, this section showed different tools associated with the attractiveness of its membership that the EU has been using to promote changes in its neighborhood. While the EU traditionally, has had more power over countries that have been considered for the membership, it still able to use its influence in countries that have been not selected yet. These tools include: financial and, institutional support, nonfinancial offers (like visa-free regimes, education exchanges), and socialization among others less visible tools. Last, but not least, this section provides an overview of regional differences that affected domestic response to EU presence through the ENP and EaP.

Poland since late 1989 and Poland – EU relations

The fall of communism in Poland was among the first in Eastern Europe and was heavily influenced by Solidarity, the trade union that was able to change the history of this county. This trade union was one of a kind, when it was created, it had about ten million members. This membership was larger than one of the Polish United Workers (Communist) Party. The creation of this union outside of the ruling communist party that was the 'workers party' created a legitimacy problem for the ancient political regime in Poland and with time brought the end to

¹³ States that currently negotiating EU membership

its domination. Solidarity started to dominate Polish politics in the 1980s and by the end of this decade, the communist government was forced to start the roundtable talks (February–April 1989) with the trade union and Catholic Church to resolve political tensions and economic problems. The main results of the roundtable talks were the establishment of the office of a president, legalization of the trade union, and the formation of a senate.

The first free presidential elections in Poland occurred in 1990 and brought victory to Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity. The first free parliamentary election took place next year, in 1991. Those major political events of 1989-1991 changed this country forever and brought many positive political and economic changes to its people. Polish transition to democracy often seems deeper than in other CEE states that can be explained by the fact that elements of civil society and degree of pluralism managed to survive the Communist era (McHalle, 1995) as in the case of Solidarity. The 1990s was a very important decade for the establishing of Polish democracy that resulted in four parliamentary elections, three presidents, and eight prime ministers. Tomini (2014) identifies two main time frames of Polish democratization: one before 1997 and second after the approval of the Constitution in 1997. The year 1997 is also important to the Polish political transition because as mentioned above, it was the year when the European Union placed Poland among the states with the high achievement of democratic transition that are ready to be invited to join the EU. The EU view on Polish democratic achievements resulted in the start of accession talks that resulted in Poland becoming a member in 2004. During the 1990s Poland also joined NATO that straightened its commitment to integrate to all European and Transatlantic organizations.

Polish democratic transition was influenced by several factors: domestic political, social, and economic situation, strong support of the Catholic Church, and strong outside influence. The role of the Church made Poland one of the kinds in Eastern Europe since the communist regime has tried to erase god from people's minds. An interesting example of communists' commitment to this goal, can be found in the Soviet Union, where in the 1950s, then communist party's leader Nikita Khrushchev promised to show the last Christian on television in a relatively short time.¹⁴ Needless to say, the communists were not able to achieve this goal in the USSR that made it even more difficult in other socialist countries that had more liberal political regimes. Additional reasons for the success of the Polish Catholic Church is the fact, that one of its members, Karol Wojtyla, became Pope John Paul II and the fact that this church was the only place where people could find protection from the communist regime and get help in freedom fighting (Eberts, 1998). The church was able to keep its strong presence in society due to two factors: strong historical influence and smaller proletariat than other Eastern European countries had. Historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church in Poland can be traced back to the eighteenth century when Poland became part of the Russian Empire that had the Orthodox Church as its official church. It is easy to conclude that the Polish catholic identity would not disappear just because the political regime in the Russian Empire changed, that eventually happened. Strong ties to Roman Catholic Church that historically is associated with Western Europe made the 'return to Europe' more than just a political slogan, it made it more meaningful on a personal level for many Polish people.

Political transformation in Poland would not be successful without the strong economic growth that this country experienced in the 1990s. During this decade Poland went through 'Shock therapy' or Balcerowicz Plan that brought successful economic growth. Poland had the

¹⁴ Recollection of family friend (Baptist), in the memoirs of Orthodox Christians, it phrased as 'show last priest'.

biggest popular support for the new regime among Eastern European (EE) states (Ivanov, 2003). The ‘shock therapy’ refers to the set of neoliberal reforms that were adopted in Poland in the early 1990s. The set of economic reforms that Poland went through included: monetary contraction policies, austerity measures, elimination of price control, liberalization of trade, privatization of state-owned enterprise, and ending of a centrally planned economy. The timing of these economic reforms at the beginning of the Polish transformation helped this country to jump-start its transition to a market economy and resulted in economic growth in the first half of the 1990s after short-lived economic problems. The success of economic reforms implemented by the new democratic government insured many people that they did make the right choice by giving up communist ideas.

Additionally, Polish successful political and economic transformation in the 1990s was greatly aided by institutions that existed before 1989 (Tomini, 2014). Poland was among the Eastern European countries that were able to transform their political and economic structure relatively quickly due to the ability of Polish political leadership to utilize existing institutions by adapting them to new needs instead of creating completely new institutions. The existence of private farms during the fifty years of communist rule helped with the transition to a market economy. Pre-existing statehood also helped this country to reform without the need to deal with issues of building a political state as newly independent state issues like Ukraine did (Offe, 1996, 1998). Also, since 1989 Poland has got a real chance to influence the geopolitics of Eastern Europe for the first time in the last two hundred years. Additionally, Polish official foreign policy stayed constant despite changes in the leadership since 1989 (Terry, 2000).

Poland also had same-minded neighbors that were going through a post-communist transition and supported each other. Poland joined the ‘Visegrad group’ or ‘Visegrad Four’ (V4) consisting of Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. The group took its name from the city of Visegrad in Hungary, where the first meeting between the heads of these states occurred. V4’s official web page list several motives for its creation:

- the desire to eliminate the remnants of the communist bloc in Central Europe
- the desire to overcome historic animosities between Central European countries
- the belief that through joint efforts it will be easier to achieve the set goals, i.e. to successfully accomplish the social transformation and complete the European integration process
- the proximity of ideas of then ruling political elites¹⁵

This group was most important for the Polish political transition during the first several years of its existence 1991-1993 and it helped Poland negotiate with NATO and the EU. The collective stand of several Central European states helped them to get a great deal of attention from both international organizations as did the Baltic States. Additionally, the strong push for the inclusion supported by effective reforms created a positive image of them internationally.

Since the beginning of a political and economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, the European Union started to work closely with many countries in the region, mostly ones that were geographically located closer to its borders. The EU helped those countries with transition and promised future partnerships and full membership in the union with time. The membership in the European Union brought many positive changes to the countries that were able to secure it. For example, Poland and the Czech Republic were able relatively quickly

¹⁵ <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about/history>

transition from the communist past to the democratic present. The economic and political success of the European Union countries makes more countries want to join it. Some of the main reasons behind fast transformations are the strong pro-European attitude in those countries and strong political support from inside alongside the help from outside. It may be influenced by “Communist-era conviction that anything coming from the West is good, or at least better” than local (Sadurski, 2006, 374). One of the tools used by the European Union to promote democratic change was political and economic conditionality that simply meant that the entering countries need to meet certain political and economic standards.

This section briefly showed how Poland, one of the success stories of democratization in the post-communist world was able to achieve its goals. Starting with pre-1989, when the Solidarity with help from Polish Catholic Church created strong political opposition to the communist rule, to successful political and economic reforms that made Poland an attractive candidate for the EU membership. In the international arena, Poland’s rewarding transformation successfully attracted the attention of the EU and NATO. The creation of fruitful relations with these two international organizations was a direct result of the strategy of political elites in cooperation with other Central European states. Especially, important for this international success was Poland’s involvement in the Visegrad Four, a group of post-communist countries that used their combined negotiating power to gain membership in the EU and NATO. At the same time, it is still unclear how the EU elite perception of national elites in Poland affected this process because, as the following chapters will show, it played a notable role. The next sections will provide a similar overview of the Ukrainian post-communist transition showing the alternative transition.

Ukraine since 1991

At the time of achieving its independence, Ukraine was one of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union with a highly developed industry. It was also one of the border republics of the USSR. Even though the border was with the Socialist Bloc countries, Ukraine was in close range of Western European influence. This influence increased significantly after most of Ukraine’s western neighbors started their way to join the European Union and other Western international organizations. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine as well as other countries in the region began to look for new ways to develop and new partners to cooperate with while turning its attention to Western Europe and Transatlantic international organizations. Ukrainian political transformation was heavily influenced by changes in neighboring republics and states and by the local nationalist movements, like Rukh. Although the main driver behind Ukrainian independence and transition was the communist party that realized that the country needs a change in its political and economic direction.

One of the negative consequences of Ukraine being the former Soviet Republic is the fact that this country got its independence without strong nationhood. The lack of strong nationhood in Ukraine can be explained by the fact that during the Soviet rule, the communist party moved a lot of people from their original places of residence to different locations. In this country, for example, many Russians moved into Ukraine’s eastern and southern territories that created a double national identity in this region – Russian and Ukrainian. After Ukrainian independence, a large percentage of the ethnically Russian population started the campaign for a closer relationship between Russia and Ukraine that got support in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, where most of them reside. Even now, after more than two decades since Ukrainian

independence, separatist ideas are present in Southern regions, mostly on the Crimean Peninsula that has one of the biggest groups of ethnically Russian population in Ukraine that led to the Russian claim to Crimea in 2014. On the other hand, Ukraine has the Western region with a strong pro-European identity that is very unfavorably towards Russia. The Ukrainian population on the East sometimes called Slavophiles or Sovietophiles due to their pro-Russian views and strong support for the communist party. The Ukrainian population on the West sometime called Westernizers due to their Western location and pro-Western European political views. Even though there is a division in Ukrainian society, most of the population located in the middle is identifying itself as Ukrainians and is the major decision-maker in national elections.

The lack of national unity created many problems for successful transformation in Ukraine on two levels. On the local level, it created problems within local communities and on the national level, it created uncertainty about the strategic priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy. The lack of national unity also slowed down democratic and economic transformation in Ukraine because the nationhood usually generates collective power, creates a 'we', and enables mobilization and representation. It also provides people ready to make the highest of sacrifices for a political community that is both modern and based upon some ethnic, cultural, and historical factors. The presumed existence of this nationhood as a prerequisite for liberal democracy also assumes recognized borders, a 'people' constituting a political community within those borders who do not call into question those boundaries (Kuzio, 2000).

Ukrainian lack of national unity created a strong centrist approach among major political actors who hold power on the national level. The centrist approach transformed Ukraine slower by pursuing the path of gradual socio-economic reforms and changes. As for Ukrainian foreign policy, the centrist political approach created foreign policy without clear direction where Ukraine wants to go. For example, does it want to go toward Western Europe and join the European Union in the future, or does it want to stay close to Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Although, the currently pro-European approach seems to be out of the question due to military conflict with Russia that is perceived by most Ukrainians as a betrayal of a close ally. In the past, it was not clear if Ukraine would be able to successfully consolidate democracy and pursue Euro-Atlantic integration to the same extent as Central European countries did. This approach sent mixed signals to the international community and with time placed Ukraine outside of those two major regional camps. First, the European Union did not see Ukraine as a potential member material and in 2005-2006 Russia started to show that it does not see Ukraine as a good neighbor anymore by largely increasing the prices for the energy sources that it sells to Ukraine. This clearly shows that the Ukrainian relationship with both, the European Union and Russia could be better. The weak pro-European activity of the Ukrainian government made Ukraine pay the price of exclusion from many European economic and political activities and the cold attitude towards Russia created many problems in the economic relationship between those two countries.

The Ukrainian slow transition to democracy is not unique and we can find many similar examples among other Post-Soviet states where the situation with democratization is different from the states that used to be in the Eastern Bloc countries located west of the former USSR. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited its main power, but in a smaller version and now, "Russia is weak, its influence in the lands of the former Soviet bloc is shrinking, and it seems to have understood (at least under Yeltsin) that it could not democratize and remain an empire. It has given up Central Europe and now concentrates its attention on the former Soviet republics—the so-called "near abroad" (Rupnik, 2000). Ukraine is part of this 'near abroad' that makes it in the zone of strong Russian interests. The gas negotiations of 2005-06 showed just

how far Russia would go just to keep Ukraine under its influence. Russia's persistence makes it even harder for Ukraine to make a strong pro-Western choice.

This brief overview of the post-communist transitional trajectory of Ukraine makes it easier to understand the development of EU-Ukraine relations over the last quarter of a century analyzed next.

EU – Ukraine relations

The relationship between the European Union and Ukraine has not been as productive as the relationship between the European Union with countries that are geographically located between Ukraine and the EU. If we take, for example, Poland and the Czech Republic, we can easily see how successful those countries are partial because they are already members of the EU with growing economies and democratic governments. This can be attributed to the fact that EU officials in Brussels will try to keep each member state that deviates from democracy accountable for its action, as it has been doing with the current Polish government. It is not a secret that most of the changes that occurred in those countries during the post-communist transition were possible due to strong support from the European Union and strong support for the European integration from inside those countries. Firstly, the division of Eastern European states between 'Eastern Europe' and the 'former Soviet Union states' created a new then invisible border that with time became the real border between the EU and the rest of Eastern Europe.

Ukraine is one of the examples of this differentiation. The European Union still does not see this country as its future member, for at least the next 20 years, according to a statement by the President of European Commission Juncker in 2016.¹⁶ Although Juncker did not specify the reasons in this statement (March 2016), a year later he stated that widespread corruption undermines Ukrainian transformation efforts.¹⁷ Ukraine has several problems that need to be fixed, but the lack of the EU membership perspective for the next quarter of the century may limit the motivation of local politicians to reform sooner rather than later. The EU's attitude towards a specific country is one of the most important facts in determining how successful the role of the European Union in the promotion of democracy in a particular country going to be. Many scholars indicate that the real possibility of becoming a full member of the European Union was the strongest pushing factor for democratization in many Central and Eastern European countries (Pridham, 2005; Sadurski, 2006, Steves, 2001; Vachudova, 2002, 2005; and others). In the case of Ukraine, there was not much incentive to make any real progress in reformation due to a lack of positive signals from the EU.

Since the enforcement of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement or PCA (1998) both sides, the EU and Ukraine have been working hard on the new, Associate Agreement (AA) between them. In its scope and thematic coverage, the AA is the most extensive international legal document in the entire history of Ukraine and the most extensive international agreement with a third country ever concluded by the European Union. The AA constitutes a new stage in the development of EU-Ukraine contractual relations, aiming at political association and economic integration and leaving open the way for further progressive developments. The AA

¹⁶ <https://www.rferl.org/a/juncker-says-ukraine-not-likely-join-eu-nato-for-20-25-years/27588682.html>

¹⁷ July 2017 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-eu-summit/corruption-undermining-ukraines-progress-eus-juncker-says-idUSKBN19Y1OA>

provides for a shared commitment to a close and lasting relationship, based on common values, full respect for democratic principles, rule of law, good governance, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The AA was signed by the EU and Ukraine on 27 June 2014 and ratified by the Verkhovna Rada and the European Parliament on 16 September 2014. Even though this agreement is part of the European Union's ENP program that do not indicate future membership for Ukraine in this organization, the successful ratification of this document greatly benefit Ukraine due to many economic and political opportunities that it brings. At the same time, there still is hope for future membership because many of the current European Union members from Eastern Europe had a similar agreement with the EU before they were invited to apply for membership. As it was said by a former EU official – “The question of Ukrainian entry into the EU is not on the agenda. But it is clear we are not closing any doors” (cited in Casier, 2010, p. 110).

The assistance provided to Ukraine by the EU shows the union's support. It has amounted to billions of euros since 1991. For example, the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) allocated € 470 million to Ukraine for the years 2011-2013. This goes to support action in three priority areas: good governance and the rule of law; facilitating the entry into force of the AA, and sustainable development, including energy and environment. This amount includes funding under the Eastern Partnership for the Comprehensive Institution Building program (€ 43.37 million). The latter is designed to improve the administrative capacity of partner countries and their compatibility with EU institutions, for instance through twinning programs, professional training, and secondment of personnel. The EU also increased its financial assistance to Ukraine since the start of the armed conflict.

The amount of financial assistance provided by the European Union to Ukraine seems impressive and it mostly focuses on the areas that currently under reform and need help for their successful implementation. The same official guide to the European Union – Ukraine Associate Agreement also clearly indicates that “EU assistance to Ukraine is linked with the reform agenda as it emerges from the result of negotiations. The Comprehensive Institutional Building Programme (CIB) is particularly important in this regard.” And the “future priority areas of the EU financial assistance to Ukraine will be laid down in relevant indicative programs reflecting agreed policy priorities between the EU and Ukraine. The indicative amounts of assistance will consider Ukraine's needs, sector capacities, and progress with reforms.” The simple summary would be that Ukraine needs to keep up with reformation if it wants to keep its relationship with the EU in good shape.

Ukrainian internal problems have played a role in weakening relationship with the European Union. First of all, there is a lack of consolidation among internal players in Ukraine that is especially visible with presence in this country's political life significant anti-system parties or movements, like the communist party that during a long time past 1991 had a majority in the Ukrainian parliament in the 1990s. When we compare the internal situation in Ukraine to its western neighbors we will notice that most of those countries did not permit its communist parties to be part of contemporary political life and isolated former communist political elite from the power. Complete removal of former communist leaders from power did not happen overnight and in some states, like Poland, it took years to achieve it by passing different rounds of lustration laws. At the same time, many Polish post-communist leaders do have some connection to the old communist party, but they did liberalize their ideology according to contemporary demands. The communist party of Ukraine had a different path, it could participate in the political life of this country without any restrictions for two decades since the

mid-1990s.¹⁸ The lack of will in Ukrainian society and new democratic governments to completely abandon old communist ways and old leaders resulted in slow and inefficient reforms in all spheres of political and economic life. Strong reliance on old leadership affected Ukrainian foreign relationships negatively and the relationship with the European Union was not an exception.

But is the EU's leverages a necessary condition for regime change and for locking in democratic and market liberalizing reforms in Ukraine? If we compare it to the countries that successfully reformed their political and economic systems due to the EU's accession process, we will see that without the membership perspective, it is hard to expect a similar result. Although, as I mentioned above, it is possible that we just must wait to see if the change will happen. The current situation in Ukraine indicates that there is a strong internal willingness to work toward democratization and Europeanization, and one of the earliest indicators of that was the success of the Orange Revolution, which promoted the European orientation of Ukraine's foreign policy. The movement behind the Orange Revolution had a strong "pro-Western agenda," and it was able to unify many people against the illiberal regime creating a key to their success. Although, the success of the Orange Revolution was short-lived and in 2010 old leaders succeeded in returning to power that resulted in the EU offering Ukraine instead of a close relationship in the context of its European Neighborhood Policy. Now, after one more revolution, the EU-Ukraine relationship seems to be much better, but it is still early to talk about much success of EU's democracy promoting efforts in this country especially while analyzing political events in Ukraine last year (2017).

As we can see the relationship between Ukraine and the European Union has not been as successful as it could be so far and there are many reasons for it. One of the direct consequences of this situation is the fact the European Union was not able to repeat its success in democracy promotion in Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics to the same extent as it did in Central Europe. Although a more detailed analysis of what caused it will follow in the next chapters, the evolution of EU-Ukraine relations provided in this section highlights the major reasons for this developmental trajectory. Several domestic developments can explain this development including increased corruption and the choice of the political system.

This section analyzed the development of relations between the European Union and Ukraine since the establishment of Ukraine as an independent nation in 1991. This analysis included major treaties and agreements, which not only determined parameters of relations between them but also significantly impacted the development of Ukraine as a nation. This impact became especially visible after refusal by Victor Yanukovich to sign the Associate Agreement resulted in major political change in Ukraine. Similarly, this single event became the catalyst for major geopolitical changes in Europe. Although, the relation between these two neighbors is great today, there still room for more improvement. Especially, Ukraine needs to continue its reform agenda and finally finish its democratization process started in 1991. Effective economic and political reforms will not only improve the internal situation in Ukraine but also will increase the Ukrainian chances of joining the EU and NATO someday.

¹⁸ The Communist Party was banned in Ukraine in May 2014 by Ukrainian President Poroshenko signing corresponding law. The lawsuit that followed resulted in favor of Ukrainian government's decision.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the political transition in Eastern Europe and the role of the European Union in it. It also provides a more detailed overview of democratic transitions in Poland and Ukraine in the light of their relations with the European Union. From the beginning of the 1990s the European Union was involved in this regions' transition and to some extent influenced its outcome. Firstly, the division of Eastern European states between 'Eastern Europe' and the 'former Soviet Union states' created a new then invisible border that with time became the real border between the EU and the rest of Eastern Europe. Many different reasons had been blamed for the contrasting success of democratic transitions among Eastern European states. Those factors are the existence of statehood before a transition, geographic location of the country, local political views, dominant religion, economic situations, national elite preferences, and many more. The analytical overview in this chapter showed that despite many different reasons mentioned above, the most important is domestic political and economic improvements. The goals of political elites are also very important because these groups oversee developing and implementing political and economic reforms needed for a successful transition.

While it is hard to determine with a high degree of certainty which factors were most instrumental for democratic transitions in Poland and Ukraine, we can conclude that geographic location played an important role. Poland's geographic location, next to Germany and other Eastern European states with a strong will to integrate into European organizations brought this country the international support needed to achieve its political ambition. Ukraine, on the other hand, located further East and has a long border with Belarus and Russia, two countries that have consolidated authoritarian political regimes. In addition to having authoritarian Russia with strong ambitions to rule the region and sees Ukraine as its zone of influence. There had many speculations in the past about Russia's reaction to the Ukrainian decision to abandon its neutral status, but its actual reaction was much worse than prediction.

At the same time, geography alone does not determine a democratic outcome. As some academic studies (Vachudova, 2002 & 2005 and Przeworski, 1991) show, the proximity of established democracies to Central and Eastern Europe is important for the consolidation of democracy in the region when compared to other regions like Latin America (LA). Also, geography explains long term democratic development in Europe, but it does not explain why different countries within the same region and the same distance to the EU, like Poland and Romania, had different success in democratization (Vachudova, 2002 and 2005). With regards to the European Union's view on potential members, it is steadily enlarging eastward by adding the next country or countries simply because most European countries that are not members located there. The last several decades significantly changes the political and economic landscape of Europe. The European Union by itself continues to evolve and integrate more and more states. As three major treaties of the EU, included in this analysis showed, the enlargement process is embedded in the core of this organization. The same can be said about the relations between the EU and its neighbors. Despite the Brexit, the EU's membership is still attractive and gives EU influence in the region to influence the change by the continuation of current programs oriented on Eastern Europe. Ukraine is an important part of these efforts with the potential to join the EU and NATO in the future.

Chapter 5 – Elite origin and perceptions

The importance of considering the elite creation process in this research is hard to undervalue because, as this chapter will show, tracing the origin of any elite help us understand its action. It will also provide a background to the creation of elite perceptions. As was mentioned in the introduction, the elite composition is one of three major factors that can explain the different international perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian political elites. Tracing the origin of these elites answers some questions of this research. Overall, this analysis will show how the tracing of elites' origin can explain the success or the lack of it in Polish and Ukrainian post-communist transitions. This chapter will answer the question – how the origin of political elites in Poland, Ukraine, and the EU can explain their action during the post-communist transition. If we take, for example, the Ukrainian transition, we will notice the lack of strong anti-communist elite groups that were present in Poland. The official change of the ideology of the new (old communist) Ukrainian elite did not significantly change the way they led the country. This lack of change can be explained by the limited flow of new ideas and people who bring them. Looking back into Polish and Ukrainian elites' history predating these two political transitions will help us understand what influenced elites' actions during transitions.

An elite in any given country or place may have a different or similar origin to elites in other countries, including socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. The diversity of elite origins can be used to explain countries' political developments. Especially it is true for three elites that are studied in this thesis. While there are many similarities between Poland and Ukraine as well as between their political and business elites there are also significant differences present that, in a way, can be accountable for differences in political and economic development in Poland and Ukraine. According to the Brussels elite (Interview C, EU; Interview A, EP), there is a visible difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites, and this difference is not based on national belonging, but rather it can be attributed to elites' educational, cultural and professional backgrounds. For example, the Polish elite is perceived as more 'intellectual' in part because it includes many people with Solidarity roots, including many intellectuals (Interview A, EP). Similar conclusions can be found in the work of Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski (1995), Karabel, (1993), and Fidrya (2013). They argue that due to the active recruiting of a new member from intellectual circles Polish political elite was perceived better than then Ukrainian elite that has a different composition and looks greedier (Interview A, EP; Fesenko, 1997).

The difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites mentioned by European politicians led me to question what caused this difference and how tracing each elite's origin will help me answer the main question of this research. More importantly, how do the personal background and the elite recruitment affect the decisions that elites make? To understand the difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites and perceptions of them held by Western Europeans, I will review the process of elite recruitment and the personal background of its members. Then I will analyze how it affects their performance in the international system. Additionally, this chapter will clarify who the European Union's elite is. Tracing elite origins will provide a clear picture of how different compositions of these elites are and if the origins can be used to explain the corresponding elite's action during the post-communist transition. In the end, I will summarize how tracing the elite's origin helps us understand political developments in each country. It also shows how understanding the process of elite creation help understand political and economic developments in a country. This study is not only important because it has the potential to

explain the elite's actions, but it can also illustrate the differences between societies represented by elites.

This chapter starts with tracing the origins of the Ukrainian elite by analyzing Ukraine's Soviet past. We concentrate mostly on the Soviet Union's past for Ukraine because the communist party eliminated the majority of pre-communist elite members. The cleansing of political, military, economic, and cultural elites during the early years of the Soviet rule also included purging inside the party with many members that were perceived as untrustworthy being removed from leading positions and imprisoned or killed. Because of these tragic events, the current Ukrainian political and economic elite can only be traced back to the Soviet elite. At the same time, we need to acknowledge the presence of a relatively small number of Ukrainian elite members that were recruited from the former Soviets opposition and the Ukrainian diaspora. The Soviet origin of the Ukrainian political elite created an image of the lack of change in a country. It also raised the question about the ability of this group to implement reforms because of their background and a small number of members with diverse backgrounds.

While having a similar communist past with Ukraine, the Polish elite of 1989-2004 has different origins. For starters, Poland was an independent country for most of the twentieth century. This helped Poland create a more stable history of elites that did not have the same level of purging as Ukrainian did after the start of communist rule. Additionally, Poland had strong opposition to then ruling communist party, especially in the 1980s. Leaders of the Polish opposition over time took leadership roles and helped transform Poland into a modern democracy. This blend of new and old elites helped Poland reform more successfully than some of its neighbours. Although current Polish political leadership took some undemocratic actions against the media that dismiss some transitional achievement, this research only analyzes elite action in 1989-2004, when Poland was a recognized leader or the post-communist transition in CCE countries.

This chapter has three sections that trace elite formation in Ukraine, Poland, and the EU, and the analytical section summarizing the importance of studying this process for the analysis of elite perception. The first two sections trace the origin of national elites of Poland and Ukraine and analyze how many of their members were members of the communist party and how the recruitment techniques of the new elite made it look more democratic. The overview of the European Union's elite consists of the clarification of what I mean by this term, and its membership. Also, this chapter will address the question of the existence of the supranational elite in the EU. The last section analyzes what the study of elites' origin can tell us about elite actions while in power.

Elite creation in Ukraine

Political and economic elites in many Former Soviet republics (except the Baltic States) take their origin from the communist elite of the Soviet Union. But to better understand the origin of the Ukrainian state and its elite we need to briefly look further back into Ukrainian history. Especially history is important when we consider the fact that many, especially Russians, question the Ukrainian 'right' to have an independent state (Solchanyk, 2001). This brief overview of Ukrainian history will help us understand the reasons behind this claim. Ukrainian national history usually is traced back to the early middle ages (9th to 13th centuries), when Kyiv was the capital of then powerful East Slav state called Kievan Rus'. Both, contemporary Ukraine and Russia take an origin from this medieval state and both nations claim to be the rightful

successor of this once powerful entity.¹⁹ After the fall of Kievan Rus', Russia could keep its independence and built an empire over time. Ukraine, on the other hand, has been struggling with staying independent and in most recent history (the early 1900s) was divided between Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Ukraine could unify its territory only after becoming a member of the Soviet Union with the addition of Crimea in 1954. Ukrainian elite has been for a very long-time provincial member of Russian (imperial) and Soviet elite (Solchanyk, 2001) that created many problems with self-identification in modern Ukraine. Especially important is the question of national identification in East and South regions that have had a strong Russian presence for a long time.

Since the economic and political elite of Former Soviet Republics or FSRs takes its origin from the Soviet times, we need to include a brief survey of the old communist elite. In the 1980s elite in the USSR was composed of three strong groups: economic elite (economic managers or directors), bureaucrats, and communist party leaders.²⁰ Most members of these groups continued to stay in power in the 1990s, sometimes changing the origin of their power from political to economic and vice versa. A look at the composition of the Russian elite in 1993 (Lazarev, 2001) shows that somewhere between sixty-five to seventy-five percent of old nomenklatura (top-level communist leaders) continued to hold their old posts (from Soviet times). While the numbers are different now, many political elite members' origins can still be traced to the old communist elite while the economic elite has a higher percentage of newcomers (Lazarev, 2001). The same picture can be observed in Ukraine. The economic system of the USSR was interconnected between all republics that created deep economic interdependence between CIS countries that helped them keep their strong relations with each other after they became independent. One of the reasons why so many former Soviet Republics were and still have close economic relations is the fact that their political and economic elites are coming from the same place (Soviet nomenklatura) and have similar social and educational backgrounds which are true for the post-1991 new elite members as well (Lazarev, 2001).

The study of economic elites in the former Soviet Republics shows one detail that differentiates these elites from their counterparts in other regions, and it is a heavy dependency on close relations or friendships with the ruling party or government with relatively weak informal elite networks. It is true in Ukraine as well as in other FSRs (Way, 2004). The creation of this type of economic elite can be explained by a few opportunities present in the private sector that made access to state resources very attractive (Radnitz, 2012). As a result, this situation created an economic elite that depends on the political elite and political elite that depends to some degree on income received from the economic elite as a share of the use of state resources. At the same time, some states in CIS, such as Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, witnessed major asset transfer from a state into private or semiprivate business structures and developed a reasonably sized small and medium business sector that with time helped 'color revolutions' to succeed (Radnitz, 2012). Even now, while analyzing the political situation in countries like Ukraine, it is hard not to notice the political power of major business-men. For example, in 2014, after the start of Russia's backed separatist movement in Ukraine, the government in Kyiv appointed major business-men to run troubled regions hoping that this move would stop the separatist movement spreading to these regions.

While the communist rule helped unite most of the Ukrainian territories and brought short-lived national revival in the 1920s, the following decade (1930s) identified as 'the purges

¹⁹ Although Moscow did not exist at the time, other parts of today's Russia were part of this state

²⁰ <http://web.worldbank.org>

of 1930s... wiped out both, the Ukrainian leadership which fostered the national revival of the 1920s and a very large part of the Ukrainian Cultural intelligentsia' (Lieven, 1999, p.31). Similarly, the Second World War brought more destruction and elite purging. On the other hand, the Ukrainian republic became the founding member of the United Nation that brought Ukraine international acknowledgment as a republic important enough to be a member of this international organization, while in reality, it was a way to balance relative power between democratic and communist states. The unification and new official identification helped Ukraine to get international recognition as an independent state in 1991. The same process also helped create a ruling elite with Ukrainian identity and experience in managing complex territory even though they only had experience in governing a republic and had to report to the central government in Moscow.

After the end of WWII, Ukrainians were feeling more or less at home in the Soviet Union. While most of them did not see the USSR as 'completely their state' (Lieven, 1999, p.41) they also did not feel completely foreign partly because the Ukrainian elite was involved in the governing of the Soviet Union. There were fewer Ukrainians than Russians holding government posts, but Ukrainians had more prestigious and powerful positions than other nationalities and ethnic groups of the former Soviet Union. Lieven (1999) provides some descriptive statistics that show that about one-third of Soviet officer corps were Ukrainians. Similar statistics can be traced in other elite circles with several Ukrainians (or people closely associated with Ukraine) becoming leaders of the USSR. For example, two men associated with Ukraine, Nikita Khrushchev (1958-1964) and Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) held the most powerful post in the USSR for twenty-eight years (Zotkin, 2004). Lieven (1999) also indicates that Russians, the dominant nationality in the Soviet Union, trusted Ukrainians due to their connective history and their view on Ukraine as being a part of big Russia.

While it does seem like Ukrainians lived comfortably in the Soviet Union with their leaders being able to raise to the highest ranks of political power, they had to pay a price for doing so – they had to stop using Ukrainian as their primary language and embrace the Soviet identity. At the same time, Ukrainian identity was not forgotten and in 1989, two years before Ukraine became independent, the Ukrainian communist elite officially made Ukrainian as the only official language of the republic (Lieven, 1999). Additionally, the Ukrainian Soviet elite that was loyal to the Soviet Communist party and was forced to get 'permissions' from Russians felt uneasy with power distribution in the Soviet Union that led to the rise of Ukrainian nationalism within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The twentieth century, especially the Soviet rule, created the situation in Ukraine that destroyed a significant part of the political and cultural elite that has roots stretching back for a significant period of the national history that is present in many other states (Prizel, 2011). At the same time, parts of Ukraine, especially the Western region were always fighting against oppression show strength of national character and created national heroes that inspired youth.

While the self-identification of the Soviet Ukrainian elite is very important, it is also important how others perceived it. One member of the European Parliament from the Baltics noted during our interview that the Ukrainian elite did not have a distinct national identity similar to Baltic or non-Slavic republics. While everybody knew about the way the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union tried to erase Ukrainian national identity, this knowledge did not make too much difference in the way others perceived Ukrainians. The main perceived characteristic of the Ukrainian elite at the time and post-1991 as well was that Ukrainians would follow Russian lead. Additionally, the Ukrainian elite was mostly peripheral in the Soviet Union despite the high number of Ukrainians (comparing to other nationalities) in the Soviet elite. The

provincial origin of the Ukrainian elite had two major consequences: first, it limited their experience of governing and it limited their contacts with national elites outside the Soviet Union.

It has been noticed by many scholars that most post-communist countries have continuity of elites during the transition (Lazarev, 2001; Higley, 1995, 2011; Wiatr, 2003; Pakulski, 1995; and Baylis, 2012) that resulted in old elite members' ability to keep their power (political, economic or both) after the initial transition. While this statistic does not apply to current elites in all post-communist states, it was the case at the beginning of political and economic transitions for all post-communist countries including Ukraine and Poland (Wiatr, 2003). This situation changed in many post-communist states located West of Ukraine (Central Europe), but in other states, the situation continues to be the same with small exceptions. The brightest personalities of the old Ukrainian communist elite became the main pillars of Ukrainian statehood. This list includes former presidents Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005), and former chairman of Ukrainian parliament Ivan Plyushch (1990, 1991-1994, 2000-2002) and former prime minister Even Marchuk (1995-1996) among many others (Shulga, alt. 1998). In addition to old nomenklatura, we can observe the rise to political power by former Soviet economic elite – managers of state enterprises who rose to power using access to economic resources. This Soviet economic elite was the origin of oligarchy in Ukraine. But mostly the Ukrainian elite consists of old communists.

One of the reasons why these countries experience strong continuity of elites was offered by Hanley (2000), who stated that old communist elites used their political power to acquire former state companies to ensure that when they lose their political power, they will at least have economic power. Some studies of Eastern European elites showed that most of the old nomenklatura members were looking forward to democratic change in Eastern European states (Wiatr, 2003) because they saw a possibility to protect their status under the new rule. For example, in Ukraine old elites only switched to the nationalist agenda to keep power (Higley & Pakulski, 1995) due to external and internal forces without radically changing the political and economic systems in addition to the conflict with the ethnically Russian Soviet elite. Furthermore, the Soviet origin of the Ukrainian ruling elite makes many in and outside Ukraine question how much of national interest they actually pursue. Some Ukrainian academics, such as Belebekha (2011), openly criticize and even make fun of current Ukrainian national elites claiming that they were raised by Russians and because of it they still loyal to them. Belebekha also states that only about eight percent of members of the Ukrainian Parliament are ethnically Ukrainian trying to illustrate the fact that this elite does not have a strong national interest in mind.

The political power in Ukraine has always been awarded to the winner of 'the fight for Kyiv' between regional elites during the process identical to the power elite creation in the Soviet Union. The most notable Ukrainian regional elites with national power came from Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, and L'viv (Zotkin, 2004). There are some differences between these four elite networks with Eastern Ukrainian elites using their economic power and Western elite using their cultural and social powers (Zotkin, 2004). An especially strong influence of the Western elite occurred during Kravchuk's presidency (the early 1990s). While for a long time (until 2013) regional elites were holding national power, currently, the situation is different, we can find representatives from different regions with a strong influence of newcomers in Ukrainian politics.

In addition to the Ukrainian communist elite, Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia (intellectuals) was the voice of pro-democracy and pro-independence with Rukh as the most famous example of this movement (Dyczok, 2000) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Rukh was one of the determining voices during the pro-independence campaign that resulted in a very high vote for Ukrainian independence during the national referendum in 1991. Even the traditionally pro-Russian Crimean Peninsula had about sixty percent pro-independence vote. This movement was composed of poets, anti-communist political opposition, and other cultural elite or intellectuals originating mostly from Western regions with the center in L'viv. These intellectual groups saw Soviet rule as a serious threat to the survival of Ukrainian national identity and did everything in their power to promote the national agenda. This movement was able to get mass attention using different media and as a consequence attracted the majority of Ukrainians to the idea of independence.

After independence was achieved, the leadership of Rukh went into politics mostly by becoming members of the Ukrainian parliament or Verkhovna Rada. Unfortunately, this movement was not as developed and widespread as Solidarity in Poland and had limited influence in the national politics of Ukraine and its foreign policy. An additional small group of Ukrainian elites came back to Ukraine from the diaspora. Many are familiar with the most recent infusion of international bureaucrats to Ukrainian politics after the 2013's Revolution of Dignity. But even before it, a small number of Ukrainians living overseas (mostly the US and Canada) came back to their motherland. With a few members of the diaspora getting involved in Ukrainian politics for all twenty-five years since Ukrainian independence.

Most characteristics of the Ukrainian elite mentioned above apply to the political elite thought twenty-five years of independence with more newcomers after 2013. The first Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk was a former member of the communist party, who adopted nationalistic views, which become dominant during his tenure as a president. These views also affected elite composition in this country. Ukrainian ruling elite under Kuchma's rule was created following Soviet tradition that promoted close network recruitment with the creation of oligarchs' clans and strict division of zones of influence. Most of the power was concentrated in the hand of the president (Stepyko, 2011 p.63). This tendency changed after the 2004 presidential election when Leonid Kuchma stepped down as Ukrainian president, but it re-emerged for short time after the 2010 presidential election. Overall, politics and business never became separated in post-Soviet Ukraine (Puglisi, 2010) that often perceived negatively by internal and external observers. This interconnectedness also negatively affected the EU's perception of Ukrainian political elites (Interview A, EP). Similar to political elites, the majority of Ukrainian business-men built their capital by using 'social capital' acquired during the Soviet times when they worked as party or youth functionaries or large enterprises' management (Nastych, 2003). Leonid Kuchma's presidency also shows how these social networks from the Soviet past were used to obtain political power.

While the Ukrainian elite has had strong roots in its communist past, it would be incorrect to say that it has not significantly changed over time to become more inclusive and more open to newcomers from different social groups. For example, after the fall of Victor Yanukovich's government, former leaders of mass protests joined the new political elite. Some went to the parliament, like Olga Bogomolets,²¹ the doctor who ran medical services during the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan. Some, like Mykola Velichkovich, former Maidan activist held a short-term post as deputy minister of internal affairs before being elected as a member of

²¹ <http://bogomolets.com/ua/biography>

parliament.²² Additionally, after the Euromaidan, the Ukrainian elite got an infusion of international politicians and professionals that were offered cabinet posts. Some newcomers were already living or working in Ukraine, like former finance minister Natalie Jaresko and former minister of economic development and trade Aivaras Abromavičius, who were able to hold government posts after president Petro Poroshenko granted them Ukrainian citizenship.

Another interesting figure in Ukrainian politics with foreign roots, is Mikheil Saakashvili, although some may question his ‘Ukrainianism’. The former president of Georgia (2004-2013) moved to Ukraine after the Georgian government started an investigation into his past. Saakashvili entered Ukrainian politics during the Euromaidan events and soon became one of the leaders in the new Ukrainian political elite. Saakashvili had mass support for his reform efforts that made him an attractive political ally to Poroshenko. He was a governor of Odessa (2015-2016), but soon lost the support of president Poroshenko. The result of this falling out was his loss of Ukrainian citizenship and deportation to Poland in 2017.

The infusion of new international members to Ukrainian political elites sent positive signals about its openness to change. At the same time, as this chapter will further show, there still is a long way for Ukraine to go to match up with the changes undergone in Poland’s elite composition despite the current infusion of new young faces into Ukrainian politics, especially in the parliament. While Ukraine does not have to follow Poland’s example, its elite can learn a great deal from the Polish elite that led to a more successful political and economic transition. We can see some attempts of the current government to do just that by inviting former Polish leaders, like Balcerowicz (the author of Polish economic policy called ‘shock therapy’) to consult on Ukrainian reforms.

Elite formation in Poland

Polish national elite during the post-communist transition (1989-2004) had a similar background as the Ukrainian elite with some significant difference – many of its members have been in opposition to then ruling communist party for at least a decade predating the democratic transition. While Ukrainian leadership since 1991 had only a small number of newcomers from the former political opposition, Poland experienced the significant influence of opposition members and is well known for the use of the roundtable as a way to negotiate power transition between two groups with opposing political ideologies. The roundtable talks were held between February and April 1989 and had two major groups of participants: the former communist elite and representatives of Solidarity with less influential unions and other organizations (Baylis, 2012). To trace the origin of the Polish elite active in 1989-2004, we will research the old communist elite, members of Solidarity as a representative of the democratic opposition, and the Catholic Church (served as the intermediary during the Roundtable negotiations) (Curry, 2015) that helped during the initial political transition.

One distinct difference between Poland and Ukraine at the end of communist rule was the existence of Polish statehood since 1945 while Ukraine was only one of fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. Even though the Polish national elite was under strong control from Moscow, this country had a group of people capable of efficiently running a country during major political and economic change inside and outside the country. Also, Poland had a longer history of being

²² Official page <https://rada.oporaua.org/en/deputaty/deputati/choloviky/4424-velychkovykh-mykola-romanovykh>

an independent state than Ukraine has. The long history of Polish statehood helped them to cherish a strong national identity during years of occupation and fight for independence any chance they get. Finally, their dream of Polish independence came true in aftermath of the first and the second world wars. This historical continuance of Polish nationalism helped its elite to develop strong national and European identity. In addition to Polish elite self-identification as European and their wish of returning to Europe after the fall of communism, the majority of Europeans and their leaders had the same perception and saw Poland as a country with a rightful place in the European Union (Kwasniewski, 1996; Terry, 2000).

The Polish communist elite was actively involved in the political and economic transformation of the country. While Poland went through different stages of lustration, the communist party could participate in political life under a new name – Democratic Left Alliance that was successful in winning elections (Mularczyk, 1997). With some formal leaders of communist youth, like Aleksander Kwasniewski obtaining a presidential post. Here is a brief overview of the communist elite in the 1980s that will help us understand the origin of then political elite of Poland. The composition of Polish nomenklatura during the year before 1989 was mostly late middle age (40-59) male (92.8 percent) members of the communist party (81.6 percent) with higher education (87.2 percent). As for the social background, the majority of them came from white-collar and skilled manual workers in addition to farmers. The social background of Polish nomenklatura was representative of the general population (Eyal and Townsley, 1995).

One noticeable characteristic of the Polish political elite during the transition is the fact that it had many former opposition members, especially members of Solidarity. The Movement that united all: workers, farmers, and intellectuals (Mularczyk, 1997) in their struggle with the ruling communist regime. The Solidarity was officially organized in August 1980 in Gdansk. This movement is often called ‘a powerful alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia against established authorities’ (Karabel, 1993, p.25). Before Gdansk’s events, the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast was in close communication with the Warsaw circle associated with Robotnik and Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) (Karabel, 1993). Later these groups co-organized the strike at the Lenin Shipyard that led to the creation of a strong social movement in opposition to the ruling communist party. While Solidarity was opposing then ruling communist party, in many ways it resembled the proletarian movement (Kennedy, 1991) that was the base for Soviet-style communism. We can argue that the workers’ origin of this opposition movement provided them more credibility in the eyes of the ruling party that claimed to represent the same social group. The presence of the intellectuals was very important for the creation of the opposition movement’s ideology and with time developing ideas for political and economic reforms.

The other important group of Polish communist opposition was the Catholic Church. The Church has always had a strong influence in Poland. When Poland lost its statehood in 1795, the church assumes the role of a protector of national identity (Eberts, 1998) in the Russian Empire dominated by the Orthodox Church. Since then, being Polish often meant being Catholic. It is approximated that somewhere between eighty-six to ninety-six percent of Polish people are currently Catholics.²³ While Polish people have always been religious, having one of them as head of the Catholic Church made the Church’s position stronger. The election of Polish Cardinal as head of the Catholic Church in 1978 (first non-Italian pope in the last 455 years)

²³ <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2005/51573.htm>
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

significantly boosted the role of this religion in Poland. New Pope used his position to promote democratic principles that were heard in his fatherland (Kennedy, 1991).

The religion has been prohibited or highly discouraged in all former communist countries with numerous people being imprisoned for their faith in the Soviet Union. The communist party raced to get rid of all traces of religion that placed the Church in the opposition to the party. While the Polish Communist Party did allow the Catholic Church to exist and operate, it was still anti-religious. It is only logical that the faith helped Poles to stay strong in opposition to the communist regime. Some scholars indicate a high influence of Catholicism in Solidarity since its creation (Beyer, 2013). Especially, Church was important in the 1980s, when it provided support to these opposing the official rule. The church was seen as the ‘defender of freedom and human rights’ (Beyer, 2013, p.39). But after 1989 and the start of democratization the need for protection from Communist prosecution disappeared that limited the political influence of the Catholic Church in this country. While after 1989 the influence of the Church diminished, it still managed to be involved in the country’s political life. One example of this involvement is the participation of the Catholic Church in the creation of the Constitution (Eberts, 1998).

After the start of the post-communist transition in 1989 Polish political elite was mostly recruited from the business community, intellectuals, regional and international diasporas (Fidrya, 2013). Polish intellectuals that participated in the political transition were called ‘moral politicians’ (Fidrya, 2013, p.99). This group included scholars, cultural figures, and artists who opposed the former communist elite (Fidrya, 2013; Interview A, EP). With the highest percentage of them being in power between 1993-2001 (Fidrya, 2013). There is also one detail about Polish society and elite that is important in the context of this research – this country consists of mostly ethnic Poles (96%) and Catholics (around 90%).²⁴ While comparing to Ukraine, which has a relatively large and active Russian ethnic minority (about seventeen percent) in addition to a large Russian speaking group of ethnic Ukrainians, Poland looks entirely ‘Polish’. A similar situation can be observed in the religious compositions of Poland and Ukraine.

This section showed the origin of the Polish elite and how it is different from the origin of the Ukrainian elite. This difference is clear when comparing the origins of two elites with Polish political elites originating from communists and Solidarity. The presence of former political opponents in the new governments allowed strong pro-reformist voices to be heard. Polish political leaders were also raised in an independent Poland which despite having been controlled by Moscow, had its own state. The elite recruitment practices also differentiate Poland from Ukraine. After 1989, new political elite members were recruited from intellectuals, the business community, and diaspora, which brought new views and ideas that helped reformation. As result, Poland’s political elites were better prepared for the demands of new post-communist realities. This preparedness helped Polish leaders to swiftly execute needed reforms and create a convincing argument for their place among Europeans. Additionally, by illustrating major contributors in elite creation in Poland we can summarize that for this research, we need to pay attention to the identification of Poles by themselves and others; to the lack of ethnic and religious diversity in Poland; and to the presence of strong anti-communist movement in Poland in 1980s.

²⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

Elite(s) in the European Union

The European Union's elite went through different formation stages than national elites in Poland and Ukraine due to its unique position as the elite of international organizations. The main question we need to answer about the European Union's elite is: is it a study of a group of national elites that work together or the study of one big supranational elite? This section will look at both aspects of the EU's elite and explain why it is important to consider both sides of this elite to be able to answer the main questions of this study. Additionally, the European elite sometimes gets divided between the old and new member states with the Polish elite becoming a part of the European Union elite in 2004. The old/new division in the European Union is sometimes called EU-15 (old member states) and EU-12 (new member states) (Kassim, 2013). This division does have some merit due to the different historical backgrounds of old and new member states of the European Union and because one of our case studies changes its place from being the receiver of EU foreign policy to become part of the elite that creates the EU's policy towards Ukraine. It does get complicated at times to distinguish which aspect of European Union elite and foreign policy creation we should concentrate on considering all options being the optimal path.

But, who actually can be called the European Union's elite? While the European Union leadership consists of both, the national and supranational political elites, it is hard sometimes to determine who is making foreign policy decisions in Brussels. The majority of supranational elite members in the European Union, regardless of where they are from are ready to have common foreign policy and/or agree that the EU should create one (Cotta and Russo, 2012). Although the national elite's members do not always agree, this makes it easier to use the European Union's elite as one unit in this study. We can simply divide the European Union's elite into 1) members of national governments, 2) bureaucratic elite and 3) members of the European Parliament. This study mostly analyzes the action of European politicians and bureaucrats that are in Brussels and who is involved in all aspects of EU's foreign policy from creation to delivery. Two major groups that are studied in this work are members of the European Parliament or MEPs and representatives of the European Commission. Additionally, when appropriate this research analyzes national foreign policy of EU member states and people who work on it.

Also, it is important to determine if there is a dominant national or European identity among European elites? While tracing the historical evolution of EU integration, Hube and Verzhichelli (2012) notice that even now, many national elite members do not see themselves as 'European' that lead to limited growth of the supranational European elite. This is explainable to the fact that the political elite is still mostly accountable to their national voters. The Europeanization of political elites is a process that can be explained by a political actor's socialization or internationalization (Hube and Verzhichelli, 2012). It means that the more time European leadership spends together – the more they accept common ideas and principles. Additionally, younger members of the economic and political elite 'who speaks a number of European languages and had experience living or studying abroad' (p. 51) are more likely to run for a European position even if they get start their career from national politics. Additionally, European elites despite the difference in their religious or ideological views are still come from a Christian background that influences their foreign policy to some extent.

The European Union's elite has a long history of cooperation, especially after WWII when the European project started. The cooperation between different national elites in Democratic Europe brought different elites together through socialization (Armstrong, 1973;

Hube and Verzichelli, 2012, Kassim, 2013) that allowed political leaders to get to know each other and share their values. This with time led to the creation of general principles adopted by all member states and a requirement for all potential members. While researching the political elite of old member states we can trace some similarities. For example, throughout history, European bureaucracy or administrative elite was mostly recruiting new members from the educated upper-class (Armstrong, 1973) while changing this practice after WWII. While Soviet administrative and other groups of elites were recruited from lower classes (Armstrong, 1973). The Soviet Union elite recruitment practices were mostly attributed to the fact that the majority of the old, upper-class elite was destroyed during the Post-October Revolution's Civil War. This example of administrative elite recruiting practices in Western Europe and the Soviet Union shows the difference between elite origin in old democracies and post-communist societies. Because the old EU member states preserved their elites and upper classes through history, they could attract people from their circles in addition to newcomers from other social classes. This allows the continuance of elites through generations.

The biggest group of the EU political elite is in the European Parliament. While all MEPs representing their national electorate, they are officially identified by their political party's belonging and can be identified as truly 'European' (Risse, 2010.) "MEPs today represent a complex elite group whose increasing responsibilities towards 'multiple constituencies' bring them to form new attitudes and behaviors" (Verzichelli and Edinger, 2005, p. 256). The MEPs are also sometimes called the "European representative elite" (Verzichelli and Edinger, 2005, p. 260) to illustrate that they the only European Union's elite members that directly represent its citizens. With time the number of members of the European Parliament grew following enlargements. The growth in MEPs numbers may suggest the growth in the diversity of political views in the EU, but the number of parliamentary groups in the European Parliament was the same in 2004 as it was in 1979 (seven) (Verzichelli and Edinger, 2005, p. 262) and is only two more (nine) in 2017.²⁵ This number rise and fall through the years that show that despite big enlargements that brought to the EU former communist countries' general ideas and principles of the European Union's community still the same as it used to be, just now the EU includes more states.

For this research, we don't need to go into detail about the elite creation in each European Union member state. The general knowledge about the origin and identification of its leadership involved in the EU's policy creation clarifies the motives behinds some EU's actions. As the supranational elite is mostly making decisions about the external relations with the national elites' approval. Additionally, the institutional division within the EU political elites plays a difference in their views. For example, two major political institutions in the European Union – the Commission and the Parliament traditionally hold different views on the EU's relations with neighbours and which country should be offered the membership. A more detailed analysis of the European Union's political elites follows with the overview above providing a history of elite creation needed to understand EU's actions in Central and Eastern Europe.

The importance of tracing elites' origin

This chapter provides an overview of elites' origin in three cases of this study: the Ukrainian, the Polish, and the European Union's elites. But what does it tell about the differences in elites'

²⁵ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/hemicycle.html>

actions during Polish and Ukrainian transitions? This section answered this question by analyzing how the origin of Ukrainian and Polish elites affected their views on the best way to lead the post-communist transition. Analyzing the elite's origin helps us understand where its members learned how to lead. The example of the Ukrainian elite that traces its origin in the communist past, can explain why they adopted slow and elite-controlled political and economic transition even if it meant falling behind other countries in the region. Additionally, this chapter showed that in Ukraine, the old communist elite had little political and economic opposition that could take a leading role during a transition as it happened in Poland. The small group of Ukrainian anti-communist opposition was mostly located in Western Ukraine and consisted predominately of intellectuals. While it is important to have intellectual opposition, the fact that it was not connected to the masses undermined its position.

Additionally, the anti-communist opposition in Ukraine was often perceived as nationalistic and western (Deshchinsky, 2008). The 'West' in this case can be viewed as the European countries and as the Western part of Ukraine. While being pro-European has been viewed positively in many Ukrainian regions, in some Eastern towns it has not been popular. It is also worth mentioning the traditional perception of regions' economic power in Ukraine. While Eastern Ukraine is heavily industrialized, Western Ukraine is the opposite of Central regions somewhere in the middle. The fact that the Ukrainian elite from the Western region did not represent economically powerful regions (comparing to Eastern Ukraine) limited its influence in Ukrainian politics. This limited influence can be explained by a relatively small number of people who shared the same views because historically, this region had stronger Western European influence with being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Additionally, this region is predominantly Catholic in comparison to the dominance of Orthodox in Ukraine. Different regional origins of the Ukrainian elite also often meant that they represented different socio-economic groups with limited connection to others. Especially, easy to trace this tendency while studying the second presidential elections in Ukraine, during which, representative of heavy industry won. This election showed growing concern about the economic decline of the country after independence and how the electorate from formerly rich industrial regions reacted to changes.

Poland, on the other hand, with its long history of anti-communist opposition that included different socio-economic groups, including intellectuals, workers, and the Polish Catholic Church, started its transition with successful round table negotiations between the old communist elite and opposition. The old communist regime and its leaders simply could not ignore the opposition group that represented the proletariat, the group that the communist party traditionally claimed to represent. The inclusion of different socio-economic groups in Polish opposition was greatly supported by its numbers that give them legitimacy to represent the people. Poland also has more unified regions without significant differences in the identities of its inhabitants. While Poland has a more monolithic population than Ukraine (with about ninety-seven percent of the population being ethnically Polish and about ninety percent being Roman Catholics)²⁶ and had a stable history of the statehood in the twentieth century, its political and economic elite also was not embodied into the Soviet elite and had the relative freedom to create its economic policies. Pre-existing private business ownership, even if it was small, helped the Polish elite to initiate successful economic reforms. On the other hand, the Ukrainian elite existed only within a centrally planned economy and had to spend more time on learning market principles than their Polish counterparts did.

²⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>

Pre-transitional experiences of Polish and Ukrainian elites also affected their relations with Western European countries and the European Union. While Polish political leaders were better known by the political leaders in Western Europe due to their educational networks and Poland's relative openness during the Cold War. Ukrainians were only introduced as national political elites after 1991 and had not had many relations with European national elite members previously. While the supranational elite in the EU was building the relations with Ukraine based on being a good neighbor, it could not use prior knowledge of Ukrainians. Tracing the origin of the European Union's elite sheds light on how they differ from Central and Eastern European states and how easy it is for them to understand each other.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the difference in elite creation in Poland and Ukraine as well as the European Union elites studied in this research. It is hard to study the elite without considering its origin, especially this is true for studying the elite role in transforming societies like Ukraine (1991-2018) and Poland (1989-2004). By answering the questions who are the people that lead political and economic changes in their countries, we are one step closer to understanding what motivated them and why it was and still is easier for elite members to foster relations with other elite groups but not the others.

This chapter showed the difference in the elite composition in Poland and Ukraine that can be used to explain different foreign policy objectives during the post-communist transition in these two states. While Poland has been an independent state for some decades before 1989, Ukraine has been a member or a province of much larger states for most of its modern history with most of its territories incorporated into the Russian Empire. This feeling of provinciality in combination with large purges during early Soviet rule can explain why the national agenda was not dominant for many Ukrainian elite members who after 1991 still saw a close relationship with Russia as the only way for Ukraine to go. Only after about a decade since independence, Ukrainian political elites started to promote younger leaders with ideas for an economic and political reformation that would build the Ukrainian nation separately from the former ruler. One of these new leaders was former president Victor Yushchenko (2005-2010) who made a career as the head of the National Bank and a prime minister before becoming president.

Ukrainian political elites also had a weaker infusion of new ideas due to its recruitment practices. The examples provided in this chapter show that for the first decade and a half of Ukrainian independence, new members were mostly recruited using old communist and nomenklatura connections. And only after two revolutions new members started to be actively recruited from business, intellectuals, diaspora, and civil society. This new development is like elite recruitment techniques present in Poland since 1989 that make it possible to conclude that Ukrainian political development is behind post-communist states in Central Europe. One obvious explanation of difference stands out, and it is the fact that Ukraine is a newly independent nation and it needed more time (in comparison to Poland) to establish itself and its elite. This chapter also showed the differences in ethnic and political backgrounds of Polish and Ukrainian elites that will be used in the following chapters to analyze if they made any contribution to different transition paths in these two neighboring states. The end of this chapter discussed the formation of the European Union's elite and details who exactly is part of this study: the group of national elites of member states of one supranational elite that represent the European Union, or the combination of both.

Chapter 6: Poland: A Successful ‘Return to Europe’?

After the start of the post-communist transition in Central Europe led by Poland in 1989, this country was often viewed as an exemplary case of a successful transition. Poland was the first country in the region to start the democratization and provided an almost textbook example of how peacefully to emerge from a dictatorship on good terms with neighbors and how to establish a functioning democracy (Bobinski, 2009). Although now the European Union questions the status of Poland’s democracy, in the 1990s, the European and international perception of the status of Poland’s democracy was very positive. This perception was influenced greatly by the actions of Polish political elites: the old communist elite and the new democratic elite, who managed to negotiate a successful change of political power in the country without any serious civil disturbances. The highlight of these negotiations was the Roundtable talks, the process that took place from February 1989 to April 1989, and resulted in the announcement of new relatively free elections and the start of political and economic reforms. After the success of initial negotiations in Poland, many other Central European states, like Hungary, went through a similar process. Some scholars view the elite level bargain that occurred in Poland as the most normatively desirable model of transition (Szczerbiak, 2016, p.222). This peaceful transition in Poland sent a positive message about the readiness of the elite to compromise for the achievement of command goals.

Highlighting the elite’s leading role during political transition is not unique to Central and Eastern Europe. It has been noticed by many scholars before that elites play a significant role during any transition. This chapter does not question this truth, it rather analyses what reasons were behind the major political and economic decisions made by ruling elites. The main aim is to understand how much of the transition was influenced by the elite; how much of elite decisions during the transition was influenced by external forces, mostly the EU; how old ties with post-soviet states influenced elite decisions during the transformation; and what role economic and security issues played in making these decisions. At the same time, this chapter does question the accepted wisdom that the democratic transformation in post-communist states was initiated and carried on by an old communist political elite. Although old communist elite indeed played a significant role in political and economic transition in Poland, some academics tend to underestimate the importance of the people, who demanded changes that are clearly illustrated by the mass support of the Solidarity movement in Poland. According to many Eastern European politicians, the main role of political elites during the transition was to represent the wishes of people. As one Polish politician mentioned ‘no elite brought democracy, but there was 10 million people movement beginning in the 1970s’ (Interview A, EP).

This chapter is structured chronologically with the first part following changes in Polish political leadership by arranging the analysis around changes of this country’s first three presidents. It is appropriate to follow presidents and their cabinets because it is much easier to track their actions and because they were and are the main actors representing Poland in the international arena. At the same time, some presidencies are analyzed based on the actions of other actors, like prime ministers. At the same time, the analysis of presidential terms will include the overview of political opposition and other groups that were influencing national politics at the time. Three presidencies studied in this chapter are:

- Wojciech Jaruzelski (Polish United Worker’s Party) – 31 December 1989 to 22 December 1990

- Lech Walesa (Solidarity) – 22 December 1990 to 22 December 1995
- Aleksander Kwasniewski (Social Democracy (first term), Independent (second term)) – 23 December 1995 to 23 December 2005

The short presidency of General Jaruzelski will be analyzed later in this chapter by the action of the reformist cabinet led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Walesa won the presidential elections of 1990 and became the first president of Poland elected by popular vote. The second presidency analyzed in this section is one of Aleksander Kwasniewski (1995-2005). The main significance of this presidency is that it led Poland into the European Union.

But before moving into analyzing the ruling political elite, this chapter will inspect the beginning of Poland's political and economic transition in 1989 by providing an overview and analysis of the main events and actors associated with it. The evaluation of these events will illustrate how the start of the Polish post-communist transition affected its outcome. More importantly, it will illustrate how the willingness of two opposing political elites to cooperate affected the international perception of this country and its leaders. Any analysis of Poland in 1989 would be incomplete without taking close look into the Roundtable talks and everybody involved in them. This historical overview provides a closer look at all players and analyses how their actions determined the apparent success of Poland's post-communist transition. The international image created by these talks is still helping this country achieving its political and international goals.

The last section of this chapter analyses Poland's relations with the EU in 1989-2004. The analysis is based on the four main periods in Poland's foreign policy identified by Terry (2000), with a small change in the time frame of the last period by extending it to 2004, the year of Poland accession to the European Union. The four historical periods analyzed are:

- 1989 - 1992 – uncertainties due to the unification of Germany and collapsing USSR, solidifying relations with CE neighbors
- 1993 – the demise of Visegrad and move towards NATO and EU, started tensions with Russia
- 1994-1996 – lobby for early accession to NATO and the EU
- 1997 and on – joining NATO in 1999 and EU negotiations

The chronological order used in this chapter helps illustrate the logical developments of Polish political and economic life in addition to the success of its foreign policy.

The Roundtable

Officially Polish post-communist transition started in 1989 when communist leaders held the roundtable talks with democratic opposition represented by the Solidarity leaders and a small number of official trade union representatives. At the time, Poland received a positive message from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who started democratic changes in his own country and had quite liberal views regarding neighbors that used to be under USSR's control. In some way, it can be argued that President Gorbachev was hoping to keep close relations with the countries of the Warsaw Pact by giving them the ability to choose their path that was influenced by the history of USSR relations with Warsaw Pact countries in the past.

The Roundtable talks started on 6 February and finished on 5 April 1989. The main participants of these talks were two political elites: then ruling communist party and the

opposition represented by Solidarity. While these two groups were major players in these talks, the Polish Catholic Church played an important role as an intermediary. The analysis of these talks is crucial for this research because the 'role of the political elite can be viewed clearly from the roundtable' (Interview A, PL). All Polish leaders of the time were discussing the future of Poland making sure that the outgoing elite keeps some level of protection, these negotiations were with time called "elite settlement" (Baylis, 2012). While nobody questions the leading role of elites in the Roundtable and Polish transition in general, many argue that democratization in Poland wasn't influenced by the EU, but it rather can be explained by this country's past (Poznanzki, 1996 and interviews). Historically, Poland was a rebellious part of Russia, had freedom movements, and was proud of its ethnic origin. The presence of these conditions limited the need for the EU to influence the democratization (Interview C, EP).

Preconditions of the Roundtable

While the idea of the pact transition was not new at the end of 1989, several reasons can be identified as the catalysis of this process. These characteristics of Poland during transition also, directly and indirectly, helped this country to transform faster than Ukraine. Most importantly, Solidarity was representing the interests of the working class. This fact gave this movement the legitimacy to compete with old communist ideas in determining the best way to build the future for the working class. The political elites involved in the Roundtable negotiations had the role of representing these movements since the first official negotiation in 1981 (Interview A, EP). Additionally, it is important to notice that both, the old communist elite and the new democratic elites in Poland did not have enough strength to take the political power on their own. This relative balance of power pushed both parties to negotiate a peaceful solution. Under this solution, opposing groups created a pact that took into consideration the preferences of both sides as well as the general public through consultations.

The second factor that influences the Polish transition and differentiated it from Ukraine was the presence of a powerful Catholic Church that was strongly associated with Polish national identity. Thirdly, the Polish economic system that was based on the small farms during the communist times affected the economic and political transition in the 1990s. The continuity of private business ownership in this country, help it in the 1990s to reverse back to the market economy. At the same time, communist Poland struggled to keep its economy going through the 1980s with high external debt and internal problems. While analysing the creation of Solidarity, it can be concluded that the bad economic situation in Poland in the 1970s and the early 1980s was the major reason for the rise of opposition. The failure of a centrally planned economy to yield good results in economic development even after the attempt to liberalize the economy in the 1980s forced all participants in the Roundtable to look for new ways to improve people's lives. Additionally, at the beginning of the post-communist transition, Poland was in exceptionally bad economic shape among all communist countries (Ham, 1993).

The presence of national elites that date back to the Middle Ages (starting with the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Union in 1385) is the fourth characteristic that differentiates Poland from Ukraine at the beginning of the post-communist transition. The continuity of the national elite through centuries comes together with Polish statehood. Poland wasn't part of the USSR like Ukraine that allowed this country to have its 'own' agenda to a degree allowed from Moscow. An additional characteristic of Polish elites that helped this country to transform in the 1990s, was their ability to pursue higher education in Western countries. Even during the communist rule Polish people could travel to the West, while Ukrainians did not have similar

travel opportunities with most of the border regions being closed even for local travel to prevent anybody from leaving the USSR. Western education made Polish political and economic elites more prepared for the transition than Ukrainian elites were in 1991 (Interview C, EU). It is hard to underestimate the importance of good education, especially while analysing elite actions in any country. Tracing the educational background of political and economic elites is especially important in this study because it helps explain the closer connection of Western European elites with Polish elites in comparison to Western European elites' relations with Ukrainian elites. According to the data available, the Polish communist sent over nine thousand graduates from Polish universities to study in the West whom on their return brought new views to the party (Kennedy, 1999).

Additionally, there is a need to mention the geographic location of Poland and analyse how it affected this country in 1989. Firstly, in the 1980s Poland was surrounded by communist countries, with the USSR on its eastern border and Eastern Germany on its Western border. While the strong influence of Germany on Polish economic and political transition was mentioned by scholars and politicians (Interview A, PL; Freudenstein, 1998), it was not as influential at the beginning of 1989 when the Roundtable started. German influence grew stronger during the 1990s and early 2000s when Poland was preparing to join the European Union. More important at the time was Polish eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union, which influence weakened due to the internal reforms initiated by Michael Gorbachev, who became the first and last Soviet President in 1985. At that point, it was clear that communist countries in Eastern Europe needed to find a new way to rule if they wanted to survive. As result, ruling communist parties in all countries were hoping to keep the political power by reforming centrally planned economies and by allowing some political freedoms. While this motivation of old communist elites for transition did not come true for most of the old elites in the region, it did make this transition possible.

One of the most important conditions that made any negotiations between Polish communist and opposition in the late 1980s was the fact that "Within the political elites and the government circles there was a deep dissatisfaction with the system, disappointment with its ideological value and practical capabilities" (Reykowski, 1999, p. 39). Some former communist leaders that were in power at the time were acknowledging that they were looking out for ideas of how to reform political and economic systems in Poland to fix numerous problems that occurred during the years of centrally planned economy and strict political rule. When the Polish communist was unable to find new ideas within their party, they often looked up to Solidarity for inspiration. Additionally, the old communist elite in Poland included a large number of people who were well educated and well-traveled that allowed them to see astonishing differences between their quality of life and the quality of life led by their counterparts in other countries (Michnik, 1999).

All of Poland's characteristics mentioned above are crucial to our understanding of the causes of the Polish post-communist transition in 1989. The overall mood of Polish society at that time can be described by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, who famously said "[i]t is entirely indifferent to us who introduces liberal principles, Lech Walesa or Mieczyslaw Rakowski. What matters is that they be introduced" (quoted in Koczanowicz, 2005, p. 3). This phrase accurately describes Poland in the late 1980s, when liberals believed that nomenklatura would accept liberal ideas just because it will give them economic power instead of political that they were losing for some time now. At the same time, there were personal risks involved for all participants of the Roundtable negotiations, especially for the members of Solidarity. Adam Michnik, a participant of the Roundtable that represented Solidarity in his 10 years reflection on

the negotiations, states that “The Round Table compromise was possible because on both sides there were people who risked accusations of betrayal by their communities” (Michnik, 1999). But, despite all problems the negotiations proceeded and produced a doable plan for reforms.

The negotiations

At the start of negotiations in February, neither side of negotiations expected the fall of the communist regime. If they did consider it, the negotiations would probably never have happened (Michnik, 1999). For both sides of the negotiations, these talks were a way to improve the situation in Poland without significantly changing the overall political regime. The communist party leadership saw the negotiations as a way to deal with the opposition to resolve long-lasting problems in the country including harsh economic situations and an urgent need for political and societal changes. While many former political prisoners (mostly members of the Solidarity) were released from prison a couple of years earlier, their organizations were still illegal that made the legalization number one priority for the negotiations. And only after quite easily achieve this goal, the opposition started asking for more changes in Poland’s political, economic, and social structures. The Roundtable talks were divided into three major areas with working groups corresponding to each of these areas:

- Political reform
- Union and party pluralism
- Economy and social issues

There were also eleven sub-tables devoted to many different issues including media, health care, mining, and others (Kennedy, 1999). Each working group was led by representatives of both sides and had constantly consulted a large group of experts and activists. In general, the Polish transition and its first non-communist government became known as the ‘government of experts’. The creation of this kind of government was attributed to the action of Solidarity.

According to some scholars and politicians (Bobinski, 2009; Szczerbiak, 2016), the prerequisites/pre-conditions for successful negotiated transition is the weakest state of an ancient regime and relatively weak opposition and that the balance of weaknesses between the communist and Solidarity made Polish Roundtable possible (Kwasniewski, 1999, p. 50). We can observe this weakness during the late 1980s in Poland when the country experienced economic problems and Poland’s most powerful ideological ally of the time (the USSR) started to reform. The observable weakness of Polish communist-led them to search for political and economic alternatives to the communist system. At the same time, it is hard to underestimate the strength of people who made it happened with unexpected results. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses of three major elite groups involved in the Roundtable below will analyse major goals and reasons for participation in the Roundtable, the composition of each group representations, and the gains versus losses of each group in the end.

Polish United Workers Party

The Polish Communist Party (PZPR) represented one side of negotiations in opposition to the Solidarity. Polish communists were represented by their leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski, and other less-known government members, with future president Aleksander Kwasniewski among them. The main promise of the communists in these talks was the legalization of Solidarity and

other trade unions as well as the political and economic reforms. The PZPR had struggled with economic reforms in the 1980s with a failed referendum illustrating their inability to find solutions to numerous problems facing the Polish economy at the time (described above in more detail). In addition to economic problems, Poland was facing political and social unrest that needed to be dealt with. The negotiations with the opposition looked like a good way to deal with issues mentioned above: first, the negotiations had the potential to calm political and social unrest, secondly, they may help find a way to improve the economic situation, and thirdly, the negotiation would add legitimacy to the ruling party.

During the negotiations, the PZPR was surprisingly forthcoming and started with the legalization of the Solidarity and trade unions. Another area where the PZPR representative was forthcoming was the economic reform. Due to the hard economic situation in the country that lasted over a decade, it was important for both sides to implement market reforms without delay. The economic negotiations were also easy because Poland was the only country among the Warsaw Pact countries that kept private ownership alive during the communist rule. Way more difficult were negotiations on political reform. It was clear from the beginning of negotiations that the PZPR was not planning to give up their political power and that they only saw the Roundtable as a way to preserve this power while showing to the society that they are willing to listen to the other side and maybe allow the opposition to actively participate in the politics. Even the agreement to allow relatively free elections was seen as a way to ensure the continuity of the regime because the opposition that was illegal only a moment ago was not seen as a serious threat and was not expected to attract many votes. And only after the elections, it became clear that the PZPR lost its power as a result of the Roundtable.

Solidarity

The second major player in the Roundtable talks was Solidarity. Solidarity was representing Polish political opposition to the communist rule. It also was one of the most organized anti-communist oppositions in East-Central Europe. The main role of the Solidarity representatives was to deliver the wishes of the people they represented because the ‘workers’ protests were the main factor in the demolition of the communist system. The importance of Solidarity consisted of destroying the official ideology of the communist state as the workers’ state (Koczanowicz, 2005) and showing people raised under socialist ideas that there are other ways to live and other political systems available that are much better in protecting workers’ rights. Solidarity also emerged from different thinking within groups of intellectuals proposing radical changes in the economy and political life (Interview A, PL; Koczanowicz, 2005). These different points of view helped this organization to truly become the representative of the people. Additionally, and more importantly, Solidarity was capable of creating political ‘counter-elite’ to the communists with its ideology and symbols (Kozminski, 2008) that allowed this movement to succeed in initiating and leading the political and economic transition since 1989.

At the beginning of the negotiations, Solidarity was hoping to get official recognition as a legitimate trade union, but during the process, the discussion took more reform planning orientations that included many people. Staniszeska (p. 40) remembered that people started to participate in the negotiation process only after the first official meeting of the Roundtable and that this interest would decrease when the talks slowed down. This occurrence showed Solidarity that they should go on with the negotiations and keep engaging more people in the discussion of Poland’s future. To keep everybody informed of the progress of negotiations and due to mistrust of the official press, Solidarity created its media with the first issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza*

(Election Gazette) coming out on 8 May 1989 (Millard, 1998). Before the creation of an independent newspaper, the journalist members of Solidarity would attend, and record interviews conducted by official media to learn what parts were cut out of the final product and educate the public about it.

Catholic Church

‘Church leaders had opposed the Soviet-imposed regime from the beginning’ (Jackson, Klich, and Poznanska, 2005) and helped prosecuted opposition to hide from the ruling communist party in the 1970s-1980s. Especially, the role of Poland’s Catholic bishops, like Alojzy Orszulik, should not be underestimated. Backed by Pope John Paul II in the Vatican, they had acted as intermediaries between government and opposition and worked tirelessly for social peace and reconciliation between two sides (Bobinski, 2009, p. 197). The Church was a credible partner for both sides. It is only logical that the Church played a pivotal role in helping to broker the round table negotiations (Szczebriak, 2016). A good example of the trust in the Catholic Church is that in the late 1980s over sixty percent of Polish nomenklatura self-identified as Catholics (Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski, 1995).

While acting as an intermediary, Polish Catholic Church’s leadership was meeting with the leaders of Solidarity and the leaders of communists separately in the late 1980s. These meetings with somehow neutral party’s help allowed the ruling communist party and the opposition to find a way to trust each other enough to start and successfully finish the negotiations. This trust in the Church can be explained by the personal backgrounds of all Polish elites involved in the Roundtable including the communist. Even though in most socialist countries, the religion and Church were always perceived as something that is not worth people’s attention and needed to be eradicated (as it was attempted in the Soviet Union), Polish Catholic Church had relative freedom and stayed actively involved in the social life of the country.

The results of the roundtable negotiations

The Roundtable negotiations in Poland led to a semi-democratic compromise between the communists and the Solidarity movement, allowing the opposition only a minority of the parliamentary seats and (informally) guaranteeing the presidency to the communists (Renwick, 2006). Additionally, these negotiations resulted in a quasi-free election in Poland in June 1989 during which the communist suffered unexpected defeat and Solidarity won the Senate (99 out of 100 freely elected seats) and the contested seats in the Sejm (35 percent allowed by the Roundtable agreement) (Osa, 1998 and Renwick, 2006). The electoral success placed Solidarity in a position to form a coalition government with the Peasant and Democratic parties, selecting Catholic activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki as prime minister. The new electoral system in Poland adopted in 1989 guaranteed 65% seats in the lower chamber to the communist and 35% to Solidarity (Renwick, 2006). Before the election Solidarity activist were divided over whether to participate as a political party or to rebuild as a grassroots labor union. Lech Walesa's ambitions further complicated the matter when he called for a new presidential election in the 1990s (Osa, 1998, p. 31). With June 1989 election Solidarity reached its political peak and along with the ensuing collapse of the communist party, Solidarity suffered the collapse of its internal unity.

(Zubek, 1991). One more important results of the Roundtable talks were the legalization of independent trade unions, like Solidarity.

- Creation of the Senate – totally free elections
- Partially free parliamentary election (Seim)
- Creation of the office of the president
- The legalization of Solidary (Pleskot, 2013)

In summary, this section provided an overview of one of the most important events in modern Polish history. This event is both – the culmination of the past and the origin of the future. The Polish roundtable was the culmination of the communist rule and its struggle to keep political and economic control of the country. It was especially hard to achieve with strong opposition led by Solidarity. This roundtable was also the origin of the new political and economic order in Poland. It also signaled to the world that this country started a new page and its new government would include former political opponents and will seek advice from its people about future development. The next section will illustrate how the new Polish political and economic reality was built.

Poland in the 1990s and early 2000s

During the pre-accession time (the 1990s and early 2000s) Poland became well developed and recognized democratic country that is shown in numerous country rankings like the Freedom House and Democracy Index. The visible success of Polish democratization in the time was partly attributed to government policies and partly because Polish society always has somebody who is in official opposition to the ruling political party (Interview C, EP). Polish economy also significantly improved during the time of the post-communist transition as the result of the ‘shock therapy’ reform’s plan started by the cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and during the presidency of General Jaruzelski in 1989. Another important process that happened in Poland during this time that directly involved political elites was lustration. While at the beginning of the political transition, the communists were able to keep some of their former power and new leftist parties originated from PZPR were successful during parliamentary and presidential elections (Kwasniewski used to be a member of PZPR), Poland had lustration later on with several reoccurrences during 1997-2007 (Szszerbia, 2016). While members of political elites, both former communist and new democrats, come from the various milieu, including village dwellers and members of lower classes, with most of them being university graduates (Wasilewski, 1999). And like previous distrust of communist rulers, the disillusionment with political elites started to grow in the 1990s (Marody, 1995).

Jaruzelski Presidency and the reforms of Mazowiecki’s cabinet

This presidency was very short and was the result of a verbal agreement between Solidarity and the PZPR during the Roundtable negotiations that legalized the trade union and allowed its members for the first time to run for the seats in the parliament. At the start of his presidency, Jaruzelski had been the leader of the Polish United Workers Party and was the leader of the Polish state for some time. General Jaruzelski was the first military official to lead the communist party in Poland when he was elected as a replacement for Stanislaw Kania. He was personally responsible for the implementation of martial law in the early 1980s that made the

Solidarity illegitimate. As it was mentioned above, Polish Communist Party came to the Roundtable without expectations for major changes in the country's political system, but the unexpected success of the opposition in the 1989 parliamentary elections drastically changed political situations in Poland and switched the political power from the communist to democratic opposition.

Even though president Jaruzelski was the communist and represented the ancient regime at the time of his appointment, he had to accept catholic activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki as prime minister appointed by the Solidarity that had a majority in the Senate and had a strong presence in Sejm. While analyzing Jaruzelski's presidency in the terms of its contribution to the Polish successful political and economic transition, it makes more sense to concentrate on the work of Mazowiecki's cabinet because it introduced the drastic economic and political reforms needed to move on from a stagnated communist planned economy to free-market economy. Jaruzelski had no power base during his presidency (Kaminski, 1991) that gave the prime minister the freedom to pursue free-market reforms. Mazowiecki was appointed as the prime minister after the Sejm rejected candidacy presented by the communist party. After the confirmation, he composed the team consisting mostly of the members of Solidarity and other democratic parties with some members of the old communist government (mostly in the areas of defense, interior, and the transport) (Curry, 2015). He was also a strong believer in allowing members of the former governing party to continue their roles as government members. He later recalls his reasons for including the communist into his cabinet:

The Communist Party couldn't be in the opposition. It wasn't an option because they had a decisive influence on the security apparatus and army. Imagine an opposition that has control of the military – it's never been seen before. That's why I believed that they also had to join the government (cited in Curry, 2015, p. 278)

But in other areas, Mazowiecki felt more comfortable appoint representatives from the new democratic elite, which explains the fact that a large proportion of his cabinet members belonged to Solidarity.

Even though the radical approach to reforms cost Mazowieski Polish presidency in 1990 (when Lech Walesa won), the former prime minister still thinks that “when it comes to economic affairs and changes to the system, decisions have to be made quickly in the first phase of governing. The longer you postpone these changes, the harder they are to implement” (Quoted in Curry, 2015, p. 283). Using his philosophy, Mazowiecki gave full support at the beginning of 1990 to Leszek Balcerowicz's radical economic plan that became known as the ‘shock therapy’. The Balcerowicz Plan had a strong influence and advice from Jeffrey Sachs and the IMF and was the implementation of neo-liberal economic reforms (Stuart, 2003; Sachs, 1993). According to many sources and interviewees, the first democratic government in Poland set up major changes and helped Poland break off from the communist past (Curry, 2015; Interview C, EU; Interview B, EP; Interview C, EP). Blanchard (1994) identifies two important dates for the revival of the Polish economy:

- January 1990, when the economic transition started
- January 1991, when the trade between Central and Eastern European former communist states collapsed

These two events created a situation when the country had to radically change the way they did business, moving from a centrally planned economy to a free-market economy and from relying

on the trade with countries from the Warsaw Pact to looking for new trade partners and for a new way of trading with former allies.

During the short year of General's Jaruzelski presidency, the old communist party started to lose its power with active help from the Solidarity and the Catholic Church. Although Lech Walesa was not a member of this government, he did a lot to make the first non-communist government a reality. At first, during and after the Roundtable negotiations, the Polish Communist Party was planning to offer only a few seats in the new cabinet to the leaders of the democratic opposition. But these plans were dismantled by Walesa, who convinced two parties that were previously in the coalition with the communist, to join Solidarity in forming the new government. This success of Solidarity's leader radically changed the balance of power in the Sejm and allowed the appointment of Mazowiecki as the prime minister. Walesa's 'war at the top' during the summer of 1990 resulted in the presidential elections. Since the beginning of the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s, Walesa was its long-term leader and it was only logical that he became the first Polish president elected by the popular vote.

While discussing successful Solidarity action in bringing down the old communist government, we need to mention the Catholic Church. Church leaders played a significant role in initiating Solidarity electoral committees which in many cases held their meetings on church properties (Anderson, 2003). With having places to meet and other support provided by the Church, the Solidarity was able to prepare for the presidential elections that resulted in the win of their candidate in 1990. The support of the Catholic Church continued from the first parliamentary elections a year earlier, when Solidarity was able to achieve great electoral success. After the win of the presidential election, the new Solidarity's government had Church's support up until 1995, when Walesa lost the presidential elections.

Overall, when looking back on the division of power between three elite groups that participated in the Roundtable during General Jaruzelsky's presidency shows the following:

- The Communists were able to keep nominate political power in the form of Jaruzelsky's presidency and some key positions in the new government.
- Solidarity became legal political power with winning elections to the Senate and having a strong presence in the Sejm.
- Solidarity also was able to appoint its government under the leadership of Mazowieski and implement radical reforms that are known now as the 'shock therapy'
- The Catholic Church also gained political power through the influence on Solidarity leaders and traditional influence on Polish society.

Although this was a very short presidency, the reforms started during this year, made significant changes that still visible in Poland. The implementation of these reforms was continued during the next presidency of Lech Walesa and will be discussed next.

Lech Walesa Presidency and consolidation of democracy

The first Polish president elected by the popular vote became long-time Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in 1990. His presidency continued the set of reforms started by the previous administration by the Solidarity's 'government by experts' (Osa, 1998, p. 32). Leaders of Solidarity and members of the group of professional opposition activists also made up the core of the Polish government elite in the period of 1989-1993 (Raciborski, 2007, p.30). One of the attributes of this 'government by experts' was the mass inclusion of known academics and

experts into the governing process and more importantly the consultations on the reformation process. To find the best program of action for the new government, Lech Walesa's cabinet sends questionnaires to all its members asking them to share their views on the future of Poland (Krzeminski, 1995). The summary of these questionnaires was used in the development of the government's action plan. This leadership's act shows the willingness of the new government to accept new ideas from all its members while determining the best plan for its country that happened to be political and economic liberalization.

While the economic situation in Poland was still hard on its citizens, Polish "neo-liberal" economic reform stayed on course because opponents of the reform were not able to obtain enough political power to derail it. Their relative powerlessness resulted from:

- The lack of sufficiently united political representations (parties) and -unexpectedly –
 - o The administrative decentralization of the state, which led to the partial decoupling of the central and local political and administrative fields (Kubik, 1994)

At the same time, the implementation of 'shock therapy' harmed the everyday lives of many Poles. Economic data sources state that up to forty percent of Poles were living below the poverty line as the result of new economic policies (Poznanski, 1996). The economic situation and the instability of the political situation significantly changed how the political elites were perceived by the public and brought changes in the composition of two major political elites. While the economic situation in the first years of transition was very hard, with time Polish government were able to significantly improve the economic life of this country with complete restoration of the economy (to 1989's level) by the end of Walesa's presidency (Jackson, Klich, and Poznanska, 2005). This success helped Poland's political elites enjoy reasonable support from the population.

This period in new Polish history was also characterised by the destruction of two opposing political powers of the 1980s – the Solidarity and the Polish communist party 'ceased to exist' and their members reorganized in new political organizations. The communist party experienced big problems due to the loss of political power in Poland that was not expected in 1989 and due to the fall of communist governments all over Eastern Europe with an additional push from the fall of the Soviet Union. But within a short period of time, former communists were able to reorganize using the new political party's framework and re-take some of their former political power by the mid-1990s. The 'comeback' of parties with roots in the Polish communism happened partially because conservative forces with links to the Catholic Church were not able to rally forces behind them in the 1993 elections (Poznanski, 1996) that led to the fall of Solidarity and the emergence of new political parties rooted in Solidarity (Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski, 1995).

When the communist party stopped its existence during Walesa's presidency many of its members moved on to different positions in all spheres of public and private lives. Wasilewski (1995) provides below a short list of destination for former nomenklatura members in the early 1990s

Table 3 - Typology of the post-communist destination of the nomenklatura (percentages)

1993 Destination:	# of cases	Percent
1. Business	217	24.4
2. Politics	54	6.1
3. Business and politics	5	0.6
4. Directors in state sector	152	17.1
5. Managers and professionals	170	19.1
6. Non-manual	45	5.1
7. Lower classes	25	2.8
8. Pensioners, early retired	161	18.1
9. Retired	59	6.6
TOTAL	888	100.0

Source: Wasilewski (1995)

Table 3 shows the Polish elite movement predicted by many scholars, stating that the old communist elite was interested in economic reforms and negotiated transition because this way it can keep at least economic power. As we can see from the above table, over fifty percent of nomenklatura assumed positions in business and economic sectors that prove former predictions correct. A somehow similar situation happened with former Solidarity elite who after being poor for many years under communist rule decided to use their new positions to become capitalist (Zubek, 1997).

An interesting picture of the whereabouts of the Polish communist elite in the late 1980s is provided by Hanley (2000). In his article, he shows that many members of the former ruling party were able to use their elite networks to acquire former state enterprises by paying lower rates than they would have to pay if these were sold following free-market rules. This cheap way of buying large enterprises was possible due to the lack of available finances in Poland to pay the market price. As for the technical ways of assuming ownership rights, these acquisitions were mostly done by using ‘two strategies to give their de facto ownership rights a de jure form: managerial buyouts and the transfer of state assets to private satellite firms’ (Hanley, 2000, p. 145). Fortunately for Poland, this practice was stopped by the first Solidarity government and did not lead to the same negative results that can be observed in today’s Ukraine. The move of the Solidarity government to prevent the sale of state enterprises to the former elite slowed down the privatization in Poland with a clear majority of enterprises remaining state-owned at the end of 1993 (Hanley, 2000, p. 158). At the same time, this slow privatization process did not affect Poland’s economic transition too much.

Similar to Poland’s left (former communist party), Solidarity went through a similar process of rebirth, but it happened for different reasons. While the former communist had to reinvent themselves due to the loss of political power, the Solidarity did not survive the test of power. Shortly after the presidential elections, Lech Walesa started to experience difficulties with keeping Solidarity’s leadership together. Some scholars attribute it to his lack of cooperation with others and strong suspicions of his surroundings. And some, like Lussier

(2006) indicate that it may be just a result of an unsuccessful transition from being non-constituted (informal) to constituted (formal) leader and it had much less to do with Walesa's lack of education or political experience. Further on the matter, we can find many examples when great political leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln while having similar education background as Walesa were able to become great presidents, and there are also many examples of great grassroots leaders who were not able to transition to successful presidential roles (Lussier, 2006). The next chapter of this thesis will analyze one example of the later, with the review of Victor Yushchenko's presidency in Ukraine.

Overall, while it seems that the Solidarity movement in Poland successfully completed its mission to bring political, social, and economic freedoms and as it often happens, a new way of living demanded a new way of political life with new actors. There are still many political and social issues exist that need to be addressed. A few brief examples of these issues include the reproductive rights (an abortion question has been one of the central issues in national discussion in the last decade) and the debatable rule of law that raises concerns among international partners and the EU. At the same time, the tension between the Church, political organizations, and the social organization started to grow because the later did not need help from the Church anymore (Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski, 1995). Additionally, the public view of the Church as a political actor started to change largely because of the inclusion of mandatory religion classes in public schools among other issues (Simpson, 1993). During Walesa's presidency, the Church was able to use the Solidarity Union to obtain economic and political benefits (Simpson, 1996). Church also was strongly campaigning for the abolition of abortions and the limitation of divorces (Simpson, 1996) – these moves angered many people in the country. After Poland began the political transition to democracy, the strict rule that Catholic Church wanted to impose on the society started to clear out and as the result, contributed to Walesa's defeat in 1995's presidential election (Sikorski, 1996).

The society that just got out of decades of the totalitarian regime did not want to have strict rules imposed on them by the Church to become part of their legal system and in the end, people choose a less religious leader. Going one step further, one leader of the Catholic Church described the 1995 presidential election as a fight between 'Christian and neo-pagan values' (cited in Luxmoore, 1996, p.357). In 1995 Church was 'campaigning' against a presidential candidate from the left – Aleksander Kwasniewski, and the fact that he was elected president questions the real influence of the Church (Anderson, 2003) in the mid-1990s. At the same time, conservative parties linked to the Catholic Church were not able to provide a single candidate that would unite their followers (Polznanski, 1996).

During this time, the support for lustration started to raise among Poles from thirty-eight percent in 1991 to sixty-four percent of the population in 1992 (Misztal, 1999). While at the beginning of the political transition, in 1989, keeping the communist party involved in the political life was a must, with years passing by this need changed. The mass support for lustration resulted in the passing of a law requiring all then-current senior public officials to provide information if they co-operated with the communist-era security forces (Szczerbiak, 2002). This was the first attempt to implement lustration in Poland. As it was mentioned before in this chapter, the first non-communist government had no other option than to gave government post in defense as security areas to the communist who at the time were in control of the army and security forces. When the new democratic government was more established and backed up with Solidarity controlled parliament and Solidarity leader as the President, the need to bring representatives of old regimes started to diminish. At the same time, Solidarity leaders continue to believe that they should keep up the Roundtable agreement alive to prevent the

prosecution of old rulers to keep the country on the reformation road (Miształ, 1999). The passing of the first lustration laws showed that elites were listening to the masses and that people were able to influence who is governing them in more way than simple voting.

Even though Walesa was an ideologized opposition leader in the 1980s who brought the end of communism, after his election as the president he 'began to be viewed in the 1990s as just another individualistic, ruthless and controversial politician, responsible for political chaos in Poland' (Zubek, 1997). Even before the end of his presidential term, in 1993, Walesa's popular support fell to a low ten percent. A similar situation happened with Walesa's relations with his team, by the end of his tenure as the president, he had only a small group of advisors to count on (Zubek, 1997).

A summary of Walesa's presidency can be divided into two: most noticeable successes and failures. The most noticeable successes of Walesa's presidency included:

- Reconstruction of Poland's \$88 billion debt
- The attraction of over five billion of foreign direct investment
- Transformation of the Polish economy from stagnation to one of the fastest-growing in Europe
- Signing trade deals with Visegrad countries, Germany and Ukraine (Simpson, 1996)
- 'Small constitution' was put in place until the new constitution of 1997

The most noticeable negative characteristics of Walesa's presidency included:

- Dismissal of Solidarity dominated parliament in 1993 (Simpson, 1996)
- Lack of effective communication with the masses (true for all Solidarity government leaders)
- Growth of the political role of the Catholic Church that resulted in attempts to delegalize abortions and the majority of divorces as well as deepening of Catholic – Jews conflict
- Walesa's presidential term was generally characterized as disruptive and unstable (Szczerbiak, 2001)

Despite all success that Lech Walesa had in the early 1990s, he dropped quite low in public opinion polls and had broken with most of his former Solidarity allies. One of the reasons for the drop in his popularity was the fact that three years after the collapse of communism in Poland, the new political elite was seen as a 'class for itself' uninterested in the needs and problems of ordinary people, playing its ridiculous games, incompetent, and quarrelsome (Marody, 1995). Walesa attempted a political comeback with a clear-cut strategy of mobilizing Polish Catholic nationalist behind his candidacy in 1995's presidential election, but he lost it to former communist Aleksander Kwasniewski (Nagle, 1997). This can be explained by the fact that then (1995) existing political parties arose from either ideological or personal divisions that had taken place in the parliament elected in 1989 (Marody, 1995). The reelection of Kwasniewski as a Polish president in 2000 put an end to Lech Walesa's political career. In this election, Walesa only got one percent of the votes (Otfinoski, 2004).

Aleksander Kwasniewski Presidency and the EU accession

Aleksander Kwasniewski was a leader of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the successor of the communist party (PZPR) when he was elected as Polish President. He also held a minister post in the last communist government in the late 1980s. Kwasniewski was one of the first

Polish politicians to realize that people ‘disliked argumentative and combative style of politics’ (Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 81) and created a public persona that represented all Poles by going above the party and ideology border to promote stability and compromise. This willingness to work with his opponents to improve the lives of Poles became clearer during the last three years of Kwasniewski’s first term in the office. During this time, he did not block any key initiatives of the Social Movement Solidarity and Freedom Union (AWS-UW) government under the leadership of Jerzy Buzek. These actions of President Kwasniewski were different from his predecessor, Walesa who often had problems cooperating with the government and the parliament. This different governing style from former president Walesa was one of the reasons for Kwasniewski's impressive win in the 2000 presidential election. This section will analyze the Kwasniewski presidency and political elites’ actions during the ten years of his tenure to determine how this social group contributed to political and economic reforms. Additionally, this section will show how the internal success in Poland during this decade help this country join the European Union.

One of Kwasniewski's characteristics that made public perception of him favorable was his ability to position himself in a way that he could both take credit for the passage of new laws and have the right to criticize them (Szczerbiak, 2001). This political strategy was in a way aided by the passing of a new Constitution, which limited presidential power with still living him some important ones. One of the examples of this strategy was Kwasniewski’s approval of Lustration laws, by getting credit for not-vetoing it. This was the second attempt to legalize anti-communist regulation and this time it was more successful than in 1992. The lustration laws passed in 1997 and were amended in 1998 when the initial version was proven unworkable (Szczerbiak, 2002). This late passage of the lustration laws can be explained by the electoral success of former communist Kwasniewski and the worry that this result of presidential elections will bring the old communist party back to political power (Szczerbiak, 2002). Additionally, the ‘Oleksy affair’ of 1996 (an accusation that the then-premier was a Soviet and Russian spy) strengthened the support for lustration that jumped to over seventy-percent of the population in 1997 (Szczerbiak, 2002). This attempt in lustration was not particularly successful and one more attempt was made in the mid-2000s after Poland became a member of the European Union.

The election of former communists as Poland’s second popularly elected president continued the success of former communists who won the parliamentary elections in 1993 and held the parliamentary majority at the time. For the first two years of Kwasniewski presidency (1995-1997) he had the support of likeminded parliament, then after four years break, leftist parties with old communist roots won the parliamentary elections again, giving the president likeminded parliament. While the former communists were able to regain political power, it was not the same as before and they had to deal with the strong presence of democratic parties. An additional problem for communist was created by the lustration laws with increased public support for them in 1997, the year AWS and UW were able to gain electoral victory in parliamentary elections.

At the same time, former Solidarity members were creating new political parties, such as Social Movement Solidarity and Freedom Union. During Kwasniewski’s first term as the president, parties with Solidarity roots were in power after winning the 1997 parliamentary elections. For the 1997-2001 polish government elite – many were members of Solidarity that shaped their political perspective (Raciborski, 2007, p.31). They created the AWS-UW coalition that was in power until the next parliamentary election in 2001. This coalition was able to find a way to work with the President to pass needed legislation. The dominant party after 1997, the AWS with its coalition partner, the UW failed in the 2001 election. This marked the political end

of the Solidarity movement that initiated a transformation in the 1980s (Jackson, Klich, and Poznanska, 2005). This coalition was relatively strong until 2000 when the problems started to emerge inside its camp. These problems were attributed to some extent to the presidential election of 2000 and Kwasniewski's ability to play the difference between different groups inside coalitions against the coalition.

The Catholic Church also lost some of its political power at the end of Walesa's presidency. Its strong involvement in Poland's political life and more importantly, legislative initiatives were major reasons for this loss. While the majority of Poles still are devoted Catholics, they did not and still do not agree that public laws should be based on religious norms. As was mentioned above, the new Polish Constitution passed in 1997 that culminate in Church efforts to be recognized as more active politically and socially than just a religious organization. While the Solidarity leader Lech Walesa who was supporting the Church lost the presidential election in 1995, it still had strong political support in the constitutional negotiations in 1996-97, although it was weaker than it would have been with him as the president due to his outspoken support for Church before. In the end, the Polish Catholic Church did get its recognition in the new constitution, but it was based on liberal Catholic formulation by Poland's former prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki (Anderson, 2003). While the Catholic Church denied any intention to seek a political role, it was not too restrained in its ability to influence the political process in Poland while comparing to other states in similar situations (Anderson, 2003). Concerning Poland's foreign policy – a small number of conservative Catholic nationalists represented in Parliament were against the EU accession (Pienkos, 2004).

Briefly, the most noticeable successes of Kwasniewski's presidency included:

- The ability to work with the opposition on political and economic stability
- Negotiation Poland's accession to the European Union
- Passage of a new constitution in 1997 that limits presidential power that shifted to the prime minister who reports to the parliament (Szczebiak, 2001)

The most noticeable negative aspects of Kwasniewski's presidency included the 'Oleky affair' of 1996.

Overall Kwasniewski's presidency can be marked as a success for Poland and its people. First, the country went through a period of relative political and economic stability without any significant destabilizing events. Secondly, Poland was able to achieve success in the international arena by joining NATO and the European Union. The later achievements also significantly improved political and economic life inside the country due to strict conditions for the EU accession that forced the governments to implement political and economic systems in correspondence to European standards. Kwasniewski's personality and ability as a political leader also helped Poland in achieving these visible successes. While most of this section analysis is concentrated on the first term of Kwasniewski's presidency, it provides a good overview of the contribution of his government.

Conclusion

The three presidencies analyzed above showed how instrumental the political elite was during Poland's pre-EU establishment of democratic rule. Even though Poland is a parliamentary republic, its presidents did play a significant role during the post-communist transition. Especially, it is noticeable in the international arena. While the first freely elected president –

Lech Walesa, was questioned by the Poles and the West, and sometimes called a dictator, his presidency shows how much progress was made in reforming political and economic systems. His successor, Aleksandr Kwasniewski, was way more successful in domestic and international politics. In domestic politics, he was able to unite both, former left and right under the idea of a newly democratic Poland. Internationally, Kwasniewski had the role of a leader that brought his country to NATO and the EU. He also stepped up during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and was part of a Western delegation that helped negotiate a peaceful resolution.

In addition to presidents, the Polish political elites in general were perceived positively in the international arena. The cooperation of former adversaries to achieve shared goals was admirable. Additionally, Poland's leadership was able to successfully use its international connections to leverage an early acceptance to NATO and later to the EU. More importantly, Western Europeans were able to identify with political elites in Poland due to their pursuit of the same goals for democratic consolidation, economic development, and European integrations. In part, this successful connection can be attributed to the socializing and in part to the visible success of post-communist reforms.

Why elites were instrumental in implementing changes

Overall, after the initial transition of 1989-1990, all members of Polish political elites were trying to build a new democratic society with different levels of success with parliament's majority changing from former Solidarity to former communists after each election. Polish political parties were formed by grassroots movements like Solidarity on the right and central side of political ideology and by the former communist activist on the opposite side. Polish leadership from Solidarity formed trade unions and represented mass movements, although sometime in the middle of Lech Walesa's tenure as a president (1992) many Polish people perceived political elites as representatives of their interests. The growing disillusion with the Solidarity elite and its ability to truly represent the people weakened the former opposition's political power and allowed reformed communists to retake the power in the mid-1990s.

Even though members of the old communist party were winning both, presidential and parliamentary elections, the country's main political and economic reforms strategy stayed somehow the same throughout the fifteen years studied in this research. To understand why this visible stability occurred, there is a need to bring in democratic elites' theories discussed in the first chapter. Specifically, it is useful in this case to use Baylis' (2012) theory of elite consensus and Easter's (1997) idea of dispersed old regime elite that states that when the old elites face strong opposition with mass support, they are removed from power and broken into parts and the old elite can only survive by restructuring itself and start competing for political power in the same way as new elite does. While looking at Poland in the 1990s we can see a clear example of how this theory illustrates what happens in the real world. Other important characteristics of all Polish political elites of 1989-2004 are their consolidation around the goals of democratization, free-market reforms, and Euro-Atlantic integration. In Poland, 'the elite pacting process ensured that democracy became embedded with no significant actors (including representatives of former ruling elites) wanting a return to the status quo ante or opposing (broadly speaking) the liberal democratic model' (Szczebriak, 2016, p. 223).

The old communist elites were interested in the free market reforms because they knew that it would be relatively easy for them to keep at least economic power if they were the initiators of political and economic transition (Sanin, 1995). It did happen, with a large

percentage of old nomenklatura moving to a business that with time became known as the 'nomenklatura capitalism' (Gaidar, 2001 and Hanley, 2000). At the same time, Polish transformation avoided the creation of oligarchy that occurred in many other post-communist countries, like Ukraine, where several rich people were able to use their former political power or connections to gain massive wealth. While there are some reports that Polish economic and political elites were working together to achieve shared goals, this tendency had mostly localised character and on the national level Polish economic elites did not play a significant political role. The same criteria can be applied to political corruption, while there are some reports of corruption in Poland (Onis, 2004) during the time of transition, it was not as widespread as in Ukraine. The other reason is embedded in the first one and is the fact that Poland simply did not have economic enterprises as large as Ukraine had at the beginning of the post-communist transition in both countries.

While from the external point of view Polish political elites made great progress since 1989, especially when analysing Poland's entrance to NATO and the European Union, some academics (Wesolowski, 2004) argue that from an internal perspective, they did not achieve much. Specifically, the Polish political elite responsible for 'maladies of political life in Poland: ... splits, mergers, departures, new alliances, changes of leadership' in the political party system (Wesolowski, 2004, p.18). The instability of political parties is not unique for Poland and as the next chapter will show, Ukraine had and still have very similar political parties live. Although, it must be noticed that the Polish elite showed greater consolidation in terms of supporting democratization, shift to a market economy, and Euro-Atlantic integration. Analyzing today's political problems in Poland, we can speculate that they are rooted in the lack of Polish political elites' ability to establish stable political practices and parties in the first decade of transition. One of the reasons for the rise of division within Solidarity during Walesa's presidency is the effect of shock therapy (Zeniewski, 2011). While this economic policy was supported by Solidarity's leadership, not all members were understanding it, especially because it was an elite-driven strategy that conflicted with labor interest. The development and implementation of this policy created a split in Solidarity's political identity (Zeniewski, 2011). This split in ideas was one of the causes of the end of Solidarity as a strong political power in Poland. The adaptation of shock therapy also challenged Solidarity's relations with civil society because it was undermining 'the prospects for more social-based forms of organization' (Zeniewski, 2011, p. 989).

Because this thesis studies the external relationship of Polish elites, the analysis is mostly concentrated on the external view on the success of Polish political elites during the transition. The perspective EU membership is often identified as one of the most important external influences on the democratic process in Poland (Steves, 2001). While it will be mistaking to undermine the importance of internal forces such as the popular demand for democracy and at least partial elite support for the same, it is hard to underestimate the importance of the EU membership perspective on the democratization in all Central and Eastern European states. General support for the EU accession in Poland by its political elites is explained by their fear to be isolated with all their neighbours (excluding Eastern borders) joining the EU (Pienkos, 2004). Polish elite was able to persuade skeptical European politicians that Poland is ready to join the EU. The price of being left out of the process would have been hard not only in political costs but in the economic costs as well. Additionally, the public opinion was in support of the accession. As Pienkos (2004) indicate, Kwasniewski's prediction that eighty percent of the voting electorate would vote yes in the EU accession referendum was

close enough with actual results of seventy-seven percent.²⁷ As the next chapter will show, Ukrainian people did not support the pro-EU orientation of their country to the same extent until the mid-2000s that maybe names as one of the reasons why Ukrainian political elites were not consolidated around this foreign policy goal.

While summarizing Polish elites' roles in the post-communist transition in 1989-2004 it is hard to exclude the Polish Catholic Church. Throughout this chapter, the role of the Church showed as an important player during all stages of the political transition, with the ups and downs of its popularity and political influence. While in the late 1980s and early 1990s the political influence of the Church was rising and kept going strong, after the 1995th presidential election it started to diminish due to several reasons including:

- The strong presence of the Church in the political life was seen as its attempt to influence everything outside its traditional dimension by trying to control education, birth control, popular values, and mass media (Korbonski, 2000). This among other issues provoked a stronger call for State and Church separation
- The need for the Church's help that was present during the communist time disappeared

Although, for some time the influence of the Catholic Church diminished, recent events regarding abortion laws initiative and protests against them show that Poland still struggles to find a working balance in the relationship between political and religious spheres of public life.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of political elites' in Poland's post-communist transition by concentrating on these periods: The Roundtable talks that occurred from February to April 1989 and the office terms of three presidents following the Roundtable. These presidents are Jaruzelski, Walesa, and Kwasniewski. It is helpful to study these periods because their main personalities, especially the presidents had 'enormous significance in the system-building process' in Poland (Millard, 2000). But the chronological use of presidencies mostly helpful for the creation of the logical flow of Polish political and economic development pre-EU accession.

In the beginning, in 1989, two major elite groups of the time, leaders of the communist party and leaders of Solidarity negotiated a peaceful political transition. While the negotiation of pact transition was not new at the time, Poland had a unique case with having a third part helping this process – Polish Catholic Church. While the Church has a strong social presence in many countries, Poland's role of Church was important due to its support of anti-communist opposition during the last decade before democratization. Additionally, the Church was able to obtain the trust of both parties of the Roundtable negotiations that made it perfect to care for a role of mediator. The result of these negotiations established a new political and economic system in Poland. The most noticeable political changes include the legitimization of the Solidarity (that used to be outlawed), the creation of the Senate, the creation of the office of the

²⁷ 8-9 June 2003 Poland had referendum on the joining the EU – 77.5 % (from 58.8 % of eligible voters) supported the accession

president, and the scheduling of partially free elections. The result of the elections surprised the PZPR that experienced a devastating loss in the race for Senate.

The immediate result of the Roundtable talks was the appointment of the communist president, Jaruzelski, and democratic prime minister Mazowieski. The prime minister took the leading role and started the implementation of economic and political reforms. The economic reforms became widely known as the shock therapy or Balcerowicz plan. While it caused an economic downturn, with time the Polish economy started to grow. After the first free election, won by Solidarity, Poland held the first free presidential election that was won by Lech Walesa. While being very successful as the leader and organizer of Solidarity, he was not a successful president. The major problem was his lack of cooperation with former Solidarity allies. The decision to dismiss Solidarity's dominant parliament marked the beginning of the comeback of former communists. Needless to say, the next presidential elections were won by former communist Kwasniewski. The newly elected president was great in finding a way to unite ideologically different parties around the same goals.

Despite many differences and disagreements among Polish political elites, including the division within Solidarity, they had one major goal in common – a commitment to reformation and Euro-Atlantic integration. The great success of Polish political elites was achieved in the international arena. Firstly, the Poles were using neoliberal reforms to change the economy. This strategy proved to be successful and resulted in the growth of Poland's economy. Polish democratic transition was influenced by the above with the active role of domestic democratic elites and its population (Steves, 2001). The prospect of EU membership also played an important role in influencing the Polish post-communist transition along with other external factors. It was passively an influential set of incentive structures that have shaped and conditioned the behavior of Polish political elites and an active agent of political reform (Steves, 2001). While comparing the Polish transition to the Ukrainian, it is noticeable that Poland was more exposed to Western democracy even during communist rule (Interview A, EP) that helped its political and economic elites to be more open to implementing democratic changes.

Chapter 7: Ukraine's unfinished transition

This chapter examines the role of Ukrainian political elites during this country's political transformation after 1991. The main aim is to understand how much of the transition was influenced by the elite; how much of elite decisions during the transition was influenced by the external forces; how old ties with former Soviet Republics influenced elite decisions during the transformation; and what role economic and security issues played. This chapter also questions the popular belief that democratic transformation in post-communist states was initiated and carried on mostly by old communist political elites. The old communist elites did initiate the transition by negotiating the dissolution of the Soviet Union with leaders of Russia and Belarus. While Ukraine did experience mass demonstrations in 1990-1991, the majority of Ukrainians did not show much enthusiasm in the politics at the time. Overall, the majority of Ukrainian political scientists have been skeptical in their analysis of the common citizen's role in politics that can be explained by the absence of civil society during the Soviet times and the recently established tradition of Ukrainian democracy (Nastych, 2003). This visible apathy changed over time and in the 2000s Ukraine experience, major political changes forced by Ukrainian people.

The post-communist transition started in Ukraine at the same time as in all former Soviet Republic and Warsaw Bloc countries, in the late 1980s. But for this research, we are analyzing the Ukrainian transition to democracy after this country got its independence in 1991 with a brief overview of two years preceding independence. It is appropriate to analyze the Ukrainian transition from this year because of the changes that occurred before it was initiated and implemented by the Soviet Union and its leadership. While Ukrainians were part of the Soviet elite, the local republican elite in Kyiv was not able to make its own decisions regarding Ukraine's future until obtaining political independence from Moscow in 1991. Ukrainian democratic transition since 1991 is in many ways like the same processes in most former Soviet Republics except the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) whose transitions were similar to Polish. The late start of the post-communist transition and the lack of strong anti-communist opposition before 1991 made it hard for a new elite to find recruits with different ideological views. This continuity of the communist elite created an internal and external perception that the new elite will continue the old practices.

Major developments and elite actions during the Ukrainian transition was resembling countries like Russia during the 1990s, but it changed significantly after the mid-2000s. At the same time, Ukrainian political leaders never established the same level of control over the country as Russian leaders did. These differences made Ukraine stand out among most of the FSRs and allowed Ukraine periods of democratic rule after the 2005 presidential elections (Levitsky and Way, 2010). But during the 1990s, Ukrainian political elites did not show commitments to reforms. The result of delaying political and economic reforms was a significant economic downfall from which Ukraine has not been able to recover for a very long time. The GDP indicators fell the lowest in 2000 with only 31.262 billion US Dollars in comparison to 77.465 billion in 1991 (The World Bank). In addition to a devastating economic situation, Ukraine experienced political instability, raise of corruption, and two revolutions.

The devastating internal situation in the 1990s improved in the late 2000s but it was still not good enough to create a positive image of Ukraine in the international arena. One of the reasons for unfinished democratization in Ukraine has been the lack of ability of political elites to united around the same goal. It seems that different political groups that compose the national

elite are just too different from opposite worldviews and goals. More importantly, these groups view Ukrainian development in a completely different way. The previous chapter showed how the unity of Polish political elites around democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration helped their country to implement successful political and economic reforms and join NATO and the EU. The analysis below will investigate the economic, political, and social reasons behind the protracted transition in independent Ukraine.

This chapter will start with an overview of the start of the post-communist transition in Ukraine in the early 1990s. The main body of this chapter will analyze the elite actions during the terms of five Ukrainian presidents by dividing them into three groups by using regime type and political ideology:

- Leonid Kravchuk (Independent)- 5 December 1991 to 19 July 1994. This presidency is significant for the establishment of Ukraine as an independent country.

- Leonid Kuchma (Independent) – 19 July 1994 to 23 January 2005 and Victor Yanukovich (Party of Regions) – 25 February 2010 to 22 February 2014. These presidencies are representation of authoritarian rule, seemingly pro-Russian foreign policy platform, the rise of oligarchs, and corruption

- Victor Yushchenko (Our Ukraine) – 23 January 2005 to 25 February 2010; Acting president – Aleksandr Turchynov (Fatherland) – 23 February to 7 June 2014; and Petro Poroshenko (Petro Poroshenko Bloc) – 7 June 2014 to present. These presidencies represent a more democratic rule. Their presidencies are outcomes of mass protests and they have had pro-Western foreign policy platforms.

The last section of this chapter will summarize the action of Ukrainian political elites to determine how they affected the post-communist transition in this country.

The concentration of this study on presidential administrations is an effective way to analyze changes in Ukrainian politics because these correspond to change in ruling political elites. The first Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk was a former communist who adopted a nationalistic view during the late 1980s and supported pro-western policies as the president. Next Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, during his presidential campaign promised to build better relations with Russia, but after electoral success did not abandon the pro-western policies of the previous administration. Additionally, Kuchma was one of the ‘red directors’ who oversaw one of the largest manufacturers in Ukraine before his election as a president. The fourth Ukrainian President, Victor Yanukovich had a similar political program to Kuchma with a pro-Russian message. With time his presidency and its political elite got the reputation of being the most corrupt in the history of independent Ukraine. Now, it comes as no surprise that Victor Yanukovich had to leave Ukraine and ask for refuge in Russia before the end of this term. Both these presidencies (Kuchma’s and Yanukovich’s) ended with mass protests due to their regimes being closely associated with oligarchy, corruption, and political persecutions. These internal problems transferred into negative international perceptions with similar consequences for Ukrainian foreign policy.

During the twenty-five years of post-communism, Ukraine also had some democratic presidents like Yushchenko and Poroshenko, although not every scholar agrees with this classification. Victor Yushchenko became the president after the success of the Orange Revolution in 2004. His presidential campaign was built on pro-Western ideas and the promise of political and economic reforms. An interesting detail about his presidency is that it was the

first presidential administration that was identified by the majority of European politicians as being serious about conducting reforms and developing a close relationship with the European Union (the other administration mentioned in the same manner is the administration of current president Petro Poroshenko). While Yushchenko and his administration promised reforms and better relations with the West, they could not deliver it and additionally, the relationship with Russia turned for the worse with the Russian government launching an economic war against Ukraine as a result of these tensions. And last, but not least, current Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko got into power after winning an emergency election after the Maidan or the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. These two presidential administrations are associated with the reformation, establishment of democracy, and improved international image of Ukraine despite internal problems.

Beginning of the post-communist transition

At the beginning of the post-communist transition in Ukraine, the elites were representing several social and cultural movements and started to work with the communist elite to reform the country. Ukrainian social and political movements that were in the opposition to the ruling communist party were not as powerful and popular as the Solidarity movement in Poland. Additionally, best known Ukrainian movements were mostly composed of cultural intellectuals that made them perceived as distant from the working people. Small anti-communist movements were present in Ukraine for all seventy years of Soviet rule, but Ukraine did not have large anti-communist movements and this situation did not change in the 1980s (Bondarenko and Deshchinskiy, 2008). Additionally, many anti-communist movements in Ukraine were part of larger organizations active in all fifteen republics. Even though left-overs of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army from World War II continued to fight communists until the mid-1950s in the country's western regions (Bedriy, 1983; Katchanovski, 2010), with time pro-independence movement (communist's opposition) almost disappeared.

In addition to the lack of mass movements in support of democratization, Ukraine was one of the fifteen republics of the USSR. While Ukraine, as the Soviet Republic did, had autonomy in some areas of political, economic, and cultural life, the major decisions about this country's future were made in Moscow. Numerous academic studies indicate the difficulty that newly independent countries encounter while building democratic societies in addition to democratization efforts (Kuzio, 1996 and 2000). The economy can be used as one of the examples, in addition to the state ownership of all economic enterprises and Ukraine did not have the same presence of small farms as Poland did. Ukrainian economy was also an integral part of the Soviet economy, with many enterprises manufacturing parts just to be sent for the assembly of the final product somewhere else in the USSR. While this practice is popular among multinational corporations now, in post-Soviet space this practice can be named as one of the reasons for the majority of former republics' lack of efficient economic reforms. But the hardest part of the transition from being a part of a different country's economy is the urgent need to get its currency, get its own energy resources (especially with the case of Russia being a major energy seller in the region), and so on.

The political spectrum was not dissimilar to the economic situation. Ukrainian national building was not completed due to the long history of being part of the Russian Empire and then the USSR (Interview C, EP; Kuzio, 2000). Several hundred years of Russian rule resulted in weak national elites without strong national historical roots. Similarly, to the issues of national

building, Ukrainian elites were Russified or destroyed over the years of Russian rule. These processes slowed down the creation of a strong national or unique identity of Ukrainian elites that would differentiate them from other Soviet Republics (Interview C, EP). An additional problem arises from the lack of national cultural development during Soviet times. Harsh rules of de-Ukrainization that lasted a couple of centuries erased a big part of national cultural identity in Ukraine.

Ukraine's international perception as part of Russia raised questions about the existence of the Ukrainian nation and the right of Ukrainian people to have their own country. The questioning of Ukraine as a nation occurred in both, Russia and the West. One example of trying to find the origins of Ukraine as a nation was attempted by Andrew Wilson in his book where he portrays Ukraine as an unexpected nation (Wilson, 2015). An additional reason for Ukrainian lack of international visibility as a nation in the 1980s and early 1990s was the lack of unity in the country with a noted division between East and West (Wilson, 2015), with the East being strongly influenced by Russia and West being strongly influenced by Poland and other western neighbors.

Despite seemingly strong Russian presence, Ukrainian people were able to keep their national identity alive and attempted to regain independence from Russia throughout the centuries with two attempts to do so in the twentieth century, during the First and Second World Wars. Both attempts were unsuccessful, but they help Ukrainian people keep national identity alive through the Soviet rule. As result, a large number of Ukrainian Communist Party members adopted the national agenda. Later, during the 1980s, the Ukrainian transition was mostly initiated by the communists with nationalistic views. Ukrainian independence was achieved under the leadership of Ukrainian communist Leonid Makarovich Kravchuk, who became the first president of the newly independent country (running as an independent). One of the main Kravchuk's achievements was the participation in the dissolution of the USSR during his meeting with Russian and Belarusian leaders in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Belarus in December 1991.

The analysis of democratic opposition of the 1980s shows several different groups that were working on bringing democratic change to the country. At the time three major groups opposed Soviet rule in Ukraine (Stepanyuk, 2013). Although these groups were small in comparison to the dominance of the Solidarity in Poland, they did influence democratic transition:

- Human rights groups also promoted democratization. They were represented in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and Union (two organizations) that was part of a larger Eastern European movement that worked on the promotion of human rights, cultural rights, and other rights. The Ukrainian Helsinki Union was organized in 1976 and it is still active today. Its membership represented individuals from different social classes that had similar political goals. While the Ukrainian Helsinki groups were part of bigger organizations, they did help the Ukrainian nationalist movement by advocating on the behalf of its members. But overall, this movement was active in all USSR.
- Religious groups worked towards the true implementation of the freedom of religion declared in the USSR's constitution. Some of the Ukrainian religious groups were part of large movement active in all or many Soviet Republics, such as the groups representing the Orthodox and protestant churches. The protestant groups were also active internationally, by using local churches in western countries like the US to get international attention to human rights abuses in the USSR. But there were also more

Ukrainianized religious movements representing Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church among others that were most active in Western Ukraine.

- Nationalist groups worked towards Ukrainian national interests with part of their members advocating for independence. Members of these groups, like Chornovil later became the back stone of national-democratic parties in independent Ukraine (Stepanyuk, 2013).

Some leaders of the Ukrainian anti-communist opposition were members of two or more groups mentioned above that show interconnectedness among all opposition movements. For example, Viacheslav Chornovil, leader of the Rukh, was a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and nationalist groups. Rukh, initially organized in 1989 during the inaugural congress on 8-10 September that was also attended by leaders of Polish Solidarity such as Adam Michnik (Kuzio, 2000). The attendance of Poland's anti-communist opposition leaders showed support of Polish democratic opposition to this organization. This political party became a major national-democratic political power in Ukraine in the 1990s. The initial composition of the party had seventy-two percent with higher education, ten percent of workers, and about two and a half percent of farmers (Kuzio, 2000). While this organization consisted mostly of intellectuals, it was able to co-organize their anti-communist efforts with miners' unions and other organizations when their goals aligned. But most of these alliances were short-lived with the majority of the workforce involved being apolitical (Wilson, 2015). At the beginning of this movement, it was self-portrayed as a vehicle to implement perestroika and was willing to work with the communist to do so (Kuzio, 2000). Only with time, it shifted to more nationalistic ideas.

1990 & 1991 – two years that changed Ukraine

While comparing Ukraine's post-communist transition to Poland's it is hard to overlook the big difference in their path to democratization. Ukraine's democratization started in the late 1980s in the Soviet Union with Ukrainian movements being part of the larger Soviet democratic opposition. We can speculate, that it may have to stay this way if the events of the 1990s did not happen. Although Ukraine did not have the process that can be compared to the Roundtable negotiations in Poland, several processes need to be analyzed to get the complete picture of the Ukrainian transition. These processes are the creation of democratic and nationalistic opposition in the USSR, the reforms in the Soviet Communist Party, and the pro-independence movements in other Soviet Republics that were replicated in other places. At the same time, the transitional process in Ukraine includes a lesser number of actors that the same process in Poland that resulted in a visibly shorter section on the Ukrainian transition of 1990-1991.

1990 was one of the most significant years in Ukrainian history. During this year, Ukraine had the first relatively free parliamentary election that brought many formerly persecuted opposition leaders to the parliament. The newly elected parliament declared the Sovereignty of Ukraine on 16 July 1990 that triggered the independence movement in addition to mass demonstrations demanding the same. This declaration clearly stated that the Ukrainian SSR has the right to self-determination as a nation and has independence in all aspects of public life including international relations.²⁸ This document was the first important step in acquiring independence from the Soviet Union.

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http://static.rada.gov.ua/site/postanova_eng/Declaration_of_State_Sovereignty_of_Ukraine_rev1.htm

1990 was also the year when the Soviet Union tried to reinvent itself by working on the new Union Treaty that would unite remaining republics in one country (after Baltic Republics declared their independence). It was possible in the time, that the new treaty would be successful in keeping together at least nine republics that participated in the negotiations, but the putsch in August 1991 changed everything and at the end of the month, on 24 August 1991, the Ukrainian parliament declared its country's independence. The declaration of independence was approved by the Ukrainian people in December 1991's referendum. A very important fact that needed to be noticed about this declaration in addition to making Ukraine its own country, is that it states that Ukraine is an 'independent democratic state'.²⁹ The inclusion of the statement on democracy clearly shows the willingness of the Ukrainian political elite to break from its communist past and start a new political tradition that will allow participants to all political parties with some small exceptions. In 1991, right after the declaration of independence (30 August), the communist party of Ukraine was banned by the Supreme Council Presidium (Kuzio, 2000). The party was re-organized as the Sociality Party of Ukraine a couple of months later and became an active participant in Ukrainian politics. December 1991 was also the month when the newly independent country elected its first president, Leonid Kravchuk.

Since the Ukrainian parliament, or Verkhovna Rada, declared both, the declarations of Sovereignty and Independence of Ukraine, we need to take a closer look at this institution in 1990. The 1990 parliamentary elections in USSR were the first elections since the establishment of communist rule, which allowed the participation of non-communist parties. This new development made these elections the start of a multi-party system in Ukrainian politics (Semenova, 2012). Even with the removal of the restriction of non-communist political parties to compete for parliamentary posts, the communist managed to prevent major democratic movements, such as Rukh to participate directly in the elections. Although, Rukh was able to participate by becoming part of the Democratic Bloc. The Democratic Bloc ended up with twenty-five percent of total parliamentary mandates (Semenova, 2012). The look at ethnic division in the parliament shows that the communist majority had about seventy percent ethnic Ukrainians while Democratic Bloc had over ninety percent of ethnic Ukrainians. The other details about this parliament worth mentioning are the fact that women composed only about three percent of all MPs (Semenova, 2012), the gender representation in this parliament was worse compared to the same during the communist rule. Despite only a small group of democratic political forces being elected to the parliament, pro-democratic mass movements were able to influence major change in Ukrainian society.

Leonid Kravchuk's presidency

As it was mentioned above, Kravchuk was one of the initiators of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Along with his counterparts from Russia and Belarus, Leonid Makarovich signed the agreement that officially ended the existence of the Soviet Union. During his presidency, Ukraine started its political and economic reforms and established diplomatic relationships with the majority of international players including countries and international organizations. While Ukraine has been a member of the United Nations since its formation, during Kravchuk presidency, Ukraine declared its goals of Euro-Atlantic integrations hoping at some point to join NATO and the European Union (Prizel, 2000). During the first year of his presidency, Kravchuk

²⁹ http://static.rada.gov.ua/site/postanova_eng/Rres_Declaration_Independence_rev12.htm

managed to put Ukraine on the map, with over a hundred countries establishing diplomatic relations with Ukraine (Prizel, 2000).

Overall, Kravchuk has an image as a more pro-western and pro-democratic president that wanted to build close relations with the Euro-Atlantic powers and limit the influence of Russia in Ukraine (Wilson, 1997; Way, 2005; Brudny and Finkel, 2011; Marples, 2015). Although he declared goals for the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, he did not think that it was possible to achieve them at the time. As he said in one of his interviews when asked what would happen if he lost the presidential elections in 1991: “I wanted to join NATO, but I knew that it was impossible at the time. I don’t think that Chornovil [his adversary in the 1991 presidential election] would be able to do so if he won the presidential elections” (Kravchuk, 2015).

As the first president of a newly independent country, Kravchuk faced many challenges from economic downfall to social and political issues. One of the biggest achievements of Leonid Makarovych as the first president was his ability to get recognition of Ukrainian independence at the time when many seriously contemplated ideas of a new union between former Soviet Republics under the leadership of Russia that would simply replace the USSR, that he helped to end. Recently, in one of his interviews, he stated that he was working hard in securing Ukrainian independence because he could not betray Ukrainians who selected him as the president of independent Ukraine and who voted for the independence in record numbers (over ninety percent of the electorate). Additionally, as mentioned above, many Ukrainian communists were nationalists and did not want to continue to take orders from Moscow.

Another achievement of his presidency was the work on the removal of nuclear weapons that Ukraine inherited from the Soviet Union.³⁰ Kravchuk led Ukrainian diplomats who negotiated with Russia and major Western powers for the removal and destruction of thousands of nuclear bombs that were shipped to Russia for demolition. While this agreement was perceived as a necessity for Ukraine at the time (Kravchuk, 2002), the text of the agreement that stated that all parties signing it will respect Ukrainian territorial integrity with time became controversial due to Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. The necessity of abandonment of the nuclear arsenal based on Ukrainian territory was explained by the fact that the Ukrainian government did not have control over this arsenal with all ‘push buttons’ were kept in Moscow (Kravchuk, 2002). The abandonment of nuclear weapons sent a positive signal to the West about Ukraine’s readiness to cooperate on major issues.

From the start of his presidency, Kravchuk showed his commitment to Ukrainian independence. While not many people believed that Ukraine would stay independent from Russia for too long, Kravchuk stated that he is fully committed to the struggle for independence (Burant, 1995). Because of this commitment, he did not attend the meeting discussing the new Union treaty in November 1991 and did not sign the CIS charter, and did not join the CIS collective security system (Burant, 1995). At the time Ukraine only chooses to participate in the economic side of the CIS and only as the associate member leaving an open opportunity for itself to join other international economic organizations such as the European Union.

Kravchuk’s place in Ukrainian history can be somehow compared to the role of Lech Walesa in Poland in the sense that he played the leading role at the beginning of the transformation but on the communist side, starting with obtaining Ukrainian independence, and

³⁰ At the time, Ukraine had about three thousand of nuclear warheads

becoming the first post-communist president. The major difference between these presidents is that Kravchuk was not able to introduce new radical political and economic reforms that would jumpstart democratic transformation. Looking back on his presidency and the Ukrainian political and economic changes over the last twenty-five years, Kravchuk notices that because the old communism machine stayed in power under a new name, it was hard for Ukraine to reform (Kravchuk, 2014a, b). While Ukraine at that time did not undergo lustration, the president was not opposing it if it had a legal base, but he also did not initiate it because it may have affected him. In comparison to Poland, Ukraine never had lustration laws that allowed most former communist leaders to keep their power. Similarly to Poland, the former democratic opposition formed during 1989-1991 started to fall apart due to internal conflicts. For example, one of the best-known democratic parties of the time, the Rukh, developed internal conflict and with time separated into two political parties with similar ideology and the same name.

Kravchuk's presidency also had a negative side because it was during one of the hardest economic times for Ukrainian people. There were several reasons for it:

- Newly independent Ukraine needed time to readjust its economy
 - o It needed new currency
 - o It needed to develop new relations with former republics and economic partners
- The lack of fast reforms that would help the economy to grow
- Growth of corruption that partially was caused by the economic downturn

All these problems led to the early presidential election, which Kravchuk lost and the second presidency of Ukraine went to former 'red director' Leonid Kuchma.

Leonid Kuchma's and Victor Yanukovich presidencies

This section will analyze two presidencies, Leonid Kuchma's and Victor Yanukovich's. Both administrations are known for their perceived pro-Russian foreign policy platforms, which were used heavily during presidential campaigns. At the same time, both administrations were more self-centered, similarly to many other political elites in the FSRs. Additionally, both presidencies ended with mass protests that succeeded in removing their political parties from power. By the end, this section will show in more detail how ruling political elites associated with Kuchma and Yanukovich achieved a negative image domestically and abroad and how it affected EU's relations with Ukraine.

Kuchma's presidency

The winner of the second presidential election was Leonid Danylovych Kuchma, former prime minister of Ukraine (during Kravchuk's presidency). During his presidential campaign, he heavily used his experience as a director of a large enterprise to show his ability to manage a country. He also used slogans promising close relations with Russia to reassure economically devastated Ukrainians that their 'safe manufacturing' jobs from the past would be resurrected when the trades with Russia starts to take off. Kuchma was elected due to this promise. Under the new structure of political power in Ukraine, the economic elites in addition to political elites started to influence not only domestic policies but the foreign policy as well. After winning the election he did keep his promises, but he also proclaimed his commitment to Euro-Atlantic

integration. In some way, he was trying to maneuver between two different foreign policy orientations, and in the end, he encountered problems with both sides.

At the start of his presidential term, Leonid Kuchma signed the Budapest Memorandum under which Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal. While the credit of negotiating the deal goes to Kravchuk, Kuchma seemed to agree with his decision. Further, in the international arena, Kuchma was able to build friendly relations with Russia using ‘vodka’ diplomacy that worked perfectly with Yeltsin. There are reports that he tried this foreign policy approach on Bill Clinton, then President of the United States, but it did not work as well as it did with the Russian leader. But this was the beginning of Kuchma’s presidency, by the end, he found himself mostly isolated internationally due to the accusation of his involvement in the murder of Ukrainian journalist Georgiy Gongadze and other reports and accusations of political silencing of the opposition. One of the examples was the scandal with Pavlo Lazarenko, the former prime minister who was arrested and jailed in the US on corruption and money laundering charges. This scandal showed Kuchma’s intolerance to politicians who went into opposition to him. Similarly, Victor Yanukovych became well known for the persecution of his political opponent, Yuliya Timoshenko that provoked a negative response from the West.

Western leaders had serious problems with Kuchma’s actions as a president due to political prosecutions and corruption. While relations with Russia were better, Kuchma had to stop Russia from building a dam that would connect small Ukrainian island to Russia, or the Tuzla incident. One of the reasons for Kuchma’s success in Russia was the fact that his speeches were misinterpreted in Russia and Ukraine as a sign of Ukraine’s acceptance of Russia’s inevitable superiority (Puglisi, 2003). Most problems with Russia occurred by the end of Kuchma’s presidency. For example, Putin did not understand why Kuchma would not use the police force more aggressively during the Orange revolution. According to a witness of their conversation on the subject, Kuchma was only able to provide one explanation, saying that Ukraine changed a lot and that the police force would not work there. Kuchma also became famous for saying that discussing Ukraine with Russians made him nationalistic that can explain the title of his book “Ukraine is not Russia”. And his son-in-law, a famous Ukrainian oligarch, is known by European political elites as a supporter of Euro-Atlantic integration (Interview C, EU). This visible contradiction in Kuchma’s foreign policy preferences shows that sometimes the president’s goals are misperceived that also illustrates the need for the study of perception.

One achievement of Kuchma’s presidency was his actions to force the Ukrainian parliament to pass the constitution. The new Ukrainian Constitution was passed after probably the longest session of the parliament started on 27 June and ended with a successful vote on 28 June 1996. Later that year (1996) new Ukrainian currency was introduced. While it was done under Kuchma’s presidency some credit went to Victor Yushchenko, then head of Ukrainian National Bank, who was recognized as a talented banker by the international press. Yushchenko also received some credit for the first economic growth in Ukraine since independence when he was the prime minister. Yushchenko’s success as the head of the National Bank got him a position as the prime minister and jump-started his political career. Kuchma’s last appointment of prime minister (Victor Yanukovych) also brought Victor Yanukovych as a new player to the national political life.

During ten years of Kuchma’s presidency, new tendencies emerged in Ukraine that changed political and socio-economic life to the worst. During these years Ukraine witnessed a rise in organized crime and the emergence of a new socio-economic group – oligarchs. Both new social tendencies were in sync with a similar development in many other post-Soviet states like

Russia. The oligarchic system became dominant in the majority of former-Soviet states. This political system still dominates the region. The dominance of oligarchic systems in CIS member states raises a question about the reach of oligarchic power – how far does oligarchs' political power go? Some suggest that too far.

Looking back on the last twenty-five years of CIS member states' history we can conclude that even the richest oligarchs need a powerful 'friend' in a government to survive a change of political leadership in a country. At the same time, if a country, like Georgia or Ukraine, has a group of businessmen that are more or less independent from the ruling political elite, this country can experience political change influenced or supported by the independent (or semi-independent) economic elite. Both, Ukraine and Georgia in very recent history saw changes in governments initiated by people and supported by business elites that were not affiliated with the ruling political party that led to significant changes in those countries' political and economic structures. The presence of a semi-independent elite positively affected the image of Ukraine, by indicating the possibility of democratic change.

The oligarchic systems rose in Ukraine during Leonid Kuchma's presidency and it has roots in the post-Soviet developmental systems (Puglisi, 2003). The model of post-communist transition selected by Ukrainian elites created an opportunity for a small group of people to acquire major enterprises using their political connections. In this model of development, the political and business never got separated that created a system of interdependence between political and economic elites. This connection helped oligarchs to hold on to their power even after their political opponents won elections. The rise of oligarchy negatively affected Ukrainian attempts at economic and political reforms and harmed democratization in general (Smith, 2017). When Ukraine got its first prime minister who was able to bring economic growth, the oligarchic groups orchestrated political attacks on his cabinet (Pavliuk, 2002). With time they succeeded and Yushchenko was removed from his post as prime minister and went into political opposition to Kuchma.

Similarly, to Ukraine's first presidency Kuchma's regime contributed to the national building. According to many scholars, Kuchma was trying to construct a system of 'managed democracy' in which formal democratic practices are controlled by informal control of all political institutions, similarly to Putin's rule in Russia (Youngs and McFaul, 2009). But Kuchma was not able to repeat Putin's success due to several reasons analyzed in this thesis. One of these reasons is the lack of unity among political and economic elites and lack of unity among oligarchs' support for Kuchma (in the same way as Russian oligarchs are supporting Putin). The other important element that limited Kuchma's control over Ukraine was the fact that he and his closest supporters did not own major segments of the Ukrainian economy. As the result, economic growth achieved in the last years of Kuchma's presidency strengthened his opponents (Youngs and McFaul, 2009) who supported Yushchenko's presidential bid in 2004. Additionally, Kuchma was not popular amongst middle-class Ukrainians that caused the loss of presidential elections in 2004. In the summary, ten years of Kuchma's presidency got different labels, with more noticeable ones being 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way, 2002), 'deliberative democracy' (O'Donnell, 1994; Kubicek, 2001), and 'machine politics' (D'Anieri, 2003). While there are differences in the naming of this regime, the general idea is the same as well as the fact that it was hard for Kuchma and his government to keep this regime type alive in changing Ukraine.

The changes of ruling elites in Ukraine have not changed the oligarchic political system in this country. During the research for this project (elite interviews in Brussels) several

interviewees stated that one of the main characteristics of the Ukrainian ruling elite (political and economic) is the fact that many political issues can be solved with assistance from well-known Ukrainian oligarchs instead of politicians. This example can be applied to other CIS states and it illustrates the important role of economic elites in the political life of CIS member states. Economic reasoning influenced foreign policy in Ukraine for some time due to the development of “a foreign policy embodied with ‘constructive pragmatism’” (Puglisi, 2003, p. 829). This foreign policy development started after the presidential election of 1994 when Leonid Kuchma was elected as a new Ukrainian president. As it was noted by some scholars, a political group needed control of the executive branch of the government to control the political and economic situation in Ukraine (D’Anieri, 2005) and the simple change of ruling political elites without changing the political system would not make any significant difference.

The other actors in Ukrainian national politics at the time of Kuchma’s presidency included democratic and communist oppositions. The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) was resurrected by the end of Kravchuk’s tenure as a president and at the time of Kuchma’s first term in the office, Ukrainian Communist Party (UCP) became the largest faction in the parliament. Despite large numbers, the communists were not able to block the passage of the new constitution (in 1996) by voting against it. The results of this and other important parliamentary votes show the limited power of this large political party. The UCP with the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) brought heavy left presence in the parliament only years after the start of the democratic transition, similarly to the electoral victory of the left parties in Poland in 1993. Overall, during Kuchma’s presidency, the communist were still important players in Ukrainian politics enjoying great support due to the worsened economic situation in Ukraine after independence. On the other side of Ukrainian political life, were right or/and democratic parties like Rukh. At the time, most democratic parties were seen as a right due to their anti-communist ideology, and only with time, the traditional left-center-right spectrum of political parties emerged. In contrast to the communist’s visible unity, Ukrainian democratic parties and organizations were in a state of conflict, similarly to conflicts inside Solidarity in Poland. The major party of the time mentioned above – Rukh did not avoid this trend and was divided into two Rukhs (both keeping the name with some variations to distinguish between them).

Overall, Kuchma’s presidency kept Ukraine on track with further development of its statehood with the adoption of the new constitution in 1996. But, the lack of reforms, growth of corruption, the emergence of oligarchy was setting the country backward. And president’s choice to support unpopular Victor Yanukovich in the upcoming presidential elections in 2004 instead of running by himself (there still debate if it was allowed by the new constitution) can be interpreted in two ways, as his way to give up the power and as his way to stay in power by trying to control Yanukovich. It is hard now to speculate about it because after the mass protests the presidency went to Victor Yushchenko, the leader of the opposition at the time. One thing that we can say about his presidency, is that Kuchma did his best to keep the transition of political power peaceful. Additionally, many researchers including Youngs and McFaul (2009) indicate that Kuchma was not willing to sacrifice the Ukrainian democratic image to preserve political power for his regime due to his goal of integrating Ukraine into the West.

Victor Yanukovich’s presidency

Victor Yanukovich earned an opposite summary of his commitments to a peaceful change of power and prioritizing national goals over his own, despite being in many ways similar to Kuchma. Yanukovich was well known by the time he finally became Ukrainian president, and

according to the majority of Ukrainians – he became the worst president in Ukrainian history bringing numerous deaths and general devastation to a once peaceful country. But this happened at the end of this presidency, and at the beginning, Yanukovich acted more like one of his predecessors, Leonid Kuchma. Similar to Kuchma, Yanukovich run for the presidency promising strong relations with Russia, and tried to keep good working relations with the West and in particular with the European Union. In the arena of foreign policy, Yanukovich was keeping up with the goals of Euro-Atlantic integration declared a long time before him. For a long time, the president was saying the right things domestically and internationally and was working towards signing the Association Agreement with the European Union initiated by his predecessors (Interview A, EU).

Yanukovich was keeping up the international appearances while the internal situation in the country took a turn for the worst. During his four-year tenure as a president, Ukraine experienced a new wave in the growth of corruption. It was even more devastating than it sounds because Ukraine was already a corrupt country. A British newspaper, the Telegraph, states that Yanukovich paid about one million and four hundred thousand American dollars per day in bribes during his tenure as a president. The total amount of his bribes summed to be two billion American dollars.³¹ And this is only one example of widespread corruption during this presidency. One of the reasons attributed to the rise in corruption was the increase in the power of the presidential family. While all former Ukrainian presidents’ families enjoyed special benefits due to their kin, they never were able to concentrate too much power in the hands of one family, that was a reoccurring practice in many CIS countries like Kazakhstan where one family-controlled and still controls all political and economic power.

It is important to clarify that term ‘Yanukovich family’ is often used with the implication of two meanings: the actual family of the former president, mostly his sons; and top members of the Donetsk clan. One of the consequences of the rise of the political power of the presidential family was the creation of a strong ‘police state’ when the president was trying to protect himself from the people. In many ways, it was based on the implementation of the same model in Russia several years ago under Putin’s rule. This new role of police forces worsened the situation with human rights in Ukraine and increased prosecution of Yanukovich political opponents with the imprisonment of Yuliya Timoshenko as the most famous example (Zhuge, 2012). Despite numerous reports of worsening corruption, Ukraine’s scores in Transparency International’s Perception of Corruption Index have not changed much under Yanukovich's presidency. Table 4 below shows how the perception of corruption scores changed over the years 1998-2015 and illustrates that the lowest (worst corruption) score³² in Ukraine occurred during Kuchma’s presidency in 2000.

Table 4 - Ukraine corruption index 1998-2015:

Year	Score
1998	2.8
1999	2.6

³¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/31/ukraines-fallen-leader-viktor-yanukovich-paid-bribes-of-2-billio/>

³² I did not use the ranking because it is not representative due to different number of countries surveyed each year

2000	1.5
2001	2.1
2002	2.4
2003	2.3
2004	2.2
2005	2.6
2006	2.8
2007	2.7
2008	2.5
2009	2.2
2010	2.4
2011	2.3
2012	2.6
2013	2.5
2014	2.5
2015	2.7

Source: Transparency International's Perception of Corruption Index (<https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>)

Another negative development of the Yanukovich presidency had a worse consequence for the country and it was the destruction of the army. Partially it was achieved by stealing and selling out its equipment and partially by limiting government funding. As the result, Ukrainians and the next president had to use every means possible to raise funds for the military after the start of the war in Eastern Ukraine. During the first year of fighting, the military was not able to defend Ukrainian territory on its own, and only with help of volunteers who send much-needed equipment, food, and people, Ukrainians were able to stop Russia from marching further into Ukrainian territory. The situation with Crimea was disturbing too and the first signs of trouble started before the annexation. Crimea was 'given' to Ukraine in 1954 and stayed as its part since then by popular agreement during the referendum. But under Yanukovich, it got completely under Russian control after the president 'let' Russia learn all secret codes needed to succeed in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (Interview A, UA). These developments of Yanukovich's presidency illustrate deep problems with some Ukrainian political elites that were willing to sell everything for personal enrichment. The oligarchy also had a major comeback after the unstable attempts in reforms by Yushchenko's administration.

Even before Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association treaty with the European Union due to harsh push from Russia to stop the deal (Interview B, EP) the international image of Ukraine and it's then-ruling elite has worsened. Political persecutions with growing corruption quickly started creating a negative international response. One of the examples of this response was the partial boycott of the European football championship that was held in Poland and Ukraine in 2012. During this time, many hotels that were build or reconstructed for this event stayed partially empty. Overall, if we quote Leonid Kravchuk, we can summarize Yanukovich's presidency as of somebody who was only temporary in power without the ideological base to be the Ukrainian President. It seems that he just entered politics to deal with his corporative

problems. He was different from other presidents due to his lack of apparent interest in protecting the national interests of Ukraine (Kravchuk, 2014). This view of Yanukovich seems to be shared by all Ukrainian presidents, who publicly contempt his actions during Euro Mайдan (together) and urged him to stop the use of deadly police force towards peaceful protesters. As a result of ignoring advice from more experienced Ukrainian presidents, Yanukovich had to run from Ukraine, taking most of his money and leaving the country broken physically and mentally.

Victor Yushchenko's presidency

Before becoming the third president of independent Ukraine, Victor Andreevych Yushchenko worked as an economist and a banker. He was well known in Ukraine and internationally for his work as the head of Ukrainian National Bank and as Ukrainian prime minister during Kuchma's presidency. He was successful in both roles, and after Kuchma fired him in 2001, he went into opposition to then-president Kuchma and created a coalition with his former deputy Yuliya Tymoshenko and other pro-democratic forces. With time, the coalition grew and even included the Ukrainian Socialist Party (political left and one of the descendants for the communist party of Soviet Ukraine) with its leader Oleksandr Moroz. The only problem with this unprecedented unity of the Ukrainian political elite was its short existence. While all oppositional parties united in their bid to stop Kuchma's regime from continuity, they did not have the same vision for the future for Ukraine and had different political ambitions. This disarray caused the collapse of the 'Orange elite' within several months after the success of the Orange Revolution in 2004 (Wolczuk, 2006; Yushchenko, 2014).

Yushchenko and Tymoshenko were both in the opposition to the previous political elite, but they did not have a clear plan of action after the election. This made them look like they did not know what they needed to do to start reforming. The lack of an effective program became clear, especially when compared to the actions of the Polish political elite that had a clear plan for the transition since its beginning in the late 1980s. This un-readiness of the 'Orange' elite was noticeable on the international level and some Europeans saw it as a negative reflection of the new government (Interview C, EU). The other issue that was not perceived as too significant by many, but still played a role in the international perception of the new Ukrainian ruling elite, was the fact that most of them did not speak English. The linguistic difficulties in addition to conceptual reasons limited the number of people that the European elite could talk to in Kyiv. At the same time, there was a clear difference in post-Maidan Ukraine.

Despite problems within the ruling political elite of the time, international and internal observers noticed positive changes in the Ukrainian economic and political situation despite the continued presents of oligarchs. This change also included the infusion of a new generation of professionals into the political elite. The other aspect of the new political reality was the newly introduced free speech that created a vibrant atmosphere initially brought by people on Mайдan (Interview A, UA). The economic growth created by the orange elite at the beginning of Yushchenko's term affected positive changes in Ukrainian society and improved Ukrainian image abroad (mostly in the West). In a way, the growth of international tourism at this time helped the country's image and probably helped Ukraine along with Poland win a bit to host the European football championship.

Much hope was placed in the Orange elite to change the country for the better. It was, in fact, the first government without a clear connection to the old communist nomenklatura. But, the positive and euphoric situation did not last long. The first disagreements started early in 2005

(Yushchenko, 2014). Yushchenko recalls that members of the Orange coalition did not have many things in common except their anti-Kuchma position (Yushchenko, 2014). The disagreement within Yushchenko's team created a lot of problems and with time resulted in the demise of Yushchenko as a politician. Former allies, Yushchenko and Timoshenko became public opponents and with time Ukrainian public got tired from observing their fights. Both leaders were trying to create meaningful cooperation with the former political enemy, Yanukovich. In the beginning, Yushchenko appointed him prime minister in 2006 and then Timoshenko was negotiating an agreement of coalition between two political parties for the next twenty years (until the end of 2020s). The copy of the agreement was only published in 2014 after Yanukovich left Ukraine by the newspaper called "Ukrainian truth" (translation to English). The political problems in Ukraine deepened after the global financial crisis hit Ukraine and Russia decided to stop selling gas to Ukraine in the winter of 2009. These crises resulted in Yushchenko's loss of popularity and loss of the next presidential election. The internal crisis of Yushchenko's team during his presidency can be compared to a similar situation in Poland in the early 1990s. As we saw in the previous chapter, Lech Walesa had to deal with similar problems, when he lost support from Solidarity leaders of the time.

There are several more characteristic of Yushchenko's presidency needed to be mentioned here due to their contribution to a national building in Ukraine and its international image. First, Yushchenko was a strong promoter of Ukrainian national identity domestically and internationally. In comparison to his predecessors, he had a 'Ukrainian' image, by wearing traditional national clothes to official and unofficial events. In some way, this nationalistic tendency diminished his chances for re-election, especially un-popular was his act to make Stepan Bandera, a controversial nationalist figure from the Second World War, a national hero. While the part of Ukrainians saw it as a well-deserved recognition of somebody who fought for a national idea and Ukrainian statehood, many people saw Bandera as an assistant to Nazi Germany's attempt to enslave Ukrainians, Slavs, and others due to a long-run Soviet propaganda campaign against Bandera.

The other notable action of Yushchenko's team was the work and progress on the Euro-Atlantic integration. This government not only improved the relations with the Western world, but some of Yushchenko former comrades believe that Ukraine along with Georgia would have joined the NATO in 2008 if Merkel and Sarkozy would not block it. Others claim that Ukraine's Membership Action Plan (MAP) was not approved at the NATO summit in Riga in 2006 because of political unpreparedness (Giusti and Penkova, 2010, p. 139). It is hard to speculate if it would have happened, but the Yushchenko administration was the first Ukrainian political elite that was taken seriously by Western leaders (most people that I talk to in Brussels said so - some directly, some by implication). Yushchenko and the rest of the Orange elite were perceived by Ukrainians and Europeans as capable reformers due to the president's past success with economic reforms (at the beginning of Yushchenko's presidency). As well as significantly improved GDP that hit 179.992 billion US Dollars in 2008 (more than double of Ukrainian GDP in 1991) (the World Bank). Additionally, this administration was willing to suffer the consequences of worsening relations with Russia if it allowed them to build closer relations with the West.

The clear pro-European orientation of Yushchenko's government faced several internal barriers that prevented its realization. First, the political opposition was against it and could stop this foreign policy orientation from moving forward due to large resources available. Secondly, the Ukrainian population in the time (2005) was not convinced that Ukraine should develop closer relations with the European Union, but rather continued towards closer integration with

Russia and Belarus (Lane, 2007). While it is hard to question Yushchenko's European choice for Ukraine, it was noted that 'he himself lack[ed] the political machinery and management skills needed to delivery on this declarations' (Wolczuk, 2006, p. 8). This lack of capacity was noticed with time by many observers inside and outside Ukraine and left many European Union politicians disappointed in Ukrainian political elites. One notable achievement of this presidency was the constitutional reform that came into force in January 2006. Under these changes, the political power in the country was shifting from a semi-presidential system established by the Constitution of 1996 to a parliamentary system that restricted presidential powers. Although, the changes in political systems were not too significant in restricting executive powers and were like political changed in Poland under the Constitution of 1997 (Wolczuk, 2006).

During Yushchenko's five years in Presidential office, his former opponent, Victor Yanukovich, and the Party of the Regions that mostly represented the 'Donetsk family' gained more political power than they had before the autumn of 2004. In part, it happened due to the conflict within Orange elite and to good party strategy by employing Russian and American advisors some of whom later became controversial figures during Trump's campaign for US presidency (Manafort was fired from the campaign due to his questionable connections in Eastern Europe). The Communist Party during this time still holds places in the parliament, but its influence is diminishing. The old parties like two divisions of Rukh lost their political standing as well with the emergence of new parties, like Our Ukraine (under Yushchenko's leadership) and Fatherland (under Timoshenko's leadership). Several smaller political parties emerged during this time and that still active.

Overall, this presidency was both, good and bad for the country. The good side included the empowerment of Ukrainian people who started to believe that they do choose their government, even if sometimes it takes more than just participation in elections to bring the change. Also, according to some scholars, like Levitsky and Way (2010), Ukraine had a democratic regime for the first time since 1991. Second, the economic growth and political and economic freedoms introduced at the beginning of the Yushchenko presidency improved the lives of millions of Ukrainians. Third, the international perception of Ukrainians and their political elites started to change positively and it started to differentiate from the perception of old Ukrainian elites. The negative side of Yushchenko's presidency was public conflicts within the ruling elite, financial and gas crises that left many Ukrainians disappointed in new democratic rule. But, the most important negative side of this presidency was the lack of reforms and an unsuccessful fight with corruption promised during the Orange Revolution. This disappointed both, the internal and external observers. This disappointment resulted in Yushchenko's loss in the presidential elections of 2010 that brought victory to his opponents in the previous elections, Victor Yanukovich.

Petro Poroshenko's presidency

The current Ukrainian president is not a novice in Ukrainian politics, he has been an active member of national political and economic life for decades. At times, it seems hard to separate his political and business ambitions because he has been successful at both at the same time. Even now, after becoming the president of Ukraine, his wealth is on the rise despite the hard economic situation inside the country.³³ Many people question the president's business activities, and some demanded that he sell his share of the business that gave him the nickname the

³³ <http://biz.nv.ua/publications/ryvok-zhevago-i-nedosjagaemyj-ahmetov-v-novom-rejtinge-bogatejsih-ukraintsev-2094498.html>

‘chocolate king’. According to the president, it is hard to sell a company worth billions due to a lack of interest. But even despite this criticism, Poroshenko seems to make progress in several areas of external and domestic policies. While it is early to summarize this presidency, we can name several things that differentiate Petro Poroshenko from other Ukrainian presidents.

First of all, the current president holds the office in the most difficult time since the independence due to the start of the war and the loss of territory when Russia made good on the threat that Ukraine will go to Europe without Crimea and South-Eastern Ukraine (Interview A, UA). This war has been feared by many security experts in Ukraine since 1991 who believed that Russia will use military force to stop this country from changing foreign policy orientation from the East to the West. Although this change brought many negative consequences to Ukraine, it also brought this government international success. Despite visible problems with reformation inside the country, the current government was able to sign the Associate Agreement with the EU and secure visa-free travel for its citizens with many European and non-European countries. Part of his success can be attributed to the quality of the team that works for the president. It has been noticed by many observers internally and externally that the new ruling elite has different recruiting sources than previous ones. Members of post-Maidan cabinets came from local and international business elites, law professionals, academia, civil society, news media, and other professionals. The new ruling elite also has a better gender balance with many new professional females joining politics. The generational shift in the ruling elite also brings new attitudes compared to the high presence of ‘Homo Sovieticus’ in ‘Orange’ ruling elite (2005-2010) (Interview A, EP).

New recruiting techniques make this elite look more knowledgeable (Interview C, EU) thanks to the infusion of successful professionals many of whom have a legal background. Additionally, the current ruling elite is more westernized, meaning that some members received their education abroad or studies a short time abroad, and have a westernized worldview. One example of the development of a new worldview is the invitation by Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk western professionals, like Harvard educated Natalie Jaresko, to join the cabinet. There is one characteristic of the current political elite that makes international communication much easier – their knowledge of English and other foreign languages. It has been mentioned by some people in Brussels (Interview C, EU) that the ability to speak the same languages makes cooperation between two parties much easier and more productive. Additionally, current Ukrainian elites (since 2014) are closer in composition and attitudes to Polish ruling elites in 1994 that seen as a good sign by the West. At the same time, the Ukrainian political elites still ununited in their attitudes towards the EU.

Overall, this presidency has some successes so far, but it is slow in the implementation of much-needed reforms in all areas of public life. This delay in reforming Ukraine raises questions among Western allies and is slowing down Ukraine’s Euro integration ambitions. At the same time, some events in Ukraine, where the government is arresting opposition leaders like Saakashvili raise concerns about the long-term achievement of this presidency and its effect on Ukraine.

Political elites in Ukraine’s democratic transition

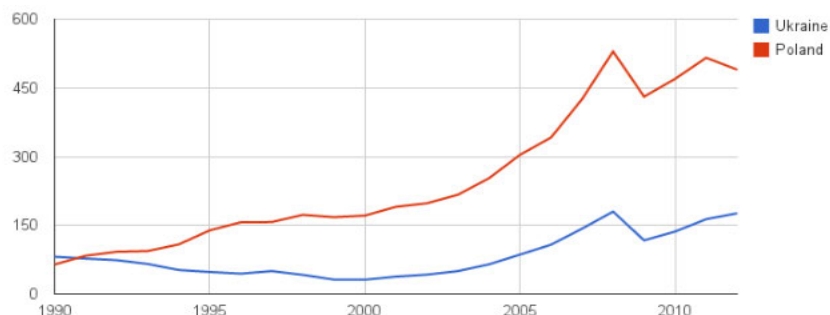
While talking about political and economic elites in post-communist Ukraine, general characteristics stand out and they in many ways differentiate it from Polish ruling elites during their country’s democratic transition. At the same time, there are many similarities found

between the two national elites. The section below will discuss how Ukrainian ruling elites were contributing to the post-communist transition of their country. One significant difference between Polish and Ukrainian elites at the beginning of transitions is the different power balance between the old elites (communist) and old opposition. As shown above, while Ukraine did have democratic opposition to the communist rule, it was not united in the same way as Solidarity was in Poland. The lack of unity inside the communist opposition can be exemplified by several factors: Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union and many of its anti-communist efforts were part of movements active in all republics. There is also the issue of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in Ukraine. Ukrainian population consists of about seventy percent ethnic Ukrainians, about seventeen percent Russians, and other minorities. The analysis of ethnic Ukrainians also shows cultural differences between East, West, and Central regions.

To understand the importance of political elites in Ukraine and how it differed from countries like Poland, we need to look at public participation in the political life of Ukraine since 1991. According to many scholars, Ukraine traditionally has had an inactive civil society. This public inactivity can be explained by the seventy years of communist rule that left limited space for mass participation in public life. Even with time, the Ukrainian public did not have significant influence over the development of policies that governed their lives. As one political analyst stated: 'the Ukrainian community, so-called people, have no more influence than they have, say, in the shaping of the foreign and domestic policies of the United States of Japan' (cited in Nastych, 2003, p.302). This visible apathy of people towards the development of policies in newly independent Ukraine allowed its ruling elites to develop internal and external policies that benefited them instead of the Ukrainian public. Although currently, Ukraine has a very active civil society and public interest in politics, it can be observed that it is very hard to undo a decade of public inactivity (in the 1990s and early 2000s).

The emergence of oligarchy in Ukraine in the mid-1990s brought a new group of influencers to the country's ruling elites. Many observers see this emergence of a step backward in reformation efforts of the Ukrainian government because the oligarchs used their political power to block the implementation of reforms that would stop them from self-enrichment by misuse and stealing of national wealth and unfair competition for government contracts (Matsievski, 2011; Kuzio, 2014; Gould and Hetman, 2008). As a result of this practice, Ukraine with time became one of the poorest countries in Europe. Comparison to Poland shows that those two countries had the reverse of economic fortunes because at the beginning of the 1990s, Ukraine was a bit richer and Poland was poorer, now it's the opposite that is showed in the table below. According to some scholars, at the beginning of the transition, Ukraine has brighter economic prospects (Hartwell, 2016).

Table 5. Ukraine VS Poland GDP 1990-2012



34

Source: Hartwell, 2016

In addition to the oligarchy, the Ukrainian economic elite played a significant role in the country's political life and relations with the European Union that was different from Poland in the 1990s. This also hurts Ukrainian relations with the EU (Interview C, EU; Interview A, EP) because economic practices in Ukraine lack clear and fair competition and high misuse of government funds created a picture of Ukrainian national elites as corrupt and not trustworthy (this view is popular inside Ukraine too). While Ukraine was still able to receive the financial aid for numerous reforms, these were given by Western donors with a clear understanding that part of these funds will never be accounted for. The oligarchs were not the only members of Ukrainian political elites who were not interested in successful reforms, most members of the Ukrainian ruling elites blocked democratization for many years to preserve their status (Interview B, EP).

The analysis of the Ukrainian post-communist elite would be incomplete without the application of several theories that can explain how the changes in ruling political elites affected the situation in this country. The application of elite theories articulated by Easter (1997) classifies Ukrainian political elites as an 'old reformed elite' that showed the need of old communist elites to adapt to new political reality and the need to share power with newcomers. At the same time, old communist elites had better chances to remain in power than new elites had. While this situation changed with time, especially under the current government, there still some remnants of the old system exist. The second important characteristic of Ukrainian political elites is the fact that they were not able to consolidate around democratic ideas (Baylis, 2012) with each government changing its stance on democracy. A similar situation can be observed in elites' views on Euro integration until now, but now Russia managed to unite Ukraine's elites to some extent. The inability of Ukrainian elites to consolidate around the same ideas can be traced back to the difference in mentality between ruling elites in Eastern and Western Ukraine that became part of the USSR in the 1920s and 1940s (Interview A, EP; Interview B, EP; Interview C, EP). The difference that still visible in Ukrainian regional elites governing styles.

A look back into the history of Ukrainian elites shows an unpromising picture. National elites in this country were periodically destroyed throughout history (Interview C, EP) and by the end of communist rule, the Ukrainian national elite was weak. Even among then ruling elites, Ukrainian communist counter culture almost didn't exist and was mostly present in western

³⁴ <https://www.reinifischer.com/ukraine-vs-poland-gdp-1990-2012>

Ukraine. One politician from Estonia, who was active in the late Soviet times provides her account of the Ukrainian Soviet elite as heavily Sovietized with a clear lack of national cultural development. According to her, this lack of national identity could be explained by cultural and physical ‘genocide’ in the twentieth century’s Ukraine. The same can be said of Ukrainians as a whole and it can explain why some people questioned Ukrainian nationhood. In the end, lack of strong cultural elites slowed down democratization efforts because democracy simply cannot work without cultural elites. Some Ukrainian political elites actions can be explained by historical legacies, especially it is true in the case of relations with Russia, as some scholars indicate, long-lasting subordination to other nations (due to being ruled by Russians, Poles, and other empires) left a negative mark on Ukrainian society by dividing their allegiances (Odushkin, 2000) and by making it hard to keep national identity strong throughout time.

The historic overview of the Ukrainian political elite can also explain the visible division between the Eastern and Western elite groups. Historically, the first intellectual groups with distinct Ukrainian identity started to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century in Kyiv and Kharkiv as well as in L’viv (Burant, 1995) and other western cities of contemporary Ukraine. Since Ukrainian territory was divided between two major empires of the time, Russia and the Austria-Hungary, continued development of these intellectual groups went different ways. As was mentioned above, the Russian empire did everything in its power to stop the spread of the Ukrainian national idea, while Austria-Hungary did nothing like it (Burant, 1995). As the result, the political elites from Western Ukraine traditionally have been more nationally conscious than their counterparts from Central and Eastern Ukraine.

It is noticeable that this chapter does not have the same level of political parties’ analysis as the previous chapter has. The main reason for this is the difference in political party creations in Poland and Ukraine, with the majority of Ukrainian ruling political parties forming around the leader instead of ideas that show a lack of the ideological base of many members of the Ukrainian national elite (Interview A, EP). It will not take long to find an example with the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko being one of the most active fractions in the current parliament. Although, it is a mistake to concentrate only on party names, the fact that many parties are organized around political personality and stop their existence after that personality leaves politics makes it harder to know what political ideology a party or a politician has. The parties created around a personality usually were located on the centrist political spectrum, like the People’s Democratic Party was created around former prime minister Pustovoitenko (Nastych, 2003).

This personalized approach to national politics can also example of the fact that Ukrainian presidents do not stop corruption and stop promoting their family & friends because they are afraid of society. They only think about themselves because people’s needs may force presidents to change (Interview A, EP; Interview A, UA; Vlashenko, 2015). Additionally, many presidents and political leaders have a limited number of loyal supporters that can in part be explained by their personalized political parties. When a politician raises through party structure, he or she will have the party’s support during the campaign and when in the office, not only because people like him or her personally, but also because there are the people that share the same ideology and strategy for a change. So far in Ukraine, the interest of many in running for an office can be explained by the need to occupy it to get access to government funds and contracts. It is hard to see how the political and socio-economic situation in Ukraine can change without changes in the building of strong and stable political parties. The problem with the development of political parties in Ukraine is also the fact that sometimes you can simply buy

one. Although not all websites³⁵ provide prices for the parties, the fact that you can simply buy a political party shows the commercial side of political life in Ukraine.

The same principle can be applied to the lack of continuity of national development strategy from one president to another. While it is unrealistic to expect any new government to have the same vision for national development, certain things can stay constant. Euro-Atlantic integration and democratization are probably the best examples to analyze this problem. As the previous chapter showed, Polish political elites were united in their view of the future, where Poland was a democratic country with a market economy and a member of the European Union and NATO. Ukrainian political elites have not shown this kind of shared vision for the future of their country. Some ruling elites were committed to democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration and others had a more 'realistic' view of the future where Ukraine continued staying a close ally of Russia and other former Soviet Republics. A similar tendency was observed in Ukrainian internal policies with all Ukrainian presidents who liked to revolutionize and change things after getting political power. Despite the times when radical action is needed, this lack of continuity is not good for a country (Kravchuk, 2015).

The search through Ukrainian academic literature on its country elites provides quite accurate and somehow negative characteristics of Ukrainian political elites that include (cited in Nastych, 2003, p.318):

- the absolute worth and value of power and hierarchy that overrides money and life
- the country, state, common citizens are tools to be used to attain power and authority
- the current goals of officials are more important than long-term planning
- attributes such as dignity, pride, independent thinking prevents people from being good performers and specialist
- the opposition are there who prevent the elite from being the effective rules
- stability is defined as a situation when nobody criticizes their authority
- strategic foreign partners are those extending credits and asking no questions about the efficiency of spending
- potential foreign enemies are the countries who either do not extend credits or demand them to be paid back
- reforms are recommendations of the IMF, which are not necessarily implemented but for which money can be obtained

While some of the characteristics listed above may seem satirical, they are based on the observation of actions of Ukrainian political elites during the first decade of Ukraine's independence.

Ukrainian ruling elites mostly used pro-European rhetoric for personal political gains and the real changes in the country's international goals were initiated and pushed by civil society and the Ukrainian people. One of the most visible gains of pro-European declarations was the opportunity to get financial help from Western donors. According to Ukrainian political

³⁵ <https://pravdop.com/en/kupit-politicheskuyu-partiyu/> (accessed 2016)

insider, all governments were and still are (including Poroshenko) employing this strategy. For example, political elites actively support reform initiatives, but when the proposals going to voting in Parliament they rarely pass, and, as the result, the old system stays in power. The relationship between government and the parliament often is an issue in any given country, especially when government and parliamentary majority represent different political powers, but it seems that in Ukraine, these two institutions shared the vision of slow reformation. Overall, Ukrainian political elites went through a long and sometimes painful (under Yanukovich) process of change. For years they slowed the process of political and economic development to keep their power, but Ukrainian people slowly force much-needed changes in political elites.

The analysis of Ukraine's relations with the European Union shows that close relations between the two were not possible until the political changes in Ukraine in 2004. Yushchenko's government was the first in Ukraine to use 'country's geographic location and its historical origins to claim Ukraine's Europeanness and to embark on the course of Euro-Atlantic integration' (Giusti and Penkova, 2010, p. 134) As it was noted by one Ukrainian commentators 'Neither the Ukrainian government nor the public at large has a clear understanding of what European integration is and [of] the complexities involved [in] the adaption process' (cited in While, Light, and Lowenhardt, 2001, p. 294). In part, this lack of knowledge can be explained by Ukrainian isolation under the Soviet rule, and only when the new generation of political elites was able to get the power in the country the understanding of the European way of living became more prevailing. The same is also true for the general population in Ukraine, with new better traveled and more westernized people getting their say in political life, the country started to move westwards. Despite many problems with Ukrainian democracy after 1991, many observers agree that elections have always played a very significant role in determining who is going to make political decisions in the country. Although there always have been concerns with the Ukrainian electoral system being unstable and unsettled due to the lack of elite consensus on the nature of democracy (Harashymiw, 2005). It has also been noted by other scholars, that the establishment of working political institutions in any country required elite consensus on the issues of the distribution of power between all branches of government (Pigenko, Wise, and Brown, 2002).

The application of Higley's and others' elite consensus theories to Ukrainian political elites shows that they always have been divided between two major foreign policy orientations that can be simplified as East and West or trying to combine them. While this division also has been an existing problem in Ukrainian society for quite some time, in many instances political elites worsened this division during election campaigns. One great example of this strategy of division is the presidential campaign of Victor Yanukovich in 2004 during which his team was able to mobilize the Russian-speaking majority in the East to support him. The results of this campaign showed overwhelming Yanukovich victory in the East and Crimea and significant loss in the Western regions of Ukraine. This strategy was also not successful in central Ukraine that voted for Yushchenko (Youngs and McFaul, 2009).

Ukrainian political elites are like other post-Soviet elites in their way of acting in self-interest and using the cost-benefit calculation for making a decision. While this is a common practice among all political elites, in Ukraine, as well as in other Eastern European countries, the calculation includes the interest of only a small group of society (Nastych, 2003). At the same time, Ukrainian political elites are also different from other former Soviet elites because they have insider groups that pursue a democratic agenda. This difference affects the international perception of Ukraine and its elites in a more positive way than many FSRs.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the role of Ukrainian political elites since independence. A group of Ukrainian communists had nationalistic views that placed them in the leadership positions during the Ukrainian struggle for statehood and an early transition period. When comparing Ukraine to Poland, it is noticeable that this country did not have strong anti-communist opposition and a strong Church that would force then ruling elite to be more efficient while reforming the political and economic system of this country. Generally, Ukrainian political and economic elites facilitated the transition similarly to Poland at the beginning, but with time, they started to block political and economic reforms to enrich themselves by using the country's wealth, mostly by privatizing and/or selling big enterprises and bidding on government contracts. This attitude of the ruling elite slowed down Ukrainian political and economic transition and placed it about twenty years behind Poland in terms of building a democratic society with a market economy (Interview C, EU; Interview A, EP).

As this chapter showed, different reasons led to current development in Ukraine. For starters, Ukraine did not have its state for several centuries before 1991, even more, important was the fact that during these centuries the national idea of Ukraine was persecuted with different frequencies under different political regimes. While the twentieth century has traceable existence of national oriented Ukrainian elites, there have been many accounts of the almost destruction of these groups to stop them from spreading nationalist ideas among the population, especially this tendency was strong after two world wars, when the communist regime needed to establish its control over the USSR. The other negative development caused by Ukraine's lack of statehood before 1991, was its provincial status in both, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. While Ukrainian political and economic elites did play a significant role in ruling the USSR, they still had to report to the center in Moscow and get approval for all major decisions concerning the development of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. At the same time, this lack of independence in developing local policies was also a trigger for the development of nationalist ideas among Ukrainian communists that resulted in the declaration of sovereignty in 1990 and independence in 1991.

This chapter also showed how and why the political situation changed in Ukraine and what role political and economic elites played in it, starting with the beginning of perestroika in the USSR and ending with the current presidency of Petro Poroshenko. It is easy to trace how the old elites used their ancient network connections to preserve their political and economic power and how the generational and regional changes influenced the change in the political power structure. Especially these changes shined during the Orange Revolutions and the Euromaidan events, when the younger generation showed its willingness to fight for a better future, although these events were not a hundred percent successful in implementing needed political, social, and economic changes, we can conclude that they were a good start for the future development of this European nation.

Chapter 8: The view from the West

European Union relations with Poland have always been different than its relations with Ukraine even though these two countries are neighbors with many similarities. There are several reasons for this dissimilarity. For starters, Poland has been an independent country since the First World War. More so, Poland has been part of Europe as an independent kingdom for centuries before the Russian occupation of its territories in 1795. Ukraine, on the other hand, was not part of the European community as an independent actor due to the lack of statehood and cultural and religious closeness with Russia. Another reason for Western Europeans' familiarity with Poland and its elite, is the fact mentioned in previous chapters – the Polish communist elite promoted connections with the West by sending its youth to study in Western European countries during the Cold War. These new members of the Polish elite brought new pro-Western ideas to the communist party's leadership. Additionally, it was clear that during the Cold War, communist leadership in Eastern European countries was not always in agreement with Moscow, and in some cases, the USSR had to march its armies to their allies' territory to keep them in check. The Ukrainian elite, on the other hand, has always been the part of Soviet political and economic elites and its members held some of the most powerful posts that give them an ability to develop Soviet internal and external policy.

The analysis of the EU's relations with its neighbours illustrates the importance of the perception of national elites by Western Europeans. The political elite's role as a leader of any given country has an important role to implement needed political and economic reforms and the inability to do so by these in power, may discourage international partners from building close relations with a country that have seemingly weak political elite. The main aim of this chapter is to get insights into how did the EU elites' view on national political elites in Poland and Ukraine affected the union's attitude towards those countries and its ability to promote democracy there. This chapter also investigates how national elites inside the EU, like German, French, British, and Italian influenced the union's foreign policy decisions towards Poland and Ukraine. While most of the people that I spoke to stated that all national elites in the European Union act united regarding Ukraine as they did towards Poland in the 1990s and early-2000s, there seem to be visible differences in support for both, Poland and Ukraine from national political elites in the EU. In addition to the national division between European elites' view on Poland and Ukraine, the type of institutions that elite members belong plays a significant role too. It has been noted that the European Parliament has more pro-enlargement views while compared to the views of the Commission.

This chapter will analyse how the difference within the European elites influenced the EU's relation with Poland and Ukraine and how it affected the EU's ability to influence positive changes in these countries. It will also analyse how the international perception of Polish and Ukrainian political elites contributed to this process. It will start with analyzing EU - Poland relations during 1989-2004. Then it will investigate EU-Ukraine relations since 1991, following by the analysis of differences between the two. The last section will analyze how the perception of Polish and Ukrainian elites affected the EU's ability to influence democratic change in these countries. More importantly, this chapter argues that the perceived ability and will of political elites in Poland and Ukraine affected the European Union's attitude towards respected countries.

European Union's decision-making in external policy

To fully understand why the European Union has had more successful relations with Poland pre-2004 than it has with Ukraine since 1991, we need to analyze the decision-making process of the EU. This process is important because it helps us understand which group within political elites in the EU is making decisions on external policy towards potential member states. Learning more about the EU's decision-making will help determine the process behind it. There also are several reasons that indicate the need for this analysis, and it is to determine the following:

- The role played by national political elites
- The role played by different European Union institutions
- The role played by lobbying and expert groups
- The role played by civil society
- The role played by external actors

While the decision-making seems like a simple process with a somehow clear division between the legislative and executive powers in the EU that is like political decision-making in any given country. The fact that the European Union is a supranational organization with representatives of all member states contributing to the decision-making process makes it more complicated.

While discussing the European Union's decision-making it is important to name all institutions involved in the process. As most students of the European Union know, this supranational organization has divided roles in the decision-making process between its institutions with the European Commission having the responsibility to propose the legislative and the European Parliament with the Council of Ministers to pass corresponding legislative. This is just a simplified structure of the decision-making process in the EU that also involves other groups mentioned above. These groups influence the decision-making from the earlier stages in the Commission and to the final passing of any decision in the parliament and the council. The research was done by Leuffen, Malang, and Worle, (2014) on the salience of national governments in the decision-making process of the Council of Ministers showed that the newest member states are more salient than older member states that show that the political power prevails among the old member states. This tendency can be explained by a better capacity of older members in achieving their goals and better experience in dealing with the European Union's institutions. Additionally, this research shows the importance of different national interest groups that could influence national governments and individual politicians seeking re-election (Leuffen, Malang, and Worle, 2014).

The analysis of the national governments or political elites' presence in the European Union's decision-making process is sometimes a tricky thing to do because any given member of any EU's institution is also a representative of his or her national political elite or government. The trick is to determine when a person acts as a national agent and when she or he acts as an agent of the EU. One way to distinguish the two is to look at how national parties influence the decision-making in two EU institutions: the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers that was recently done by Muhlbock (2017). He analyses the influence of national political parties on voting in both institutions together. The result of this study showed that MEPs from any given member state of the EU are very likely to vote the same way as their country's ministers did in the Council of Ministers without major differences between political parties. And when analyzing the voting results between ministers and MEPs from the same national parity – this unity is even higher. While Muhlbock analyses the influence of national parties in the EU's decision-making process in general, this analysis is also important for this study of the

political elites because it may indicate how we can predict the EU's decisions on external policy by analysis corresponding goals and statement of leading political parties.

Lobbyists in the European Union mostly try to influence the Commission, the main decision-making organ, but recently the European Parliament got their attention too, especially after the treaty of Lisbon (2009) (Dionigi, 2017). The interesting detail about the European Parliament decision-making is that in comparison to the European Commission, the EP does not have the same number of in-house experts that can provide a comprehensive overview of the situation that requires a decision. In addition to the need to rely on outside expertise, the parliament usually does not have the same amount of time as the Commission does. These two differences between the parliament and the Commission, make the European Parliament more susceptible to lobbying (Dionigi, 2017). Both, the European Parliament and the European Commission try to achieve complete transparency in their decision-making process with the current Commission, under Juncker's leadership, proposing making it mandatory for all EU institutions to participate in this process (Dionigi, 2017) in addition to the Commission. This clarity helps with the analysis of elites' perceptions effect on the decision-making in external policy.

The example of the European Parliament's reliance on outside sources of information and experts raises the question about where do the European Union's institutions are getting their information from? While the European Commission does employ many experts in different fields needed for the successful operation of this institution and the European Union in general, it still looks for consultations with outside sources. Even more, they are required to provide detailed reports indicating who they have been consulting with that in theory should make it easier to identify who is influencing Commission's decision. In reality, it is more complicated and requires detailed studies to determine which group of influencers is more significant. Gornitzka and Sverdrup (2011) indicate that among several influential groups noted by many scientists, the national governments and their experts are the most influential group. The other groups include the scientists, social and industrial actors. This small example adds more reasons for the analysis of the national political elites' view on European enlargement and on which country is ready to be invited to apply for the membership.

The overall review of the European Union's decision-making process can apply to the development of its external policy with some exceptions. As Best (2016) indicates, the EU used the concept of intergovernmental cooperation instead of supranational decision-making by the EU institutions, but currently, there is the need to revise this view to reflect the current status of the decision-making process in this area. This need rose since the creation of foreign and security policy is mostly done by the Council and does not have the same procedure as other EU laws. The main reason behind the creation and success of the European Union is economic and trade cooperation, and only after economic benefits started to be significant, member states were willing to give up some of their political power. It has been traditionally hard for the member states to give up their political power to determine their foreign policy and their political power as independent international political actors, that can be easily traceable in the slow development of EU's foreign and security policy with foreign policy being more agreeable subject between the last two. As the result, we currently can observe more unity among member states regarding the external policy of the EU than ever before. The next section will look into both, the EU as an international actor and the national political elites and governments of the EU as different actors with their external policy agenda.

Another important detail of the European Union decision-making process is the creation of a strong narrative to support it, especially it is true in developing common foreign and external policy (Tonra, 2011). The same applies to the decision-making process on the enlargement of the union. As the example of Netherlands' referendum on the ratification of the AA agreement between the EU and Ukraine shows the diversion of the official narrative for this agreement by stating that its ratification would make Ukraine a member, resulted in the negative vote. While the Netherlands did ratify this AA agreement with Ukraine (in the parliament), this example shows how the EU's decision-making can easily be influenced by the creation of alternative narrative and influencing public opinion.

Overall, we can conclude that both, the supranational and national governments participate in the decision-making process in the European Union. Regarding the external policy, most of the decisions are made by the European Commission and the European Parliament with the European Commission having the leading role as EU's representative. The next two sections will analyse how the EU elites' perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian national elites and how it affected the EU's relations with both countries.

Poland 1989-2004 – the view from Europe

European Union membership was the main Polish foreign policy goal of all post-1989 governments in the 1990s and early 2000s (Szczerbiak, 2016). While it was analogous to Ukrainian foreign policy goals, Poland had positive signals from the EU that this goal was achievable from the start of the post-communist transition in 1989. But, the major shift in the EU's attitude towards Poland and other CEE countries happened in 1993 during the Copenhagen European Council meeting, during which EU leaders stated that Eastern European countries may join the European community when they met certain conditions (Hill and Smith, 2000; Grabbe, and Hughes, 1998) that are known now as the Copenhagen criteria. This shift happened as a response to inquiries from CEE countries which indicated their goal to return to Europe.

Polish anti-communist elites had established networks with similar groups in other Central European countries (Steves, 2001) even before the start of the transition in 1989. These connections later were used to present a united front in their dealings with the EU and other Euro-Atlantic organizations including NATO. As previous chapters indicate, both Polish political elites, the old communist one, and the new democratic elites agreed that the country's future is in Europe. While there were political and social groups that did not see European Union membership as the right fit for Poland, generally Polish elites were perceived to be more unified in their ambitions towards Europe and 'going to Europe' (Higley and Pakulski, 2012, Interview C; EU) comparing to Ukraine (Interview C, EP). Western foreign policy orientation was seen as the only choice (Interview A, PL) because Poland as well as other CEE countries just ended their Eastern orientation that brought economic, social, and political devastation to the majority of their population (Marczuk, 2012).

Additionally, Polish political elites were relatively independent of economic elites with business groups playing a limited role in developing Poland's foreign policy goals, or at least it was perceived this way by Western Europeans (Interview C, EP). This perceived independence from economic elites in Poland can be explained by the lack of oligarchy in this country. The self-preservation was one of the reasons for Polish elites to form a consensus that Poland should join the EU. At the same time, Onis (2004) note that Poland did have a group of political elite

members that were opposing EU's accession and lobbied for a referendum to let people decide what Poland should do.

Poland was also part of the group of states that were offered membership in the EU. This group of states had strong EU influence on democratization (Interview A, EU) and the European Union's elite looked very united on the admittance of Poland as a new member (Onis, 2004). More importantly, members of political elites in these countries were going to do anything necessary to get into the EU (Interview A, EU). This commitment can explain the fact that EU influence was the strongest during the negotiations process and took a form of formal conditionalities (Interview A, PL). Poland also had help from Washington, where a strong Polish American lobby was able to convince the American government to support Poland's accession to NATO in 1999. The motivation behind the European goals of the CEE countries seems simple - everybody wanted to be in the EU because it was perceived as a rich club and because of the safety it can provide. Since all CEE countries just got out of the Soviet influence, and to some extent still feared that Russia may fight to restore former Soviet glory, it was very important to join Western European organizations and alliances, like NATO.

When summarising the views of Poland's political elites, we can briefly conclude that in the post-Cold War era and the increasingly democratic Europe, Polish foreign policy had the following general goals: 1) to encourage the development of a new international security system which would guarantee Poland's national security; 2) to gain diplomatic support for the reforms conducted in Poland, including the transformation of the economy and its adaptation to free-market mechanisms designed to bring about economic growth; and 3) to maintain and increase the international prestige of Poland and the Poles, who had been the first to commence the struggle to create a democratic civil society in the Soviet bloc (Zieba, 2011). The goal to join the EU was present from the beginning and wasn't questioned by many (Interview C, EP), despite a small group of political elites that feared the possibility of a hostile reaction by Russia if they join the NATO and the EU. In addition to elites, the majority of Poles saw the EU accession as the next step in the democratization process. Strong support for Euro integration visible since 1994 by analyzing data provided by Bielasiak (2002, p.1249).

As for the motives behind the Polish elite's wish to join the EU, it can be attributed to the fact that Europe meant freedom, normalcy, economic rationality before 1989 (Michnik, 2003). This view of Western Europe seems to grow stronger in the 1990s and becoming a part of this Europe became a major goal of Polish political elites. Poland achieved its main goals – joining NATO and EU and becoming a democracy with a full-fledged free-market economy by the mid-2000s. As it was said 'Being in the EU means respecting the same values – the values of democracy, human rights, women's rights, minority rights, etc.' (Chou, Faber, Sanderson, 2007 p.154). This feeling of Poland being part of free Europe was received with warmth from Western European leaders who have seen Poland as part of the European club.

Despite the visible unity among Polish ruling political elites towards the Euro-Atlantic goals, some political powers in Poland opposed this orientation of external relations. For example, in the 1990-2003 period, the ex-communist alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD) and Polish Peasant Party (PSL) was broadly opposed to the return to Europe project drawn up by Skubiszewski and driven by the Solidarity coalition. But it was mostly driven by the fear of destabilization in Central Europe (Steves, 2001). At the same time, the second democratically elected president in Poland, Aleksandr Kwasniewski, was the leader of SLD, who led the negotiation of Polish accession to the EU and continued political and economic reforms started by Solidarity governments before him. The continuity of pro-European and pro-democratic

development in Poland by all governments despite their political views shows that it was hard to imagine a different future for this country in the 1990s and early 2000s. And only with time, Polish radical right that are Eurosceptic became more influential (in the 2000s) when some of its leaders, namely those in the League of Polish Families began to enter mainstream politics (Kasprowicz, 2015). Additionally, some groups of the Polish population were against European integration, but they were not influential (Interview A, PL; Interview A, UA) with over seventy-seven percent of Poles voting for the European Union's membership in 2003 (Szczerbiak, 2003).

Since 1989, Poland received positive signs from Brussels about the possibility of the accession to the EU and the assurance that Poland was a member of the EU club (Interview A, PL; Onis, 2004). This perspective of the European future helped Polish political elites to create good working relations with the European Union's political elites (Interview B, EP). In some way, this relationship was built on the need for guidance for the reformation process that would help Poland adjust their policies for successful accession to the EU (Interview A, EP; Interview B, EP). While it seems that Poland had an upper hand in its relationship with the EU while comparing to Ukraine, some Eastern European politicians (MEPs from Eastern Europe whom I interviewed) would argue that Poland and Baltic countries faced harsh conditionality to join the EU, especially comparing to current support that EU provides to Ukraine (Interview C, EP).

Poland was constantly reporting reform success to the EU after the start of membership negotiations. The EU used the 'stick and carrot' policy towards Poland pre-accession (Interview A, UA; Veebel, 2009). In the 1990s EU had programs of financial support and expertise that helped Poland prepare for accession (Interview A, PL; Kolodko, 2009). Overall, Poland, Baltic countries, and other countries that joined the EU in 2004 went through 'harsh' treatment by the EU in comparison to newer EU members like Bulgaria and Romania (Interview C, EP). The strict use of EU conditionality shows the willingness of Polish elites to do everything they can to join the club. This enthusiasm did not go unnoticed and resulted in high praise for the Polish political elite.

The look back to the 1990s shows that Western European political elites had no problem finding a way to successfully communicate with Polish elites. Partially it can be explained by the fact, that some Polish leaders were western educated and partially because they had a similar socioeconomic composition as western elites. Particularly, political elites who represented Poland in the international arena were mostly intellectuals without economic power and recruited from the free profession or budget sphere (Interview A, EP; Raciborski, 2007). This recruitment process of the Polish elite is comparable to the same processes in Western European countries. Although there is and always has been overlapping between political and economic elites, it has always been much smaller than in countries like Ukraine. Another important aspect that helped both, Western and Polish political elites to find an easy way to communicate, was the long history of connections between European nations since the middle ages and the fact that Poland is a catholic country.

West also had many links to Poland during the Cold War (Interview B, EP). Polish communist elite was well known during the Cold war as one of the most pro-western and pre-independent elites among CEE states and the Solidarity became an example for other CEE countries (Interview C, EP) to follow during the post-communist transition (Szczerbiak, 2016). This historical connection to the EU resulted in the situation that allowed Poland to have less tension around the issue of the EU (Interview A, EU) that Ukraine has. In part, this easiness can be explained by mutual understanding produced by the similarities in the personal backgrounds of elite members.

In addition to the Polish ruling political elite connection with European Union's elites, during political transformation in Poland, different political group links to different political parties in Western Europe (Interview B, EP) that can be seen by representation in the European Parliament, where members are seated by their party affiliation instead of the country they represent. Overall, Poland in the 1990s was moving away from its past (Interview A, EU) and was building liberal democracy by using Western European countries as examples. A good example of this shift is represented by various ranking tables that show the current condition of democracy, economy, and other important aspects of a country's life. The relations between political parties in Poland and the EU was also a necessity because the European Parliament does not have a division of national representatives, but only uses political parties and groups to indicate different political powers. In a way, this division by political ideology helps unite the representation of all nationalities in the EU and connect like-minded officials.

On a more personal level, EU leadership was supporting Polish inclusion with the political backing of a certain politician by EU leaders and politicians. That shows a growing connection between Polish and EU politics and it also shows the importance of personalities and personal connections (Interview A, PL). This tendency can also be traced in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution and Maidan, but it did happen under different social and political conditions. All attributes mentioned above made it easier for the Polish elite to communicate with the West than it was and still is for the Ukrainian elite. We can summarise that the Polish elite has always been part of the European elite, Poland – part of European culture (Interview C, EP).

While Polish economic elites were not as involved in the pre-accession politics, the fact that the Polish economy was linked to Western Europe (Interview B, EP) did make it easier for Poland to reform its economy. As it was already briefly mentioned in this thesis, Poland never had a completely planned economy with the continued presence of small privately own companies (mostly farms). This historical legacy in addition to a set of neoliberal reforms in the early 1990s (Kolodko, 2009) helped Poland create a working market economy in a short time. The broader look helped Poland develop working relations with market economies in the West (in the European Union) and the South (CEE countries with economies similar to Polish) and transitioning economies to the East (Ukrainian would be the best example). These economic developments showed that joining Western economic organizations was the only logical option due to major similarities between them and the high economic cost of being left out of this economic cooperation. Despite all mentioned above, the economic elites in Poland had no significant need to lobby for the pro-European choice because it was already made by the ruling elites.

Overall, the interest of the Polish economic elite in European integration can be limited to the interest of joining the EU because of market access. In the end, this interest helped improve economic performance that helped Poland in its EU accession (Interview A, PL). The economic interest of Polish accession was matched by the European side, where economic and business elites were looking forward to new markets. At the same time, there was one economic issue perceived negatively by rich Western European countries and it was the fear of economic migration from CEE countries to rich West and North. This fear resulted in labor movement restriction in the first years of Poland's membership in the European Union. The presence of the same fear of 'Polish plumber' can be observed in the Brexit movement in the UK and can be indicated as one of the reasons for lower support for EU enlargement by the people in comparison to the elites.

It seems that the EU was interested in having new members and when considering that EU enlargement is widely perceived as an 'elite project' it is safe to conclude that EU political elites were satisfied with the progress of Polish elites in reforming their country to Western standards. While most members of the EU elite would say that they act as one towards their international partners, there is a traceable difference in how different national political elites react to each partner or country that the EU is dealing with. For example, German leadership, concerned to center Germany in the heart of Europe, has responded to the Polish regime's aspirations by becoming the leading sponsor of EU membership for the Visegrad states and assuming a key role in vouching for the admissibility of these states to integrated Europe (Steves, 2001). Germany's support of Poland's EU aspirations was of high importance for Poland (Interview A, PL). Germany has been seen as a logical link between CEE countries and the West because it consisted of two parts, East and West that used to belong on different sides of the Iron Curtain. German support for Polish EU aspiration was also important because, since the mid-1990s, Germany started emerging as a new EU leader (Bulmer and Paterson, 1996) and could use all influence and benefits of its new position in its lobbying efforts. Poland also had linkages to other EU member states. For example, several linkages existed between France and Poland before the 1990s, at the same time, France was against Polish accession to the EU (Interview A, PL). The United Kingdom was also a good supporter of Polish reforms with Margaret Thatcher offering practical guidance on how to reform with some funding during her visit to Warsaw in 1988 (Ledger, 2016).

While this study is concentrated on the actions of political elites in Poland and Ukraine, there is a need to mention other types of elites and greater society participation during the post-communist transformation and EU accession. The inclusion of civil society into political decision-making was influenced by the EU, although, Poland already had a history of active civil society. For example, during the 1980s, Polish civil society proved to be strong via the Solidarity movement, but it was still important for Poland to continue to actively involve this sector into political life. It has been suggested that Polish economic success in the 1990s can be attributed to a strong civil society based on Solidarity's and Polish Catholic Church's leadership (Inglot, 1998; Anderson, 2003; Bernhard, 1996). The active role of civil society can also be explained by the fact that Poland had a relatively equal society in the 1990s and still has now, especially while comparing to the existence of the Ukrainian super-rich class.

While analyzing European Union relations with any Eastern European country, it would be a mistake to overlook the Russian position on the issue. A more detailed analysis of Russian influence on EU's relations with Poland and Ukraine will be provided in the next chapter, but some details need to be mentioned here to complete the picture of regional politics at the time of Polish preparation for EU membership. Also, the Soviet Union's last leadership's approval for political and economic transition in Central and Eastern Europe played a significant role in the successful ending of this process. And in a way, these successes in CEE affected the start of a similar process in the USSR, that ceased to exist in 1991 with Russia officially taking over the USSR's international position. With time Russia was able to regain some of the USSR's former prestige and power that it shows now. But, at the time of Polish preparation for the accession to Euro-Atlantic organizations, Russia was too weak to stop Poland and other CEE countries on their return to Europe (Interview A, EP).

Overall, Poland in general, and the Polish political elite in particular, have been perceived and presented as an exemplary case for a democratic transition. Starting with the ability of political elites to negotiate pact transition and jump-start political and economic reforms in the first years of transition and ending with a high appraisal by international

organizations and rankings like the Freedom House, the Democracy Index, and others. This success in the Polish post-communist transition is the major reason for the European Union's interest in having Poland as its member.

European Union's view on post-communist Ukraine

While comparing European Union relations with Ukraine and Poland, one of the first things that comes up is the fact that the EU did not see Ukraine as a potential member for at least a decade since Ukrainian independence. Due to several different reasons, the European Union has been trying to find alternative ways for the integration of the former Soviet Republics including Russia (Dannreuther, 2006). This alternative way of integration is done through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Many reasons that can explain the need for an alternative way of integration have been already discussed in this thesis, but there are several that still needs to be analyzed in detail. One of these reasons is the perceived lack of ability to implement needed political and economic reforms by Ukrainian political elites. Also, at times, it is unclear if Ukraine wants to join the European Union that has been shown by numerous social studies (Pavliuk, 2002; Kubicek, 2017) and elite actions. Other reasons for the lack of EU interest in Ukraine are the weak economy, strong Russian stand against it, and the identity of Ukraine as a Eurasian nation. Also, the Ukrainian oligarchic system possess a threat to Ukrainian Euro-Atlantic aspirations. In general, the EU relations with Ukraine for most of the part of the last twenty-five can be summarized in a short statement used by R. Youngs (2009) as a title for his paper 'a door neither closed nor opened'.

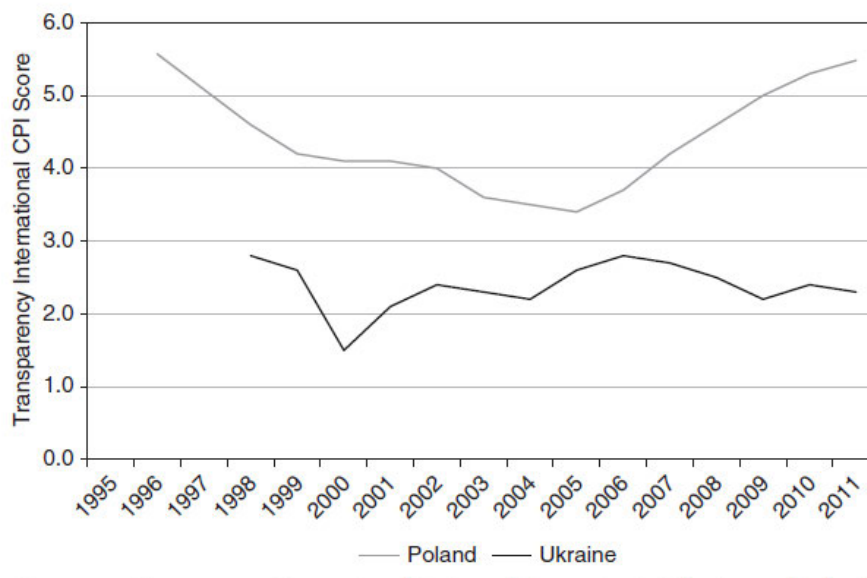
When analyzing the people with whom European Union's representatives regularly work, the rich businessmen are often placed alongside the most powerful politicians and according to many, they play a consequential role in developing Ukrainian foreign policy. Ukrainian oligarchs are well known among European political elites, but the stand of individual oligarchs on the Ukrainian foreign policy orientation is known to a lesser degree. When talking about other businesses, mostly smaller that are run by less famous businessmen, they seem to be in favor of a close relationship with the EU because it gives them access to the European single market and because other Ukraine's business partners like Russia, are not reliable in the long term (Interview C, EU). Additionally, Ukrainian business now is more modernized then it used to be in the 1990s when it seemed more logical to continue keeping strong economic relations with the former Soviet Republics because it did not require swift economic reforms and industrial modernization and could improve the economic situation in Ukraine. This action was advocated by Leonid Kuchma, the second president of Ukraine. While this economic policy may have helped Ukraine to improve the economic situation in the short term, in the long run, it slowed down economic reforms that harmed the Ukrainian economy and international perception of the Ukrainian leadership. Concerning democratization, it is generally perceived that the oligarchs in Ukraine slowed down the democratization process because they had the power to do so and because they needed to protect their interests (Smith, 2017).

More to the point, the Polish political elite was perceived as an intellectual that did not hold economic power while the Ukrainian elite always had the opposite image. While dealing with Ukrainian elites, the West looks with suspicion at rich political elite because often it is unclear where their wealth comes from, especially it is suspicious when looking at the oligarchy and the problem of systemic corruption in Ukraine at the same time (Kubicek, 2017; Pavliuk, 2002; Gould and Hetman, 2008; Dimitrova and Dragneva 2013). These suspicions raise a question during negotiations with the Ukrainian political elite that is represented by oligarchs, and this question is - do they represent the country or their interests? (Interview A, EP).

Dimitrova and Dragneva (2013) indicate that while Ukrainian oligarchs do not have institutionalized political power, they can stop reform efforts by using their influence. Especially this is true for two Ukrainian oligarchs, Firtash and Achmetov, two of the richest men in Ukraine. There is also one more problem in this situation, and it is the lack of clarity of how Western financial aid is used, especially when the projects that have been funded do not seem to be progressing.

One of the most important reasons for the EU’s reservation while dealing with Ukraine is the fact that many people perceive the Ukrainian elite to be very corrupt (Interview C, EU) with an average score of about 2.5 for the perception of corruption by Transparency International for the years 2006-2015 (with 10 being the perfect score for a country completely free of corruption). The systemic corruption in Ukraine gave this country a bad image, especially it’s easy to see while comparing it to Poland. More so, Brussels’ insiders think that if the Polish elite was perceived as being corrupt, Poland would get the same treatment from the European Union as Bulgaria and Romania did (Interview C, EU) that would also result in delayed accession. At the same time, the look on a table comparing Transparency International scores for Poland and Ukraine created by Hartwell (2016) shows that Poland, while having a much better situation than Ukraine, is still far from being corruption-free.

Table 6 – CPI scores in Poland and Ukraine



Source: transparency.org

Needless to say, the perception of the Ukrainian elite as corrupt plays a notable role in the general perception of Ukraine (Interview A, EP) in the international arena. According to major rankings, Ukraine is the most corrupt country out of Europe and placed amongst the world’s most corrupt countries overall (transparency.org). Systemic corruption in Ukraine comes as no surprise due to the international rankings of CIS at the end of the 1990s as the most corrupt

regions in the world by the World Bank (Holmes, 2017). The situation with corruption makes it hard to see how Ukraine can become a member of the EU without significantly improving the image of political elites. Even if European Union's elite overlooks this characteristic of the Ukrainian elite, it would still be very difficult for Ukraine to achieve close relation with the EU because it makes difficult to convince people to support Agreement(s) with Ukraine because of corruption. A good example of these difficulties provided by the Dutch referendum on the ratification of the Associate Agreement with Ukraine in 2015. This lack of popular support can be explained by the fact that corruption is more problem for regular people because the government have to do businesses with other government and has a need to convince its people to support their initiative to help Ukraine (Interview B, EP). The EU tries to influence changes in Ukraine that would help fight corruption (in a broad sense) by using a carrot and stick approach. For example, one of the conditions for visa liberalization was the implementation of electronic declarations of funds when crossing the EU border by Ukrainian officials as well as others. The Ukrainian Parliament had to pass laws to make it a requirement (Interview A, EU) before the EU would allow Ukrainians to visit without a pre-approved visa. It is generally believed that this measure would help fight corruption among the Ukrainian political elite that visits European countries.

While the EU has always been keeping an open dialogue with Ukraine, starting with official recognition of Ukraine as an independent country in 1991, it is clear that change in the Ukrainian ruling elite was making difference in improving or worsening the relationship. The first noticeable shift to the better in the EU – Ukraine relationship happened after the success of the Orange Revolution that brought hope for the development of Ukraine as liberal democracy with a market economy and lesser corruption. But after a short time of watching the Orange revolution's leaders having problems with delivery on their promises raised the question if any people in Ukraine would be able to successfully implement reforms. A similar situation could be observed after the Euromaidan, with current Ukrainian leadership having problems delivering results as well (Interview C, EU), as reported by numerous civil society's watchdogs like Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.³⁶ The lack of a membership perspective for Ukraine also limits the EU's ability to influence democratization in Ukraine. A good example for understanding how it works is to compare EU's presence in Poland (1990s and early 2000s) and Ukraine, this example makes it clear that when Poland was joining the EU, the EU was more direct into telling Poland how to reform (Interview A, EP).

As mentioned above, the Orange revolution brought the EU and Ukrainian elites closer, but it was still difficult to communicate with each other due to linguistic and conceptual reasons. The other issue arose with time. In the beginning, Yushchenko and Timoshenko were in clear opposition to the previous elite, but they didn't have a clear plan and looked like they didn't know what they were doing. This lack of easy identifiable foreign and domestic policy goals made the new Ukrainian ruling elite look as incapable as the previous one. The current Ukrainian elite shows significant change despite the presents of oligarchs. This change can mainly be explained by the inclusion of a new generation of professionals with whom Europeans find it easier to communicate with (Interview C, EP). These new elites are often compared to the Polish elite in 1994 (Interview C, EU; Interview A, EP). But with time, as it happened after the Orange Revolution, the EU observes the work with post-Maidan elite started to get disappointed and a lot of optimism present after the elections in 2014 went down (Interview C, EU). The Orange Revolution was met with hope from the EU that had formally declared its support for

³⁶ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/10/ukraine-reform-monitor-october-2017-pub-73330>

Ukrainian democratization but had no real opportunity to influence the change due to Kuchma's tightening hold on power in the country (Youngs, 2009). And some academics go further by indicating that the Orange Revolution was a catalytic event in EU-Ukraine relations (Roth, 2007).

One of the examples that shows the importance of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine as a turning point for EU-Ukraine relations is provided by Youngs (2008) that traces the changes in EU member states attitudes towards Ukraine with the after-2004 discussion shifting to the prospects of EU membership for Ukraine. While there always have been reservations against closer cooperation with Ukraine by a group of member states, there are also have always been a group pushing for it. The reservationist group traditionally includes France, Germany, Spain, and Italy and the opposite group includes Poland, the UK, Nordic and Baltic states (Youngs, 2008). The only common idea among all EU member states is their support for democratic transition in Ukraine. 2004 was also a year that straitened Poland's argument for the EU to change its 'Russia first' policy to Ukraine first' (Youngs, 2008) that eventually happened. The interesting detail about the European Union relations with Ukraine post-2004 is that the lack of the invitation to join the union can be simply explained by bad timing. As it was acknowledged by an EU diplomat 'If the Orange revolution had occurred five or six years earlier, Ukraine would be a member by now' (cited in Youngs, 2008, p. 25). This simple quote shows the need to analyze the internal dynamics of the European Union to have a complete picture of its relationship with Ukraine over the years.

It is also important for Ukraine to have solid mass support for the Association Agreement (Interview C, EU) with the EU that was shown by Euromaidan in 2013-2014. While currently, Euro-Atlantic integration is supported by the majority of Ukrainians, a decade or two ago it was not the case with many people feeling nostalgic about the communist past and the prosperity they then had (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2015). This nostalgic sentiment was one of the reasons for mass support for close relations with Russian and CIS countries. The other reason was the shared history with former Soviet Republics and lack of personal connections or socialization with Western Europe.

Similar to EU's pre-accession relations with Poland, Brussels indicates the importance of civil society is a strategic partner in addition to the Ukrainian political elite (Interview A, UA). Although the EU values the input of Ukrainian civil society on their relations with Ukraine, some of them seem unhappy with civil society leaders not wanting to move into politics to make a real difference (Interview A, EP). It is hard to underestimate the importance of civil society in Ukrainian democratization, with two major pushes for democratization occurring throughout mass revolutions: The Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013/14, with both of these being organized by mass movements like PORA (student organization) in 2004. The civil society connections across borders help create relations between the EU and its neighborhood outside of official international relations (Scott, 2011). But the real problem that caused Ukrainian slow results in democratization was a very weak civil society before the 2000s (Smith, 2017).

The current view on Ukraine by national political elites in the EU can be compared to the same towards Poland in the EU's relations with it before 2004. According to many people in Brussels, there is no clear difference between Ukraine lovers and critics among national elites and can be briefly summarized like this: Maidan was a good, even impressive event, but the war with Russia complicates things and makes parts of EU's elite worried (Interview C, EU) about EU provoking the war in its neighborhood. During Polish negotiations for NATO and EU

membership similar worries came up, but Russia was not too aggressive than in defending its historical zone of influence. As for now, some European elites (Polish and British among others) think that if Ukraine wants to be part of Europe, Russia should get out of its way. Other national elites, like Italians, are more sympathetic to Russian needs (Foy, Sanderson, and Politi, 2017; Dunaev, 2018; Rosato, 2016). Other national elites, like German, are somewhere in between with the national elite divided among themselves on the issue of Ukrainian's European aspirations and Russian claim to keep its influence there. For example, one German politician said that they did not understand Russia and its feelings about EU and NATO expansion (Interview C, EU) and it is hard to come up with a correct plan of action. On average, EU national elites know little about Ukraine that is much less than they knew about Poland in the early 1990s (Interview A, EP).

Although the old Russia-first policy is not that important now, the look at economics will show that the European economic elite is more interested in developing good relations with big countries like Russia (Interview C, EU). When comparing the interest of the European economic elite in relations with Ukraine to EU's relation with Poland pre-2004, it is easy to notice that EU's Economic elite was much more interested in a relationship with Poland because of membership perspective – Ukraine is less attractive because it further away and not a member or potential member of European single market. Ukrainian market is also less organized and corrupt that makes it less attractive (Interview A, EP).

Overall, it is hard to compare the attractiveness of Ukraine to the attractiveness of Poland before 2004 because the EU membership perspective played a very significant role (Interview B, EP). Until Ukraine will have the same future economic prospects in the EU and will develop its economy to the European level, it would be hard to see big interest from the EU's economic elite in Ukraine. In addition to analyzing how the national elite within the European Union see future relations between the EU and Ukraine, there is a need to acknowledge the difference on this issue between different EU institutions. It has been noted, that the European Parliament (EP) is more supportive of Ukraine's European ambitions than other EU's institutions (Hansen, 2006; Youngs, 2006, Pridham, 2014). Mostly the EP was reacting to pro-democratic and pro-European development in Ukraine, such as the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan.

We can argue that the EU does not bring democratization in its neighborhood that would mean that there is no difference between Poland and Ukraine, but rather people, who demand and bring democracy. The EU can influence democratization by showing others that democracy works. We can observe this in Poland in the 1990s that was much more exposed to western democracy and how it works. Even during Soviet times, it was more open to the west (Interview A, EP). In addition to the exemplary role of the EU, the EU can help democratization in countries like Ukraine by providing financial, technical, and expert support for reforms. EU has a financial commitment to Ukraine, but it not that big and it is hard to see a significant increase soon because it is usually allocated for potential members. Additionally, the problem of corrupt and incompetent political elites would prevent the EU from developing deeper relations with Ukraine and having more influence on the democratization process in this country.

So, what made the difference?

While comparing European Union relations with Poland and Ukraine and especially analyzing the relationship between EU's political elites with Polish and Ukrainian national elites, there is

an urgency to identify which differences between Polish and Ukrainian elites (as seen from the EU perspective) made Poland look more appealing as a potential member of the EU and as a country that would be more susceptible to EU influence. For starters, Poland was much more EU and Brussels oriented versus Ukraine that has been divided between East and West in its foreign policy for years. More so, some European politicians have a view that Ukraine always could go opposite democracy and Europe, while Poland is going to be part of Europe and will stay democratic (Interview B, EP). In part, it can be explained that during the accession negotiation with Poland, the EU was discussing 'Portugal to Vladivostok safe Europe' (Interview B, EP), which meant Russia's inclusion, but currently, it is hard to imagine Russia being a potential member of the EU.

While at times it seems that Poland had only one choice – to join the West, Ukraine had the opportunity for integration in the democratic western institutions or non-democratic eastern institutions. This competition between different integrational goals, became visible after the Orange Revolution in 2004 when Russia realized that one of its most valued partners could choose a development path that would deepen post-1991 separation (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2015). The events of 2013-2014 showed just how far Russia would go to keep Ukraine under its political and economic influence.

While analyzing European Union's view on Ukraine, we can note that the EU and its political and economic elites would benefit from Ukraine achieving the candidate status because it would mean that this country has a stable democratic political regime with stable economic development (Lane, 2007). It would also mean that the European Union would have a stable economic and trade partner that allows the opportunities for investments, outsourcing, and other benefits of having a partnership with a big low-wage economy and with a highly educated workforce (Lane, 2007). The political dividends of this development are very attractive too. For starters, the Russian zone of influence gets moved further east, then the consolidation of liberal democracy would reassure political stability in the region because democratic countries never go to war against each other. One more benefit of this development would be the possible spread of democratic rule further east and south of Ukraine.

In addition to different integrational opportunities for Poland and Ukraine, the Polish elite was always perceived as part of the European elite and culture with strong anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment present during the Cold War years (Petrovic, 2017). At the same time, Ukraine was seen as a shadow of Russia (Interview C, EP) that resulted in the 'Russia first' approach (Solonenko, 2011). The constructivism seems to provide the best way to explain this development of 'us versus them' approach of the European Union's external policy towards Poland and Ukraine, with Poland always been part of 'us' (Europe) and Ukraine being part of 'them' (Eurasia). While Ukraine has seemingly been part of the 'them' group, some academics, like Hansen (2006) indicate that this situation may change much faster than most experts predict. When analyzing the mass perception of Ukraine, also of studying elites' perception, it is easy to see an increasing number of people identifying Ukraine as Europe (58% in 2005 survey) (Hansen, 2006). More so, mass uprisings in support of European choice for the Ukrainian future significantly erased this difference with more people currently seeing Ukraine as a European nation with a place among European families.

While it is hard to underestimate the importance of the EU membership perspective on democratization success, the data suggests that Poland experienced a regression in democratization during the accession negotiations (Mingiu-Pippidi, 2005). Additionally, there seems to be overestimation for the membership perspective's having actual power on

democratization and a real chance of Ukrainian accession to the EU. Turkey's relations with the EU can be used as an example here. They show that other important forces can slow and speed up the accession process. Also, there are different links between the European Union's political parties with pre-2004 Poland and Ukraine (Interview B, EP). While representatives of major EU's political parties have a connection with parties with similar ideologies in Ukraine, these relations are not that close and can be examined by the fact discussed in the previous chapter. This fact is the organization of Ukrainian parties around political personality and not political ideology. This development makes it harder to find likeminded people across the border that have the potential to become long-term partners.

A more detailed view of Polish and Ukrainian political elites from the European perspective also helps understand the difference in EU relations with both states. As it was mentioned above, the Ukrainian political elite consists mostly of oligarchs who enriched themselves in not completely legal ways and by using their political positions and connections. It is sociologically very different from their Polish counterparts in the 1990s. The most influential representatives of this group include Yatsenyuk,³⁷ Timoshenko, Pinchuk, Poroshenko, and others. Personal wealth made it harder for this group to talk to the West because they often block reforms to protect their economic interests. Additionally, West feels that these people may represent their interests instead of Ukrainian national interest and they did not represent the people who elected them. Most of the current Ukrainian oligarchs emerged from corrupt Soviet managers who gained political power and are closely associated with rent-seeking and have close relations with Russia.

Although there is a need to acknowledge an important distinction between the Ukrainian and post-Soviet elite in the CIS (Interview C, EP), there are still a lot of similarities between these elites. The previous mentioning of the CIS being identified as the most corrupt region in the world would example the negativity that this connection brings to the international perception of Ukrainian political elites. This association makes Europeans skeptical about the Ukrainian government because they don't think that they will be able to reform that creates a problem for European politicians to pass agreements with Ukraine (Interview B, EP). On the other hand, the Polish elites' structure has been closer to Europe with the majority of its members coming from intellectual circles, such as academia, civil society, and other non-business circles.

Ukraine and Poland also had very different democracy rankings. Ukraine, among other members of EaP countries that signed AA deals with EU, has steadily being ranked as partially free in the last 25 years (Gill, 2017) in contrast to currently free countries like Poland and Baltic states that are members of the EU and non-free countries from the former Soviet Union that are members or close partners of the Eurasian Union and Russia. The successful part of the Ukrainian democratization effort was the change of political power between different leaders based on election results. The first Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk was the first post-Soviet leader voted out of office (Smith, 2017). At the same time, some scholars, such as Levitsky and Way (2010) classified Ukraine as democracy during Yushchenko's presidency (2005-2010).

Even though Polish political elites were interested in democratic reforms, it is hard to underestimate the level of help they received at financial, technical, and expert levels. As one Ukrainian official said, with this kind of help, the transition normally done in a hundred years

³⁷ While he is not often identified as an oligarch, some European politicians think that he is one

can be done in ten years (cited in Smith, 2017). Another important characteristic of political elites in Poland and Ukraine as overseen from outside has been their relations with the rule of law and its use in preventing selective judicial decisions based on the personal preferences of the ruling party. While Poland did not have many examples of the selective judiciary, Ukraine had two ruling elites, under the leadership of Kuchma and Yanukovich that were abusing their power by using the judicial system to diminish their political opposition. While the principle of the 'rule of law' applied differently to Ukraine and Poland due to EU accession of the later (Burlyuk, 2014), it is still easy to see significant problems in Ukraine.

While analyzing European integration during the last century we need to study identity. The development of a shared European identity was one of the most important steps in making this union successful. As Tonra (2011) indicates, 'the discursive construction of identity is necessarily a political project that creates difference' (p. 1193). When the idea of shared European identity is applied to Poland and Ukraine, it becomes clear from this research that not all Europeans can identify with Ukrainians as being part of the same groups. As well as not all Ukrainians can identify themselves as Europeans due to the strong connection to shared East Slavs identity with Russia and Belarus. Part of Poland's success in this area was the creation of strong narratives of its political elite regarding their country return to Europe. At the same time, the look on Turkish efforts to Europeanize their country and join the EU was not successful so far that indicates the need for a complex analysis of this issue.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview and analysis of the European Union's relations with Poland and Ukraine and how the international perception of both national political elites shaped these relations. In the beginning, the review of the international perception of Poland's political elites showed the picture of elites with different political backgrounds and ideology that we're able to create a united front in their democratic aspirations. It is easy to conclude that despite all internal problems within Polish political elites, they were able to agree on the importance of conducting fast and effective market reforms to transform their economy, as well as implementing important political and social reforms. Additionally, all Poland's political elites since 1989 agreed regarding the European Union's accession. One example of this unity is the pre-EU referendum campaign during which, both the ruling and the oppositional political parties were promoting 'yes' vote. The European Union's political elites were also showing support for the Polish accession to the union.

Concerning Ukraine, the European Union's political elites showed a different attitude throughout the years since 1991. This attitude is explained by a handful of reasons with the most important ones being the political situation in Ukraine and the way Ukrainian political and economic elites have been consolidating power in the country for themselves. But, in the beginning, Western Europeans mostly saw Ukraine through Russia, and only after 2004, the year of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and eastern enlargement in the EU, the situation started to change. Overall, the European Union's attitude towards Ukraine is directly related to the internal situation in Ukraine, and the events of mass demonstrations demanding democratic change in a country after the presidential elections in 2004 showed the world that Ukraine is willing to make necessary changes to become truly democratic. The response of the European Union and Western world, in general, was very positive, but short-lived due to the internal problems in

Ukrainian democratic forces that led to the electoral victory of the Party of Regions that was closely associated with authoritarian Kuchma's regime.

The second re-ignition in EU-Ukraine relations happened after the Euromaidan and the Revolution Dignity when once again millions of Ukrainians went to the streets to demand democratic change in the country. While these events were much bloodier than the Orange Revolution, they also seem to initiate more changes in Ukraine and improve the international perception of this Eastern European country. Current Ukrainian political elites also visibly improved their image and have been compared to Poland's elites of the mid-1990s, the ones that started negotiating the Polish EU's membership perspective. At the same time, despite many positive developments in EU-Ukraine relations, there are still significant shortcomings that holding Ukraine back and do not allow all needed reforms to be implemented. It can be concluded that the long history of political and economic struggle and the lack of a political elite that can implement much-needed reforms, all contributed to the complicated relations between the EU and Ukraine, the situation that will not probably see much improvement in the near future.

Chapter 9: EU – Russia competition in Eastern Europe

This chapter reviews the Russian and Eurasian Union's alternative to the EU and investigates which group (Western or Eastern) was and is more successful in influencing the changes in Eastern Europe (mostly concerning former Soviet Republics). It also investigates the separation between Eastern Europe and Eurasia that divided former Warsaw Pact countries from FSRs. This separation may be perceived as an unofficial division of the spheres of influence between two dominant regional powers – the European Union and Russia. While this view is not widespread, it seems that Russia would like to keep its zone of interest, or near abroad clear of the Western influence. Russia's actions in Ukraine can be viewed as evidence of this realism-based outlook. Similarly, scholars of international relations would argue that when the EU and NATO showed the intention of crossing this invisible line, Russia decided to retaliate (Mearsheimer, 2014). This perception of Russian aggressiveness has been affecting the EU's politics in the neighborhood.

Generally, post-communist states can be divided into two camps: west and east with the European Union having more influence over Central Europe and Russia having more influence over former Soviet Republics. The geographic division makes sense while looking into ties between member nations. Traditionally, post-communist countries located in the West were viewed as part of Europe, and post-communist countries located in the East were viewed as part of the territory under Russian influence. At the same time, this is a simplistic view and the truth is somewhere in between. Russia tries to keep FSRs under its influence and is successful in many cases by using economic and/or political power. One example of the acceptance of this division would be the regional division by the United States' State Department, where countries located west from Ukraine are classified as 'Eastern Europe' and countries located east of the EU border, classified 'Eurasia'. Even after the end of the Cold War, Russia was trying to preserve its zone of influence by blocking western organizations from expanding eastwards. Not all of Russia's efforts were successful, but this country does have it say in the international politics of the region and beyond.

This thesis showed already that the success of external influence in any country is determined by its attractiveness to domestic gatekeepers (Tolstrup, 2014; Morlino 2011; Vachudova, 2005). Also, it illustrated that Ukrainian political elites, as well as many Ukrainians traditionally have more in common with Russians (and other FSRs) than with the West. A shared history with Russia that goes back several hundred years, created a bond that started to diminish faster due to Russian actions in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Poland, on the other hand, does not have a similarly shared history with Russia, but it had a stronger connection with Western Europe. In addition to history, Ukraine has a strong cultural bond with Russia than with Western Europe. This bond is rooted in the Eastern Slavs culture and the Orthodox Church. Poland, on the other hand, is predominately Catholic, like many countries in Europe. Last, but not least, Ukrainian political elites came from the same post-Soviet political networks and have a similar ethnic, political, and economic background as Russians. This connection makes it easier to understand and cooperate with Eastern neighbor. Polish political elites, while being from the former communist country, had more connection with the West that helped them create stronger relations with the European Union's elites than other post-communist states located east of Ukraine.

The resistance towards Western influence in this region often undermines the EU's efforts to influence positive political and economic changes. Most of the countries east of the current EU border 'have a choice' to join or work closely with European organizations, like the EU and NATO, or Eurasian organizations, like the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Union. While the integration into European and Western organizations seems very attractive, Russia, the leader of the Eurasian Union, usually makes a counteroffer that countries often cannot refuse because if they do, they may have to face the same military actions as Georgia and Ukraine. The Eurasian Union was created to balance out the EaP and provide countries that are traditionally viewed as Russia's zone of influence an alternative for economic integration, but it seems to fall short in creating a similar economic attractiveness. Russia currently seems to be more efficient than the EU is using its economic and political power to keep governments of many Former Soviet Republics under close control. The main question that this chapter answers is: does the European Union use all its political and economic connections to national elites in its neighborhood to help resolve arising issues and bring positive changes compared to Russia? By comparing the usage of the economic and political power of the EU and Russia during the last twenty-five years this chapter indicates the main reasons behind the limited role of the European Union in Eastern Europe. Additionally, this chapter will analyze how the perception of Russia and its ability to protect its interests affected the European Union's effectiveness as a democracy promoting actor in the region.

Ukraine and Russia – divorce of the century

This section analyses Ukraine – Russia relations since 1991. Before 1991, Ukraine was one of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union with a highly developed industry-leading to high economic interdependence between Ukraine and other Soviet Republics, especially Russia. It was also one of the border republics of the USSR. Even though the border was with the socialist bloc countries, Ukraine was in close range of Western European influence while comparing to other FSRs. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine as well as other countries in the region started to look for new ways to develop and new partners to work with while turning its attention to Western Europe and Transatlantic international organizations. The political transformation was heavily influenced by changes in neighboring republics and states and by the local nationalist movements, like Rukh.

One of the negative consequences of the Ukrainian past in the Soviet Union is the fact that this country started post-communist transition without strong nationhood. This can be explained partially by the fact that during the Soviet rule, the communist party moved a lot of people from their original places of living to different locations. In Ukraine, for example, many Russians moved into Ukraine's eastern and southern territories that created a double national identity in this region – Russian and Ukrainian. After Ukrainian independence, a big percentage of the ethnically Russian population always lobbied for a closer relationship between Russia and Ukraine with massive support in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, where most of them reside. Even now, after more than two decades since Ukraine's independence, separatist ideas are present in southern regions, mostly on the Crimean Peninsula that has one of the biggest percentages of ethnically Russian population in Ukraine that led to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Shulman, 1999). On the other hand, Ukraine has a Western region with a strong pro-European identity that is very unfavorable towards Russia. The Ukrainian population on the East sometimes called Slavophiles or Sovietophiles due to their pro-Russian views and strong support for the communist party. The Ukrainian population on the West sometime called

Westernizes due to their Western location and pro-Western European political views. Even though there is a division in Ukrainian society, most of the population located in the middle, or Central Ukraine is identifying itself as Ukrainians and is the major decision-maker in national elections.

Ukrainian lack of national unity also created a strong centrist approach among major political actors who holds power on the national level. The centrist approach transformed Ukraine slower by pursuing the path of gradual socio-economic reforms and changes. This approach sent mixed signals to the international community and with time placed Ukraine outside and between those two major regional camps. First, the European Union did not see Ukraine as a potential member material and in 2005-2006 Russia started to show that it does not see Ukraine as a good neighbor anymore by largely increasing the prices for the energy sources that it sells to Ukraine. This clearly shows that the Ukrainian relationship with both, the European Union and Russia could be better. The weak pro-European activity of the Ukrainian government in the past made Ukraine pay the price of exclusion from many European economic and political activities and the cold attitude towards Russia created many problems in the economic relationship between those two countries, especially in the energy sector.

Russia always was able to use its political and economic power in its near abroad, especially by highlighting many similarities between itself and other post-Soviet states. After being an unchallenged leader of the region for centuries Russia reenergized its ambitions after Putin's first term as a president. While Russia officially recognizes the sovereignty of its neighbors, it uses the regional integrational project to keep former Soviet Republics together with allocating Ukraine 'special' place in Russian integration plans (Wilde and Pellon, 2006). At the same time, Ukraine has not been too interested in Russian-led integration even though it has been interdependent with Russia for a long time (Wilson and Popescu, 2009; Kuzio, 2015). To understand the tendency of Ukraine-Russia relations it is helpful to look at some regional development first.

Although Ukraine went through many changes recently, and have many new people in the government, it is still close in its political and economic development to twelve former Soviet Republics then it is to Poland. Another significant similarity between Ukrainian and Russian elites is the high importance of the economic elite in political life and vice versa. While it was not the case during the post-communist transition in Poland.³⁸ Ukrainian and Russian economic elites in addition to political elites are influencing not only domestic policies but the foreign policy too. Several interviewees from Brussels stated that one of the main characteristics of the Ukrainian ruling elite (political and economic) is the fact that many political issues can be solved with assistance from well-known Ukrainian oligarchs instead of politicians. Economic reasoning influenced foreign policy in Ukraine for some time due to the development of "a foreign policy embodied with 'constructive pragmatism'" (Puglisi, 2003, p. 829). This foreign policy development started after the presidential election of 1994 when Leonid Kuchma was elected as a new Ukrainian president. Kuchma was elected due to his promise of developing a close relationship with Russia that would help the Ukrainian economy keep going during hard transitioning times. At the same time, Kuchma has not completely changed Ukrainian foreign policy. He was trying to keep a balance between the East and the West with a clear understanding that Russia can become more aggressive towards Ukraine if something changes.

³⁸ Numerous interviewees in Brussels

One important question for Russian and Ukrainian relationship during his presidency was the negotiation of strategic partnership and border agreements between two neighbors with a partnership agreement signed in 1997 and a border agreement signed only in 2003 and ratified by Ukraine in 2004.³⁹ While until 2014 Ukraine and Russia did not have big disputes about the border, some problems did occur over a small island close to the Russian border in Ukrainian waters between Azov and Black Seas. It took the only personal presence of then-president Kuchma on the island in question (Tuzla) to stop Russia from creating a dam that would connect it to mainland Russia.⁴⁰ This example shows that while Ukraine and Russia had relatively good relations in the past (comparing to the current situation), both elites were aware of the possibility of Russian aggressive actions against Ukraine. It is also quite easy to find examples of Russian use of hard economic power against Ukraine to keep the Ukrainian elite compliant to the Kremlin's wishes. Among these, the energy trade stands out.

Strong economic reasoning for close relations with Russia was not only relevant in the early 1990s when Ukraine was still trying to create its economic system. This economic connection was still alive more than a decade later when during the financial crises of the late 2000s, Ukrainian economic elites saw their cooperation with Russia as a way to assure short-term survival. At the same time, neither political nor economic elites of Ukraine during Yanukovich presidency (one of most pro-Russian governments) wanted to dismiss the possibility of close economic cooperation with the EU, they just saw it as a long-term perspective that can wait for its realization (Gnedina, and Sleptsova, 2012). The main attractiveness between all FSRs is their shared presence of oligarchy.

The dominance of oligarchic systems in Ukraine and the former Soviet Republics can be explained by tracing its roots to the communist times when all elites (political, economic, and bureaucratic) were interconnected and relayed on each other as shown in chapter five. Looking back on the twenty-five years of CIS member states' history we can conclude that even the richest oligarchs need a powerful 'friend' in a government to survive a change of political leadership in any country. This type of relationship goes both ways with political leaders benefiting economically from having friends in major economic enterprises. Often these 'friends' had or still have financial stakes in both, Russia and Ukraine that influenced Ukrainian foreign policy for some time. At the same time, if a country, like Georgia or Ukraine, has a group of businessmen that are more or less independent from the ruling political elite, this country can experience political change influenced or supported by the independent (or semi-independent) economic elite. Both, Ukraine and Georgia in very recent history saw changes in governments initiated by people and supported by business elites that were not affiliated with the ruling political party that led to significant changes in those countries' political and economic structures. The emergence of the new more independent elite in Ukraine led to a worsening in the already problematic relationship with Russia, which also led to the current military confrontation between these two neighbors.

As we can see the relationship between Ukraine and the European Union has not been as successful as it could be so far and there are many reasons for it. One of them is the European Union competition with Russia over influence in shared neighborhood and willingness of the later to do whatever possible to keep its influence alive. European Union was successful in

³⁹ http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_157

⁴⁰ <http://www.jnsm.com.ua/cgi-bin/m/tm.pl?Month=09&Day=29&a=N>
http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news/story/2003/10/031022_tuzla_crisis.shtml

influencing democratic transition in Central Eastern Europe mostly by using its leverages over potential members, like Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and other current members of the EU. But is the EU's leverage a necessary condition for regime change and for locking in liberal democracy and market liberalizing reforms in Ukraine? If we compare it to the countries that successfully reformed their political and economic systems due to the EU's accession process.

The current situation in Ukraine indicates that there is strong internal readiness to work toward democratization and Europeanization, and one of the earliest indicators of that was the success of the Orange Revolution. The movement behind the Orange Revolution had a strong "pro-Western agenda," and it was able to unify many people against the illiberal regime creating its key to their success. Although, the short-lived success of the Orange Revolution was succeeded by the return to power of old gray democratic leaders that resulted in the EU offering Ukraine instead of a close relationship in the context of its European Neighborhood Policy. Now, after one more revolution, the EU-Ukraine relationship seems to be much better, but it is still early to talk about much success of the EU's democracy promoting efforts in this country despite strong action from Russia to prevent it.

Poland's complicated relations with Russia

While comparing to Ukraine, Poland had closer relations with Western European countries than with Russia. This tendency has strong roots in the history and geography of this region. While Poland, as well as Ukraine, used to be a part of the Russian Empire before getting its independence, it was during a much shorter time than Ukraine. The timing of Poland getting its independence from Russia after the first world war is also an important milestone that still influences the relations between these two countries until now. Especially, this is significant for a study of democratization and Europeanization in Poland and Ukraine because as this thesis will show, it affected Poland's turn to Western-oriented foreign policy.

Poland – Russia relations are in many ways like Ukraine – Russia relations. Both states have been under Russian rule for many years, both have struggled for their independence with different levels of success. Poland was able to achieve this goal after WWI, during the same time when many other countries in Central and Eastern Europe did. The creation of a modern state at a time help Poland to keep its statehood after the end of World War II. It was an important achievement since the USSR had occupied part of Poland at the beginning of the WWII but respected Poland's statehood afterward. It is hard to underestimate the importance of the statehood that according to numerous scholars, it was one of the reasons why former Warsaw Pact countries were treated differently comparing to former Soviet Republics, like Ukraine (Johansson, 2011; Kuzio, 2000; Gherghina, 2009).

Keeping formal independence after WWII helped Poland keep communication with Western European countries and as result, it helped this country to transform much faster than many other states in the same region with a similar history. While Warsaw had to listen to the USSR during the communist rule, its formal independence created political institutions needed for the successful operation of a state. Western engagement with Poland showed its elite the alternative way to lead prosperous lives without constantly taking orders from Moscow (Curry, 2015). As was showed previously, the old communist elite in Warsaw started to negotiate with Solidarity only after the official approval from Moscow (Hardman, 2012). Poland had also a different regime type that the USSR did that allowed some private enterprise, more free movement of people, and lesser government control.

The start of the political and economic transition in Poland corresponded with the start of transition or perestroika in the Soviet Union. According to some sources Poland was able to proceed only with the approval of last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (Curry, 2015). As Aleksander Kwasniewski recalls it – Gorbachev, the soviet reformer, was interested to see how the experiment with political and economic transformation will work (cited in Curry, 2015, p. 261) and Poland was a good place to observe the change. Additional evidence of Gorbachev's support of Polish political transition can be found in his speech during the Tenth Polish United Workers Party Congress, in which he stated that protesters against then ruling Polish party in 1980-1981 had legitimate reasons to voice their concerns and that PZPR leadership should listen to them and react appropriately or somebody else will do it instead of them (Hardman, 2012). Polish recent history, with the creation of Solidarity in the early 1980s, was a good example of what can happen if the government ignores the public for too long. In the 1980s Poland's communist party had support from the Soviet Union, which would have probably intervened if the situation went out of control. But by the end of the same decade, the Soviets started to transform itself significantly liberalizing its political life. The changes in the USSR initiated by its leadership, and the eventual collapse of this global power, allowed all states in Warsaw Pact to determine their political path to follow.

The political and economic transition in Poland started 1989, only a couple of years ahead of the same process in the former Soviet Republics that replaced the USSR. Most importantly, Russia, the country that officially claimed USSR's legacy, was under transition too. In the 1990s, when Poland expressed its wish to join major Western international organizations, such as the European Union and the NATO, Russia was not strong enough to prevent it from happening (Interview A, EP) even if it was not particularly happy about the expansion of Western international institution eastwards. Russian leaders were only able to express their disagreement with Polish new membership verbally without any military or serious economic actions to follow. It is also worth mentioning that while Russia has not taken any serious step to prevent Poland and other CEE states joining the NATO and the EU, it considered it as disrespect and break of an international agreement by Western countries. This perception with time affected Russia's foreign policy turn towards using hard power to protect its interest in its neighborhood.

While Russians leaders like to blame the West for losing political control over CEE, there also has been some negligence from Moscow towards Warsaw (Feklyunina, 2012) and other Central and Eastern European countries that allowed all willing states an opportunity to determine their foreign policy and development strategy. This negligence can be observed in the lack of strong interest in developing a new type of relations-following the fall of communism. Since the early 1990s, the relations between Poland and Russia changed significantly after Warsaw become a main Moscow's opponent inside the European Union and blocked the beginning of negotiations between Russia and the EU in 1994 (Morozov, 2009). Another action that worsens the relations between these two former allies was Poland's willingness to host the U.S. missile system that was perceived as a military threat to Russia (Ozbay and Aras, 2008). During the 2000s, Russian foreign policy turned its attention to Poland and other CEE countries again, starting with the official visit of the Russian President to Poland. With time, when Poland become more active in the European Union's politics, Poland and Russia 'have moved to the stage of shallow, mostly elite-driven, reconciliation' (Feklyunina, 2012, p.445). Widely observed reconciliation of the 2000s hit a problem after Poland along with other European states supported the Ukrainian new government in 2014.

While Poland's and Russia's political elites were attempting to create a friendly and productive relationship, the social perception of each other has not been positive for a long time in both countries. Polish side saw Russia as an imperial power that had claims on Polish land as its territory or at least its sphere of influence. Respectfully, this view was not shared in Poland, the country that had its imperial ambitions in the past, before it was concurred by Russia. Since the fall of the USSR, Poland has been trying to protect itself from Russian treat by joining NATO and the EU. After the start of Russian aggression in Ukraine, Poland has been among the most vocal supporters for the sanctions against Russia that some explain as the influence of former relations. One more reason for the worsening of Poland – Russia relations that illustrate each country's foreign policy ambitions has been the difference in these countries foreign policy towards countries in the shared neighborhood, especially Ukraine (Ozbay and Aras, 2008) that can be seeing as a competition between different political ideas. In addition to social perception, there is a need to include the cultural difference between Poland and Russia that will help with the analysis of their foreign policy, especially in the context of Eastern European geopolitics.

An insightful analysis can be made while comparing Poland's liberal perception of the world with Russian realist one and how it affected their foreign policy and relationship between them (Dudek, 2016). Poland's political and economic system has been transformed to follow the western liberal example that eventually led this country to become an official member of Western liberal international organizations like the EU and NATO. Russia, on the other hand, has been following the realist worldview most time for the last quarter of the century following the Soviet Union's example. Russia's realism based foreign policy is easily observable in its action in Georgia and Ukraine, against whom they used harsh economic sanctions and military campaigns that led to taking over some territories. Poland's dependence on Russian energy sources is also an important part of the relations between the two countries. While many European countries, like Poland, are dependent on Russian energy sources, Russia is dependent on European buyers for these resources (Debski, 2009). This dependency prevented Russia from imposing harsh economic sanctions against Poland and the rest of Europe in energy trade.

Additionally, we can use He's (2013) theory of national myth-making to explain why political elites from these two countries were not able to keep alive their formerly close relationship. According to this theory ruling, elites construct national myths, often with an instrumental goal of legitimating their policies. There is, however, a limit to what can be constructed as a myth, as the elites are constrained by the historical and cultural context (Feklyunina, 2012). The creation of the myth of 'national superiority and the need to protect' youngest brother nations is one of the keystones of Russian national myth created in the past and efficiently used by the current Russian leadership to gain popular support.

The relation between Poland and Russia has been quite dissimilar to Polish relations with Western European nations since the start of the post-communist transition in Eastern Europe. This distinctness can be explained by various aspects, with most noteworthy being the debate over shared history, political and economic views, close location of Poland to Western Europe, and the inability of Russia to impose its will on its former partner.

EU vs. Russia as regional powers in Eastern Europe

So far, this chapter reviewed Russian relations with two states in Eastern Europe – Poland and Ukraine. Now its time to use these examples to analyze how Russia affecting European Union influence in this region. As was mentioned above, Russia was weak politically and economically for most of the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. But the situation changed in the 2000s, when current Russian leader, Vladimir Putin named transforming Russia into one of the main global powers in a multipolar world as Russia's national interest in the latest National Security Strategy and the Russian Federation's foreign policy strategy of 2013 (Dudek, 2016, p. 90).

Geopolitical power of both, the European Union and Russia with Eurasian Union comes in different forms, but most importantly in economic and political areas. While Russia always had imperial ambition, there was a brief period, after the fall of the Soviet Union when Europe and the world were unipolar with Western countries in power. Haukkala (2015) indicates three stages of Russian move away from unipolar Europe with The European Union in the center. According to him, the first state occurred in the 1990s, when Russia made no effort to converge toward the EU standards, then, during the 2000s under Vladimir Putin, Russia started to disassociate itself from the EU principles. The third state is the most recent one when Russia started to play a more active role in the region using all means available to do so and bringing the possibility of a new cold war to the region and the world.

The European Union has a strong economic presence in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, mostly by buying energy resources from Russia and having bigger trade with countries located close to its borders that are the members of Eastern Partnership, such as Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, etc. EU reliance on market power (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013; Damro, 2012) has proven to be effective in some states. For example, Ukraine's two biggest international trade partners in 2011 were the EU and Russia. Russia accounted for 28.9 percent of Ukraine's export whereas the EU accounted for 27.6 percent in 2011 (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013). Now with strong sanctions from Russia on Ukrainian products, the European Union has become the most important trade partner for Ukraine. Overall, Russia uses selective economic policies towards countries that are perceived to be unfriendly (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013). It can be easily noticed by the Russian treatment of Ukraine since the Orange Revolution in 2004 by using the gas prices and import restrictions to punish the country. Russia's perception of itself as a 'major power' is reflected in the readiness to bear economic costs (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2015). This conclusion is based on numerous comments by Russian officials since the start of economic sanctions imposed by the European Union, the United States, and other Western countries. The economic hits from the sanctions weren't strong enough to make Russia yield its position on Ukraine.

One of the Russian appeals in the region is their development of 'a 'third way' in politics and economics that includes authoritarian government and a corporatist economy' (White, 2007, p. 150). This new approach to development looks appealing for many political elites in the region because it allows them to legitimize their control over the political and economic development in their countries without making any efforts to move towards a more democratic society (in a western understanding of liberal democracy). While the development of this 'new' way seems attractive for many national political elites in the former Soviet Union, many Ukrainian politicians do not see it positively. As a former high-ranking member of Yushchenko's government said – Russia does not provide a satisfactory alternative to European Union democracy promotion (Interview A, UA).

The EU's leverage is animated by the fact that the substantial benefits of EU membership – and the costs of exclusion – create incentives for states to satisfy the entry requirements. Following this logic alone, we may conclude that the benefits of EU membership for post-communist states must be immense: at no time in history have sovereign states voluntarily agreed to meet such vast domestic requirements and then subjected themselves to such intrusive verification procedures to enter an international organization. For states that fail to enter an enlarging EU along with their neighbors, a steady flow of aid, expertise, trade, and foreign direct investment is diverted away from states that are relatively rich states as well as poor ones.

The same logic applies to neighboring states that have or negotiate associate agreements with the EU since most of the EU's aid goes together with democracy promotion and/or economic reforms programs. For example, most of the European Union aid to Ukraine is tied up to successful reformation in the specific area discussed in the agreement. If the aid receiving country wants to continue receiving the money it will have to comply with terms and show the results. The financial aid maybe sometimes even more persuasive for democratization and economic reforms than the possibility of future economic gains from treaties, because the aid money coming right away, and the country can use them to make positive changes faster.

Socialization is another important instrument of the European Union in terms of democracy promotion (Solonenko, 2009). Generally, it implies 'multiple personal and institutional contacts, which inevitably serve as a mechanism of 'Europeanization'. Unlike conditionality, which implies rational choice and is predominantly targeted at political elites, socialization produces long-term results in the penetration of EU norms and values into society. However, such 'social learning' implies that domestic actors perceive EU rules and norms as legitimate and appropriate. The most successful use of socialization can be observed in Central East European countries that were originally classified by the EU as 'Eastern Europe' and had a strong political campaign under the 'Return to Europe' slogan. Lack of the free movement of people from Ukraine to Europe in the past was limiting the European Union's influence in this region, especially among poor people who could not afford to buy a visa. At the same time, we can argue that each state has the right to protect its borders from unwanted newcomers especially in the light of the recent development of refugees and the illegal immigration problem. When we compare European limitations of people's movement with more liberal policies among more Eurasian states with Russia and checking the number of remittances these states receive from their people working in Russia, we will see the difference.

Despite all problems that the EU has in projecting its powers in Eastern Europe, the union still has a great deal of influence. Especially when we think about the concentration of economic, political, scientific, and cultural powers of Europe. It has been noted many times that the European Union is a normative power (Longo, 2010) in the region that provides normative standards to its neighbours to follow. Recently aspiration to do the same became noticeable in Russia, although it has not been accepted on the same level as the EU because nobody sees the Eurasian Customs Union or ECU as 'a credible source of modernization through rule-based economic integration' (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013). While the EU has strong normative power, Russia is only capable to keep its influence through military, economic, cultural, and political powers. The list below summarizes the major difference in the political powers of the EU and Russia to illustrate how these two differentiate.

Analysis of the political power of the European Union is hard to do without looking into its normative power. As normative power, the EU provides the standard of norms that Eurasian

countries can use to achieve similar success in political and economic spheres as European states did. Also, the ability of a country to transform their institutions to copy these in the West, usually bring more prosperity to the people.

- The diplomatic power of the European Union is very strong too despite the fact the EU does not have its military and must rely on NATO and national military forces to protect itself. The diplomatic power of the EU can be observed in the way it can bring conflicting parties to the negotiations table.
- Cultural and national identification in addition to its military power is cleverly used by Russian propaganda to unite the former Soviet Republic together and specifically, keeping orthodox Christians under the umbrella of Moscow patriarchate. The Moscow patriarchate of the Orthodox Church has been the most influential in the region since the rise of the Russian Empire centuries ago and was creatively used by Russian rulers to keep its territory in check. Although, the recent success of Ukraine in separating its Church from Russia started to undermine the status of the Moscow patriarchate.
- The cultural and national identification created a base for the development of the Russian ideology of Eurasianism that plays some role in the process of this country's struggle for regional domination. Influential thinkers like Gumilev, Trubetskoi, and Dugin made convincing statements about the role of Russia as a great cultural center for the Eurasian Region and especially, as a center for East Slavs.
- Russia also was able to use Soviet legacies of victory in WWII to secure its role as a leading fighter against the ultra-right and the protectors of Russian speakers everywhere.
- Russia has strong political and economic power in Eurasia, partially due to its past a Russian Empire and a leader of the Soviet Union and partially to its current official politics.
- Russia has the strongest military in the regions with one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world. Russia is also very good at using its military power to influence favorable results.

It is also hard to underestimate Russian economic power. Even now, with so many sanctions imposed against imports to the EU, one of the most valuable commodities, natural gas, was excluded due to the high reliance of some member states on it. Russian economic power is much stronger in Eurasia. Even though only some states in this region rely on energy supply from Russia, this country has a strong economic connection within the region due to the economic interdependence of the former Soviet Union. It is quite important for local trade because most states can use old factories/equipment and sell their products to known contacts. At the same time, export to the European Union and other developed countries will require modernization of the means of production. It is hard for the European Union to have the same political and economic power in Eurasia as it had in Eastern Europe before the last enlargements. At the same time, the EU still has a strong influence on the region's western part. Russian attempt to create bipolar Europe has been successful to some degree and isolated this country from the West.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the European Union's efforts to influence political and economic changes in the former Soviet Union are counteracted by Russian efforts to limit the Western presence in this region. The contrast between Poland's and Ukraine's relations with Russia and most importantly Russian interest in these two countries shows how hard the European Union

needs to fight to keep its status in the shared neighborhood with Russia. Also, this chapter illustrated the importance of historical changes over the last twenty-five years, with the first decade of the post-communist transition, the 1990s giving many states more freedom to pursue their own foreign policy goals. The relative weakness of Russia during the 1990s was successfully used by several states in the former Warsaw Pact for political and economic transformation and eventual joining of Western international organizations. It can be argued that Ukraine lost its chance to do the same without Russian interventions by delaying its transformation with the rise of strong pro-Western and pro-democratic social movements in the 2000s. Now, Ukraine is working closely with the European Union and its other Western partners to counteract Russian empirical ambitions that seem to just strengthen the European Union's influence in this country.

Russia's struggle for geopolitical dominance starts to 'pay off' by keeping many former Soviet Republics friendly. While the European Union still keeps its power in the region, Russia is getting more ambitious about getting 'back its former status as a superpower',⁴¹ even if it is only in its immediate neighborhood. The difference between the economic and political power of both, the EU and Russia presented in this chapter shows that strong reliance on business with Russia may prevent local countries like Ukraine from developing productive relations with the European Union. Russia also relies greatly on its military power to keep its neighbor in check and influence its domestic and foreign policies. While the European Union does not have its military power, it relies on the NATO and arm forces of its member states to protect itself. Comparing Russian and European military power was not part of this analysis, but it does play an important part in the political power of each. In addition to the influence of the military, the political powers of the European Union and Russia are influenced by cultural power including national identity and religion.

⁴¹ Since Russia claimed to be legal successor of the USSR, it is strike to become as powerful as this state was during the Cold War.

Conclusion

The study of political elites can say a lot about the society to which the elite belongs to. It is also helpful to use such a study to determine how the international community viewed corresponding countries because in many instances political elites are the first people outsiders meet. In the case of this research, two national political elites – Poland's and Ukraine's - were studied during the time of their countries' transitions from communism with planned economies to democracy with market economies. To understand how the actions of these two political elites were perceived by the European community and how they affected Poland's and Ukraine's relations with other countries and international organizations we analyzed the European Union's relations with these two states and how national elites in Poland and Ukraine, as well as EU elites, affected the development of these relations.

Many casual observers would correctly notice that EU relations with Poland were much more productive than EU relations with Ukraine. The fact that Poland became a member of this organization in 2004 illustrates a major difference between the international perception of the two countries studied in this thesis. Even now, despite the visible closeness of EU, and Ukrainian-EU relations developed after Euromaidan - the EU and Ukraine still have many problems and misunderstandings to resolve to achieve a more productive relationship, let alone possible Ukrainian EU membership.

This thesis's main research questions constituted the backbone of this research. A brief overview of these questions is in order:

- Why did the EU have a different level of influence on democratization in Poland and Ukraine, and what role did EU, Polish and Ukrainian elites play during this process?
 - o How did the EU, Polish and Ukrainian elites contribute to the results?
 - o What determined differences in EU elite attitudes toward Ukrainian and Polish elites?
- How the structure/divisions of the EU's elite affect its relations with Poland and Ukraine?
- What were the main variations between Polish and Ukrainian elites that prevented EU elites from developing similar relations with them?
- Why did the democratic transformations initiated and supported by elites not lead to the same results in Poland and Ukraine?

The main aim of this research was to determine how the actions of national political elites in Poland and Ukraine during the post-communist transition affected these countries' relations with the European Union and – equally - how perceptions of EU elites of Polish and Ukrainian elites affected the EU's influence on democratization in these two countries.

In the beginning, this thesis provided an overview of existing theories that could explain the political elite's role in the transitioning as well as the general role of political elites that can be applied to the analysis of EU elites. While most theories reviewed in the first couple of chapters analyze some aspect of political elites - looking into their composition, creation, recruitment, and their actions - the combination of these theories can provide a great insight into the role of political elites in the EU's relations with neighboring nations. The comparative analysis used in this research proved helpful in illustrating the difference between the transitional approach of both nations and how elites' actions in both states led to different

results. Poland built liberal democracy with a market economy much faster than Ukraine, which still is in transition on both counts.

Generally, this thesis followed a chronological structure by building the analysis of post-communist transitions in Poland and Ukraine, their relations with the European Union, and the role of political elites in this process. The logical order started to look at preconditions to the transition and ended with Poland's accession to the European Union and the current state of Ukraine – EU relations. This structure was used to show how things developed over time and to trace the historical origin of current events. Although, historical analysis is not always helpful in evaluating current political events, in the case of this research it was a helpful tool for explaining general tendencies in Polish, Ukrainian, and European Union's foreign and external policies. At the same time, the analysis was careful to not place too much weight on historical explanations because recent developments in Ukraine with the Euromaidan and other pro-democratic and pro-European mass movements seem to have changed the traditional view of Ukraine in the West.

For many years Ukraine was seen as part of a Russian zone of influence due to historical connections with Russia. This view was shared by many, including other Europeans and Russians. Needless to say, this view had a big effect on the EU's relations with Ukraine and it still has an impact despite a significant change in the EU's external policy towards Ukraine, which changed from the 'Russia first' to 'Ukraine first' foreign policy approach. At the same time, the historical trace explains the more favorable view on Poland by Europeans with regards to shared European identity and the place of Poland as a member of the European family. This thesis showed that its more successful struggle for independence at the beginning of the twenty-century helped create an image of an independent European nation that has always been part of Europe.

The main body of this research is concentrated on several interconnected research subjects, which in combination answer the main research questions of this thesis. Analyzing the role of the political elite in the post-communist transition in Poland and Ukraine shows how much the outcome of post-communist transitions in these two countries was influenced by elites. This analysis is essential for the determination of how national political elites were contributing to the transition. Additionally, it helps us understand where the success or failure of reform efforts was caused by the elite and where other forces have been in play. A good example of this would be the signing of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine. Then-president Victor Yanukovich and the elite groups that supported him refused to sign the AA at the EaP Summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania in November 2013. This refusal provoked mass protest, escalation of which forced the former president to flee Ukraine and let another politician, who was willing to sign it to become the new president.

Another judgment of national elites' actions occurs on the international level. And quite often, the image that is projected abroad determines the type and quality of relations that the corresponding country could build. In terms of this research, the analysis of international perceptions of national political elites in Poland and Ukraine showed its effect on the European Union's relations with both nations. One of the main themes that came up during this research was the widespread corruption in Ukraine. This image of the political elite does not necessarily stop the interaction with the European Union's elite, but it does determine the quality of the relationship that can be built. A good example of how it works in practice was described by an EU official I interviewed. She said, that it does not matter too much who is in the office of the partner country, if both parties are willing to cooperate, the relations will be built and the treaties will be signed (EU negotiated the AA with Yanukovich, who had the reputation as one the most

corrupt Ukrainian presidents). But the negative image will determine the quality of the relationship, and in the case of Ukraine, it will determine if closer cooperation (like visa-free travel) is offered (Interview A, EU).

This research also studied political elites in the European Union by analyzing the role of these elites in relations with Poland and Ukraine. It has been established that national elites in the EU have different views on their eastern neighbors, with some looking favorable to deepen cooperation and some not. For years, during the Cold War, the relation between European countries was determined by the fight for influence between Western democracies and the USSR. While this situation changed thirty years ago, many in the West continue to think that they need approval for the development of close relations with Eastern European states from Russia, the country that succeeded the USSR. These beliefs were especially influential in determining the EU's external policy towards former Soviet Republics, which were viewed through the 'Russia first' approach. Even after this approach was abandoned in the mid-2000s, many national elites within the EU, are still trying to promote Russian interests over EU-Ukraine relations. In addition to the differences in the national elites' view on the EU's relationship with its eastern neighbors, different institutions of the union have different priorities. For example, the European Parliament has been traditionally more open to enlargement than the European Commission.

Russia also has been trying to influence the EU's presence in the shared neighborhood more directly by creating economic and political incentives for cooperation. It even created the Eurasian Economic Union as an alternative to the European Union's Eastern Partnership. While in the 1990s, Russia had limited ability to protect its interest using hard power, it does it now. The economic sanctions and military operations against uncooperative neighbors are showing Russia's willingness to protect its interests despite the high price. Russian aggressiveness in achieving its foreign policy goals creates a negative image abroad that often produced the opposite result its leaders hoped for. For example, the Russian push for keeping Ukraine as a close ally backfired and in many ways is the cause of current problems with two neighbors.

Research findings

Original expectations of this research speculated that national elites in Poland and Ukraine had different levels of interest in joining the European Union and democratizing their countries. While this statement seems to be still true regarding the democratization efforts, this research showed that the political elites of both nations were interested in joining the European Union. The main reason why the Ukrainian political elite did not show too much effort into transforming this state to European standards is the fact that the EU did not send direct signals indicating that Ukraine would be offered a place in the EU. Additionally, the Ukrainian political elite was always keeping in mind what Russia would do if Ukraine suddenly prioritizes Euro-Atlantic integration as its main foreign policy goal. Poland, on the other hand, started to reform first and then used its success in economic and political transformation as an argument for an early accession to the EU and NATO.

The second expectation of this research is connected to the previous one and states that the European Union was more interested in Poland as a potential member comparing to a small interest in Ukraine. This research-proven it to be mostly true. While it is a fact that Poland has always been seen as more European than Ukraine, Polish political elites also made much more effort in transforming their country to European standards. In this case, it seems to be an

interconnected issue, when both parties show interest in building a closer relationship with the potential of joining under one organizational roof. But, the simplistic view that the EU invited Poland to join because it was more interesting in this country as a potential member in the early 1990s would be a mistake. Throughout this thesis, the general storyline of the Polish post-communist transition showed that the political elites of this country made enormous efforts to speed up political and economic transition by employing fast and harsh reforms that became known as the 'shock therapy'. Additionally, Poland along with other Visegrad Group countries was strongly advocating for potential membership arguing that it is part of their 'return to Europe' journey. Another important fact needed to be mentioned here is the internal problems of the European Union that include the long-standing question about how it should proceed in the future – by adding more countries by the enlargement or deepening economic and political integration of current members by harmonization of policies in all member states.

The third proposition of this thesis was that the economic interests of national elites in Poland and Ukraine were and still are influencing their country's foreign policies. The research on the matter showed it to be mostly true, with some exceptions. While the membership or simple trade relation with the European Union has very big economic benefits, in the case of Ukraine, it was not always being more attractive than economic relations with Russia and other FSRs. A good example of the exception to this proposition is the events of 2013-2014 in Ukraine where the majority of people opposed then political elite's course on turning away from Europe to deepen its relations with Russia. The result of this development was the removal of the ruling president and political parties and replacement them with new pro-democratic and pro-European political elites with some of their members experiencing economic loss as a result of worsening in relations with Russia.

Despite some influence of popular opinion, the economic interest of ruling elites can help explain the development of foreign policy in Ukraine and to a lesser extent in Poland. This difference comes up when we analyze the difference in elites' composition in these two countries. As previous chapters have shown, Polish political elites were and still are mostly made of professional politicians, intellectuals, professionals, and former business people. This composition of the political elite does not give any strong indication of how their economic interest would affect foreign policy. The composition of Ukrainian political elites, on the other hand, with a clear majority of its members having business at the same time as holding political posts proves that the development of foreign policy in this country has been motivated by elites' interest. Oligarchic influence on the development of Ukrainian foreign policy is a great example of economic influence on foreign policy creation. Although, recent developments show some diminishing influence of oligarchs in Ukraine in general and on its foreign policy in particular (Interview A, UA).

The last proposition of this thesis was that the level of consolidation of political elites determines their commitment to democratic reforms. The investigation of political elites in Poland shows that all ruling elites were committed to reforms, while they had different views on what these reforms should consist of, but in the end, there was a strong will to make them successful. A big role in this determination was played by Poland's goal to become a member of NATO and the European Union. Both of these goals were and still are impossible without building a strong liberal democracy and market economy. In Ukraine, the situation has been different. While most academics who study political elites during the transition, like Higley and Pakulski (1995), see the lack of elite consolidation as a negative sign for democratic transition, this research showed that while it did slow down the reformation process, the lack of elites' consolidation also prevented this country from becoming totalitarian or autocratic. The

autonomic elite theory formulated by Etzioni-Halevy (1990) indicates that only the relative autonomy of elite groups can help consolidate democracy, works better to explain the Ukrainian continued to struggle for democracy despite having several authoritarian regimes. Because neither democratic nor non-democratic part of political elites was able to consolidate political power in Ukraine, this country has been partially free and democratic for the last twenty-five years.

Now, looking back to the beginning of the post-communist transition and analyzing its results, it is hard to believe that the prediction for the Polish and Ukrainian transition was opposite to the outcome. The prediction made for Poland was not as good as the results (Hartwell, 2016). While Ukraine shows the opposite – Ukraine had a favorable prediction for a successful transition, but, it still struggles with the remnants of its communist past. Mostly these predictions were based on the economic outlook of both states when Ukraine was the second most powerful republic in the USSR after Russia. Ukraine in the 1980s had a more developed economy with many large state-owned enterprises that were privatized or sold after Ukrainian independence in 1991 for millions of euros (Hanley, 2000). At the same time, Communist Poland before 1989 was heavily indebted to a weak economy. Although it did have the largest in the Warsaw bloc private sector including agriculture, trade, crafts, and small industry (Kozminski, 2008) that helped transformation to a market economy. The economic success in Poland helped this country to consolidate its democracy and prepared it for the EU membership.

Because of European history, it comes as no surprise that as soon as Poland started its transformation in 1989, the European Union was seeing the possibility of inclusion of this country among other Central European countries into the union and other continental organizations. Additionally, the pro-European activity of the Polish political elite, under the slogan of ‘return to Europe’ was met with warmth from the EU, which indicated that Poland and other CEE countries would be able to join it when qualify. There was also an important detail that showed how the European Union and its western allies saw Poland and Ukraine, and it is the regions’ classifications: Poland was and still is classified as part of Eastern Europe and Ukraine classified as part of Eurasia alongside Russia and majority of former Soviet Republics (although, this identification seems to be changing).

Ukraine also did not have any indication that the European Union was interested in Ukraine as a potential member. Several reasons have been named for this position and they are: 1) Ukraine was unknown in the international arena as an independent actor, 2) Ukraine has been part of the Russian sphere of influence, and 3) Ukraine was also seen as far away country with CEE countries between then EU borders and Ukraine. The last factor lost its value in 2004 when, when after Poland acceded to the union, Ukraine became the EU’s immediate neighbor. New political geography forced the EU to build closer relations with its Eastern Neighbours including Ukraine.

EU – Poland Relations

The first link analyzed in this study is the case of Poland. In the beginning, this research overviews the Polish transition and the role of political elites in it. Later this research analyzed how the perception of Polish political elites by the European Union’s elite affected the relations between Poland and the EU. In summary, Poland has always had more political and economic freedom than Ukraine, even during communist rule. It has been clear for everybody since the late 1950s that the USSR would not allow their satellite countries to just go their own way. This

was made clear when the Soviet army marched into Hungary in response to their pro-democratic movements. The dependence of Poland's communist leadership also played a significant role in the Polish transition from the communist rule to democracy and it started with clear approval from Moscow to start the negotiation process. At the time, neither Warsaw nor Moscow realized that their efforts to reform old communist rule with the inclusion of the opposition would result in the loss of their power.

Solidarity started as a workers' movement about a decade before the end of communist rule. Almost immediately, this movement attracted representatives from other social groups, including intellectuals, and grew to become one of the biggest anti-communist movements in the region. The close cooperation of intellectuals with workers all over Poland helped this movement achieve truly national reach and attract millions of members and supporters and with time to take over political power in the country. More importantly, Solidarity was the origin point for many political elites' members that transformed Poland from a totalitarian country with a weak economy to successful democracy (in the mid-2000s) with a fully functional market economy in the relatively short term. The involvement of people from different backgrounds helped to create a more representative political elite after the start of transition in 1989 than Ukraine had in all twenty-five years of its post-communist history.

Overall, Polish political elites 1989-2004 can be generally described as strongly united behind the idea of democratization, market reforms, and joining the European Union and other Euro-Atlantic organizations despite their political differences. That is traceable through two presidencies: Walesa's and Kwasniewski's. With two presidents from different political parties, former Solidarity leader and former communist were committed to the same place of action to transform their country. At the same time, Polish political elites, especially, Solidarity leadership had to deal with many internal problems with choosing to go their ways (creating different political parties) since they won the first Polish presidency by electoral vote. But despite inside struggles, Polish political elites were able to present a joint force on the international level. This visible unity got praised by many scholars, such as Higley and Pakulski (1992, 1995, 1999, 2012), Baylis (2012), and Etzioni-Halevy (1990, 1993) but more importantly, their got recognition by the international and European community for their efforts to reform Poland. This recognition, in the end, helps Poland along with other CEE states to get invited to join the European Union and successfully became a member in 2004.

EU – Ukraine Relations

The second case studied in this research is the case of relations between the European Union and Ukraine. By tracing the political elite action in Ukraine, this thesis showed that the internal problem with widespread corruption backlisted this country in many international rankings, including the European Union's view on potential members. One of the reasons that created this negative perception of Ukraine that was investigated in this thesis is the lack of unity among competing political elites in regards to long-term plans for Ukrainian reforms. This tendency can be traced back to the Soviet Union when Ukraine was just one of the fifteen republics with most of its political and economic decision made in Moscow. In addition to being a part of a bigger country, Ukraine did not have the same type of popular anti-communist movement as Solidarity in Poland. As a result of this lack of strong opposition to the ancient regime, Ukraine's post-communist transition was almost completely controlled by a reformed communist who accepted new nationalistic, democratic, and free-market ideas and was trying to implement them.

Additionally, the Soviet Union's legacy became visible when we compare Ukraine to other former Soviet States, especially this is true for the analysis of political and economic elites that took a similar developmental road since 1991.

Only after about twenty years since the start of the post-communist transition in Ukraine (in 2015), many hoped that this country finally has an elite that capable to implement much-needed reforms to make Ukraine truly democratic with a fully-functioning market economy. This comparison of current political elites and their willingness to reform Ukraine and work with the European Union was indicated to me by many politicians I interviewed in Brussels. Additionally, the current situation in Ukraine seems to limit oligarchic power to some extent mostly due to the war in Eastern Ukraine that involves Russia, the country that most Ukrainian oligarchs have personal and business connections too. Some Ukrainian politicians and civil society leaders look very optimistically at the country's ability to go from oligarchic to a democratic form of rule. The former Vice-Prime Minister of Euro Integration of Ukraine (during Yushchenko's presidency) stated in 2016 that "the time of oligarchy in Ukraine is over" (Interview A, UA). Although this statement sounds optimistic, some analysts come to similar, although less optimistic conclusions (Olszański, 2017).

The view from Brussels seems to be less confident with one interviewee stating that "we know all oligarchs, even the small ones" indicating that many European politicians see rich Ukrainian politicians such as Yatsenyuk as oligarchs (Interview, C, EU). While both views may be on opposite sides, the truth is somewhere in the middle. The one thing that is clear from this research is that oligarchic rule in Ukraine slowed down the post-communist transition and is still preventing the move towards successful political, social, and economic reforms. The raise of this system can be traced back to the Soviet Union as the general development in the majority of its former republics (except Baltic states), it has mostly economic roots. The economic reality of early post-Soviet times dictated the need for close relations between economic and political elites. This type of relations reassured that businessmen will have access to state control enterprises and the politicians will get their share of profits in return. The lack of fast economic reforms in Ukraine created a favorable situation for the rise of oligarchy.

At the same time, Ukraine is different from the majority of other FSRs because it has a significant part of independent economic and pro-democratic political elites. A similar situation can be observed in Georgia. Presence of relatively strong, but not strong enough to take over political power, democratic elites in Ukraine can be viewed positively and negatively. Currently, with mass demand for reforms, infusion of a new generation in political life, strong support from Western countries, and limited influence of Russia, Ukraine has a real chance of making long-awaited positive changes.

This research reviewed development in Ukrainian politics since its independence in 1991 by concentrating on five periods indicated by the changes in presidents. The first period was during the presidency of Leonid Kravchuk, the first Ukrainian president. During this time, Ukraine went through a hard economic downfall with the majority of large enterprises that employed millions of people, stopped working due to the lack of demand created by the fall of the USSR, and the creation of a border between former republics. Additionally, the political situation in the country was difficult with former communists trying to reform the country and weak democratic opposition to make a significant difference. The second Ukrainian presidency was the time when the oligarchic system became institutionalized. Under ten years rule of Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine was able to achieve some economic growth, but the political situation got worse.

The situation changed for the better by the end of Kuchma's term when former prime minister, Victor Yushchenko, and his former deputy went into opposition and started to lead pro-Western and pro-democratic bloc. This development in Ukrainian politics was met differently inside and outside the country. Local people in Ukraine received the hope that they will finally have a leader that would change the country for the better and will improve their quality of life. But, this is only true for part of Ukrainians, the second part, with strong pro-Russia views saw Yushchenko's victory as a nationalistic take-over. And on the international level, Western countries and organizations started to see the development of a political elite that would be able to fight corruption, implement reforms, and become a trusted partner. The Eastern neighbors, mostly Russia, saw the victory of the Orange Revolution as a treat to their geopolitical dominance and their way of living.

The popular support for Yushchenko and his allies also added legitimacy to his claim for the presidency during the Orange Revolution and the international perception of him (that was already high due to his achievements as the head of Ukrainian National Bank and a prime minister). But the development of the Yushchenko presidency left both, Ukrainians and international observers disappointed. His team was not able to effectively work together and did not keep its promise to implement reforms and fight corruption. In a way, Yushchenko's presidency can be compared to Walesa's presidency in Poland, when a popular opposition leader took the highest office in the country but was not able to efficiently use his powers.

As a result of Yushchenko's failed presidency, his opponent in the 2004 election, Victor Yanukovich won the presidency in 2010. This presidency was even more disastrous than the previous one and ended up with mass protests that forced the then-president to leave his post prematurely and run from the country. Overall, this presidency, similarly to Kuchma's move Ukraine backward in the international community. And while the European Union continued negotiating the Association Agreement with Ukraine at the time, Yanukovich and his 'family' were negatively perceived due to political persecutions, with Tymoshenko's imprisonment being the most famous case, and due to increasing accusation of corruption. The important detail about the Yanukovich presidency is that he was pressured by Russia to change foreign policy goals according to Russia's wishes. While Russia was intervening in Ukrainian politics for many years, this time, it resulted in mass pro-European protests in Ukraine, Russian occupation of Crimea, and the start of armed conflict between two neighbors.

The current Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, assumed the power after being elected in 2014. While his presidency seems to struggle with effective anti-corruption efforts, there are many improvements achieved up to date. For starters, Poroshenko was able to gain international support for the anti-war efforts in Eastern Ukraine and the continuity of Western sanctions against Russia. Overall, this Ukrainian president seems to have achieved more international success in comparison to his predecessors. In part, Poroshenko was able to achieve it due to his language skills (he is the first Ukrainian president who is fluent in English)⁴² and in part, he was able to achieve it due to an increase of awareness of Ukraine due to the Euromaidan and the conflict with Russia. At the same time, despite the international success of the current political elite in Ukraine, some politicians in Brussels note that Ukraine already missed out on many opportunities (in 2016). As an MEP said that the EU would provide much more help to Ukraine if Ukrainian elites were more proactive in asking for it, but as time passes by, the

⁴² Although may not be too significant

attention shifts to more current topics and problems, and EU's politicians and bureaucrats start to forget about Ukraine (Interview, C, EP).

Overall, this research highlighted the main shortcomings of Ukrainian political elites and their actions that resulted in delayed post-communist transition and a raise of oligarchic order. These shortcomings also created a negative international perception of Ukrainian political elites and limited EU's presence in Ukraine. One of the most visible differences that differentiate Ukraine from Poland was the composition of political elites with weak democratic opposition; long delay in reforms that have not have been finished yet; and the rise of oligarchs. We can make an argument that it is just a way that the majority of FSRs are going through and while taking into consideration of comparison of current Ukrainian political to the Polish political elite of 1994 – we can conclude that this country simply got a delay in its transition due to several reasons discussed in this research. These reasons are the lack of statehood at the beginning of the post-communist transition, weak national political elites at the beginning of the 1990s; the strong interconnective economic with other FSRs, and Russia's lack of will to let Ukraine go its own way.

Elite perceptions' effect on external democracy promotion

It is more traditional to analyze the external influence on democratization by studying the receiving side of the country that is undergoing a transition. This thesis employs a reverse strategy by analyzing the influencer side by concentrating on one aspect – the perception of national elites in receiving countries. In the end, we still need to answer the question – how the EU elites' perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian national elites affected the EU's democracy promotion efforts?

Up to date, several reasons have been identified as the causation of different results in the post-communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe. These reasons are: the existence of statehood before the fall of communism (Johansson, 2011; Kuzio, 2000; Gherghina, 2009); identity (Przel, 2009; Bergbauer, 2018; Szporluk, 2000); external influence (Tolstrup, 2014; Morlino 2011; Vachudova 2002, 2005; Przeworski, 1991, 1995; Whitehead, 2001, 2002; Stroschein, 2012; Collier, 1999; Moser, 2001; Markoff, 1996; Seim and Parente, 2013; Mahr and Nagle 1999; Priban, 2012); and the commitment of national politic elites (Tolstrup, 2014; Vachudova, 2002 and 2005; Etzioni-Halevy 1993; Higley 1992, 1995, 2012; Easter, 1997). This thesis adds to this research by analysing how the EU elites' perceptions of national political elites in Eastern Europe affected external democracy promotion efforts. While it was notable that Poland and Ukraine were perceived differently by Western Europeans since the start of the post-communist transition, this thesis provides a detailed analysis of why it happened. The analysis is concentrated on three main factors that affected EU elites' perceptions: 1) geographic location, 2) elite composition, 3) national elite's commitment to reforms.

The main argument of this thesis that the European Union elite's perceptions of Polish and Ukrainian political elites contributed significantly to the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion efforts is supported by a detailed analysis of how the three factors mentioned above contributed. First, this research showed that the geographical location of each country contributed to the EU's perception of national elites in Poland and Ukraine by analysing the elite origins and relations with powerful neighbours like Russia. The elite origin also illustrated how elite composition affects the perception of it by internal and external observers. A good illustration of this importance is provided by the analysis of the effect of oligarchy in Ukraine.

As this thesis showed, many political and economic problems in Ukraine can be connected to the abuse of power by a small group of people who control the development of government policies. Additionally, tracing the origin of national and EU elites showed the importance of socialization. As it was noted by Jarvis (1976), perceived similarities between two elite groups will result in more sympathetic views on each other, as we can observe in the case of EU-Poland relations. The elite composition correlates with the elite's commitment to reforms. As it was showed above, the corrupt elite in Ukraine has been slowing down political and economic reforms in Ukraine to protect their interests.

Overall, this research's main findings are that indeed, the elite perceptions play a significant role in European Union democracy promotion efforts in addition to other contributing factors. Additional factors include the influence of competing for regional powers, like Russia, Eurasian Union, and CIS; economic factors, and geopolitical situation.

Further research

While this thesis adds much to our understanding of the democratization process and the role of elites in it, there are still topics that need to be researched in detail. One of these topics is how the development of party systems build around political personalities affects the consolidation of regime type in transitioning societies, either democratic or authoritarian. In Ukraine, for example, most successful parties and blocs (Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko's, Bloc Petra Poroshenko, etc.) are created for the period of several elections and then disappear when the central politician leaves the politics. This disappearance or reinvention of a political party may have very negative results on the effectiveness of the ruling government and promote corruption due to the lack of long-term accountability. A detailed study of domestic elites' perception of dominant powers in Europe, would also add to our knowledge of the subject studies in this research. While it was my intention at the beginning of MPhil to study the mutual perception of EU and national elites, it has proven to be hard to combine it in one thesis. Additional research on the subject will enrich our knowledge of the EU's external influence on democratization by analyzing national elites' (from non-member states) perception of the EU.

Additionally, researching Polish and Ukrainian post-communist transition highlighted the challenges of combined political and economic transitions, especially in the case of Ukraine. Ukraine, along with other former Soviet Republics had to establish an independent state in addition to reforming political and economic spheres that added more responsibilities to governing elites to achieve international recognition as well. The study of how harsh economic and political conditions caused by separation from former dominion and transition from planned to a market economy would help us understand the challenges to successful political transition faced by states like Ukraine. This thesis also investigated how national elites within the European Union have been contributing to the development of a foreign policy of the union. While some studies analyze it, they usually investigate the broader picture.

Summary

The comparison of Ukrainian political elites since 1991 to the Polish political elites of 1989-2004 shows several differences that could explain the different outcomes of the post-communist transition in these two neighbors as well as the relations of these two countries with the

European Union. In the end, several tendencies stand out. The EU in the 1990s was looking to its immediate neighbors as potential members because these countries were geographically closer, their political elites were more committed to the implementation of political, social, and economic reforms needed for a successful transition from communism with planned economies to democracies with free markets. Additionally, the countries that were invited to apply for membership at first were showing better popular support for the European Integration.

In the case of countries further East, such as Ukraine, it is problematic for the European Union to offer the membership because of delayed political and economic reforms that left these countries with the weak economic and corrupt political system. Additionally, only several countries (Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova) have shown interest in closer cooperation with the European Union. And more importantly, the statement by political elites of their desire for Euro integration has mass support (to a different extent) in these states. The other states that are part of the Eastern Partnership do not seem to be very interested in deeper European integration at a moment.

It is also hard to underestimate Russia's role in Eastern Europe and the European Union's integration efforts. During the 1990s, when most CEE countries joined the EU, Russia did not possess the political and economic power to intervene. At the time Russia also had many internal problems that restrained its ability to influence the geopolitics of the region and had no other choice than to let the former USSR's satellite states determine their future in exchange for the promise of not enlarging NATO eastwards (Mearsheimer, 2014). The situation started to change in the 2000s, when Russia's new president Vladimir Putin accepted a new strategy in foreign policy and when Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan started to have colored revolutions threatening pro-Russian regimes in these countries.

In the beginning, Russia was using economic power to keep its neighbors close, but it did not always work. As a result, Russia invaded Georgia in 2009 and Ukraine in 2014. Russia was also able to use its economic power in the European Union because many Eastern countries rely on Russian energy resources. Also, the economic benefit of trade with Russia was much higher than with other countries in the region that resulted in the 'Russia first' approach in EU external policy towards the Eastern neighborhood. This policy changed in the mid-2000s (Giusti & Penkova, 2010), but it did affect relations between the EU and Ukraine by delaying the development of the productive partnership.

All of these factors contributed to the limits of the European Union's influence on democratization in Eastern Europe in addition to the elite perceptions.

Annex

Interview List

Interview A, EP Member (Brussels: April 2016)

Interview B, EP Member (Brussels: April 2016)

Interview C, EP Member (Brussels: April 2016)

Interview A, PL Polish Scholar (Warsaw: May 2016)

Interview A, EU Official (Brussels: May 2016)

Interview B, EU Official via email (Brussels: May 2016)

Interview C, EU Official (former) (Brussels: April 2016)

Interview D, EU Official (Kyiv: June 2016)

Interview A, UA (Ukraine) Former Official (Kyiv: June 2016)

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Archive of the President of Ukraine

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Archive of the Mission of Ukraine to the European Union

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European Commission's Archive

<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc>

Nexis Archives

<https://www.nexis.com>

Lexis Library News Search

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/search>

European Council news archive

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/>

