

The Impact of Europeanization on Democratic Transformations:

The Cases of Slovakia and Ukraine

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The research project is realised within The Ilko Kucheriv Democracy Fellowship programme, which is a project of PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), carried out in conjunction with the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF), Ukraine. The programme has been made possible with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), with mentoring from Polish Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation, Poland.

November 2013

Abstract

This paper aims to distinguish certain features of the impact of Europeanization on democratic transformations in Slovakia and Ukraine in comparative perspective in order to find out what role Europeanization plays in the democratic transformation of these countries. The comparison is conducted according to four main parameters: trends in the democratization process and political system development, the position and role of domestic political elites, the institutional and coordination structure for European integration and Europeanization processes, and the role of public opinion in the Europeanization process. The research was done according to modern theoretical concepts, which are presented in the first part of the paper. The paper finishes with a summary of the main findings regarding the impact of Europeanization on democratic transformation processes in Slovakia and in Ukraine, as well as defining factors that can facilitate the impact of Europeanization and factors that can hamper its effectiveness and success.

Introduction

The process of Europeanization in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in the post-communist period is one of the most topical issues in the field of Europeanization studies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the appearance of independent states in the region, the question of their transition to democracy arose. In the early 1990s, newly independent states in the CEE region existed under relatively similar starting conditions for democratization and European integration conditions, predetermined mainly by common post-communist problems in the political, economic and social realms. Despite this fact, relations with the European Union and the broader process of Europeanization differed from country to country in the region.

Ukraine is a good example of a country that had its own special features of economic and political development at the beginning of 1990s, but was rather similar to its post-communist neighbors in the CEE region in terms of the need for a transition to a democratic political regime. Nevertheless, Ukraine has demonstrated a different pace of integration and Europeanization, and has achieved different results, from other CEE countries.

The impact of Europeanization on the domestic transformations of CEE countries has become one of the most significant current aspects of research concerning Europeanization in general. Here the findings and research conducted by Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, Börzel, Risse, Olsen, and Wallace are important and will be used in this analysis for finding the most optimal

conceptual basis for the argued conclusions at the end. The study of Ukrainian Europeanization hasn't yet become a full-fledged field. There are scholars dealing with some aspects of Europeanization and the transformative power of the EU towards Ukraine, in particular Solonenko, Reznikova, Pelagesha, and Garyaga. But the general disadvantage of Ukrainian studies on Europeanization is that they are fragmented, lack complexity and don't pay much attention to analysis and comparison of certain aspects of Europeanization in Ukraine with corresponding practice in the CEE region.

Thus, the main problem this research deals with is finding out the extent and scale of the influence that Europeanization has on the process of democratic transformation in Slovakia and Ukraine.

The main goal of the research is defining specific features and factors which constitute the impact of Europeanization on the democratic transformations of Slovakia and Ukraine in comparative perspective. This will enable understanding of what role Europeanization plays in the transition of these countries to democracy and in what particular ways Ukraine and Slovakia have differed on their path toward European integration.

The importance of this research can be justified by several factors. First of all, the problems of both Europeanization and democratization remain urgent for Ukraine. Even after two decades of independence, Ukraine hasn't managed to achieve prominent progress either in establishing a stable democracy or in its compliance with EU norms, standards and values. Following the 2010 presidential elections Ukraine has again entered a period of strong tendency towards political authoritarianism and rollback of democracy. In Ukraine the process of Europeanization hasn't been as active, dynamic and successful as in its CEE neighbors which have already joined the EU. If the success of democratization in CEE countries is to a great extent a consequence of effective Europeanization there, we can suppose that the problem of democratization is still present in Ukraine because of the insufficient impact of Europeanization there. The second factor is the significance of Slovakia's experience for Ukraine. Both countries had rather similar starting conditions after gaining independence, but the outcomes have been very different. That is why in modern Ukraine, which is again faced with the danger of authoritarianism, the successful experience of CEE countries appears to be important in terms of understanding the real roots of problems and possible ways of implementing successful practices of Europeanization and democratization in Ukraine.

In order to reach the goal of the research, the following objectives must be fulfilled. The first objective is to create an appropriate conceptual basis for studying the problem in Slovakia and

Ukraine using a variety of modern concepts and approaches to Europeanization. The second objective is to identify and analyze certain peculiarities of the impact of Europeanization in Slovakia as the first case study for comparison. The third objective is to study specific features of the impact of Europeanization on democratization in Ukraine. The fourth objective is to analyze the results of both case studies in comparative perspective and make conclusions in light of the theoretical background.

The methodological basis of this research is a combination of suitable concepts and approaches to studying Europeanization which will be described in the first section titled “Theoretical Perspectives.”

Slovakia’s selection as one of the cases for comparison is justified by the following factors. Firstly, the Eastern Enlargement wave (to which Slovakia belongs) and the European Neighborhood Policy (which covers Ukraine) stimulated new generations of research in the field of Europeanization processes. The EU launched the ENP as a space for shared values, common norms and principles, but Ukraine is a special case among ENP countries because its relations with the EU were much deeper and closer (until the start of the crisis in 2010) than the EU’s relations with other neighboring countries. Slovakia was also a special case among those CEE countries covered by the EU accession policy of the 1990s and joining the Union in 2004.

Secondly, it is possible to assume that in Slovakia the mechanism of political conditionality was more successful than in some other CEE countries because Slovakia was dealing with the problem of unstable democracy, much like Bulgaria or Romania. There are more chances for Europeanization to be effective as a factor of influence in unstable democracies than in stable ones. In these terms, Slovakia is more interesting for comparison with the Ukrainian case.

Thus, the usage of current conceptual bases for studying Europeanization and the broad usage of empirical data will provide complex conclusions on Europeanization’s impact on democratic transformations, as well as factors which facilitated or hampered this impact. The comparative perspective broadens understanding of the role of Europeanization in domestic transformation, and enables more general conclusions about both theoretical and empirical findings of the research.

Theoretical perspectives

This part of the paper presents the theoretical perspective of the research, explaining the theoretical points of view from which the main problem is examined and the conclusions of the case comparison of Slovakia and Ukraine are made.

Beginning with the conceptualization of the term “Europeanization,” there are several specific factors to keep in mind.

The first important factor is that there is no single, universally agreed upon and applied definition of Europeanization, and thus the most appropriate definition for this research must be formulated or chosen from a variety of already developed concepts. The choice depends mainly on the research problems, since Europeanization is a rather broad field of study covering different research questions and because the details of Europeanization at a practical level depend on the general context and conditions under which Europeanization takes place.

For instance, Ladrech suggests considering Europeanization as an incremental process during which the political and economic dynamics of the European Union become integrated into the methods and logic of domestic politics, policy-making and decision-making¹. Buller and Gamble argue that Europeanization is a situation in which domestic politics transforms under the pressure or influence of “...distinct modes of European governance...”² These conceptualizations are focused on such features of Europeanization as its effects on domestic policies via downloading EU norms and values at the domestic level³.

In a broader perspective, Europeanization should be regarded as a complex two-way process that includes both top-down and bottom-up dimensions; thus in different studies Europeanization and domestic changes may both acquire the role of dependent and independent variables⁴. Hix and Goetz, Bulmer and Burch, Dyson, Featherstone and Kazamias emphasize the interactive character of Europeanization, the interdependence between supranational and domestic levels of policy-making, and the necessity to take this fact into consideration while conducting research⁵. Some scientists conceptualize Europeanization in such a way that it appears to be rather similar to European integration. But here the emphasis is placed on “emergence and development”

¹Howell, Kerry. Developing Conceptualizations of Europeanization and European Integration: Mixing Methodologies. November 29, 2002 – p.6. – Available at: <http://aei.pitt.edu/1720/1/Howell.pdf>

²Ibid.

³Ibid. – p.7.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

processes, which make Europeanization a combination of uploading and downloading methodologies, according to which EU institutions and networks receive feedback for further development (uploading) and at the same time formulate “authoritative European rules” (downloading)⁶. This approach to understanding Europeanization is developed by Risse and Börzel in particular. Bomberg and Peterson investigate Europeanization in light of its links with policy transfer processes.

Meanwhile, some analysts try to develop a broad and comprehensive concept of Europeanization. For example, Radaelli describes it as a complex process of “construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms” which are determined through decisions at the EU level and later become integral parts of domestic reality, public discourse at the national level, and development of domestic political structures as well as policy-making⁷. But Radaelli himself points out the problem of “conceptual stretching” that comes with using such a broad concept of Europeanization, and argues that the explanatory power of the concept is stronger when the definition is more specialized⁸.

The second factor we should keep in mind is that Europeanization research is not a unified field of study. There are three phases in the development of Europeanization studies, with three different but deeply interconnected dimensions of research:

- Membership Europeanization;
- Enlargement Europeanization;
- Neighborhood Europeanization⁹.

In the framework of the given research paper, this classification (in comparison to other existing classifications) is especially important, because we are interested not in Europeanization studies in general, but mainly in the external dimension of Europeanization, which according to the above differentiation covers Enlargement and Neighborhood Europeanization. Enlargement Europeanization applies to countries which have a clear perspective of EU membership (in other

⁶Howell, Kerry. Developing Conceptualizations of Europeanization and European Integration: Mixing Methodologies. November 29, 2002 – p.8. – Available at: <http://aei.pitt.edu/1720/1/Howell.pdf>

⁷Ibid. – p.9

⁸Ibid. – p.10.

⁹Gawrich, Andrea/ Melnykovska, Inna/ Schweickert, Rainer 2009. Neighbourhood Europeanization Through ENP: The Case of Ukraine, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 3, August 2009, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) “The Transformation Power of Europe,” Free University Berlin. – Available at: http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/v/transforeurope/publications/working_paper/WP_03_August_Melnikovska_Gawrich_Schweickert.pdf– p.5.

words, accession and candidate countries). Neighborhood Europeanization refers to the EU's neighboring countries which have not been given the prospect of membership as an inalienable part of their relations with the European Union¹⁰.

It is worth mentioning that analysis of Europeanization has been developing in parallel with developments and changes in the EU's functioning on practical level. In particular, the development of Enlargement Europeanization was mainly encouraged by the process of the Eastern Enlargement of the EU and domestic changes in Central and Eastern European countries which started their movement toward EU membership in early 1990s. The appearance of Neighborhood Europeanization analysis was similarly related to the practical issues and questions which arise from non-candidate countries' relations with the EU. Neighborhood Europeanization is mainly focused on the EU's capacity to shape domestic developments in these countries, as well as these countries' ability to absorb the process of Europeanization, comply with the norms and standards of the EU and become part of the European space in terms of shared values, attitudes and ways of doing things. This dimension of Europeanization studies is less developed than the other two in terms of having a well-established methodology of study.

All this makes Europeanization in countries with an unclear perspective a broader but more difficult field of study, and forces analysts to try to evaluate the scale, extent and limits of the EU's possible influence on outsiders in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy as a political and technical basis for relations between the EU and third countries. Anastasakis, Emerson, Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier are only some of the analysts who have been trying to figure out a methodological basis and approaches applicable to studies on neighboring countries¹¹. Nevertheless, at present we still have a lack of case studies in this field and the problem of the most suitable methodological approaches towards such case studies hasn't been solved yet.

The third factor refers to specific features which belong to studies on both Enlargement Europeanization and Neighborhood Europeanization. Since in this paper we deal with two countries which belong to different models of Europeanization and have different historical relations with the EU, we should take into consideration some of the different and similar aspects of Enlargement and Neighborhood types of Europeanization. In doing so, it becomes clear that

¹⁰Gawrich, Andrea/ Melnykovska, Inna/ Schweickert, Rainer 2009. Neighbourhood Europeanization Through ENP: The Case of Ukraine, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 3, August 2009, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) "The Transformation Power of Europe," Free University Berlin. – Available at: http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/v/transforeurope/publications/working_paper/WP_03_August_Melnikovska_Gawrich_Schweickert.pdf - p.5.

¹¹Ibid.

although some factors are givens and we keep them in mind as such, comparison between these two cases is still a very possible and manageable methodological task to accomplish.

Thus Enlargement Europeanization, which pertains to the case of Slovakia, presupposes a clear membership perspective and a well-established and EU-driven model of external incentives, working mainly via the usage of conditionality and concrete rewards for fulfillment of “home tasks.” Schimmelfening and Sedelmeier argue that success of this model of Europeanization depends on the clarity of settled conditions, and the scale, size and terms of receiving the rewards¹². Conditionality is regarded as the most powerful mechanism of Europeanization in this model, while social learning, lesson drawing and other mechanisms of indirect EU influence are less significant and effective¹³. Attractive incentives formulated by the EU are of vital importance for the Enlargement Europeanization model. In general, these are the main features of this type of Europeanization and should be considered integral to Europeanization processes in Slovakia.

Neighborhood Europeanization specifically refers to some kind of imbalance between the offers and requirements given by the EU. The EU’s capacity to influence neighbor countries under this model may be significantly limited because of a lack of strong conditionality and clear incentives. Neighborhood Europeanization presupposes a stronger focus on lesson drawing and social learning mechanisms instead of conditionality¹⁴. In general this kind of Europeanization is characterized by an asymmetric, top-down Europeanization process, weak conditionality, no membership perspective, an illusion of membership created by domestic actors within the neighboring countries, and largely superficial political changes within the country in order to make the EU believe that transformation is occurring¹⁵. Neighborhood Europeanization combines features of both Membership Europeanization (weak conditionality and requirement of a strong social learning mechanism) and Enlargement Europeanization (asymmetric, top-down design), but suffers from internal inconsistency because, in contrast to Enlargement Europeanization, neighboring countries don’t have strong motivation mechanisms to absorb Europeanization, and thus the scale and extent of Europeanization’s domestic impact is smaller.

¹²Gawrich, Andrea/ Melnykovska, Inna/ Schweickert, Rainer 2009. Neighbourhood Europeanization Through ENP: The Case of Ukraine, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 3, August 2009, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) “The Transformation Power of Europe,” Free University Berlin. – Available at: http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/v/transforeurope/publications/working_paper/WP_03_August_Melnykovska_Gawrich_Schweickert.pdf -p.6.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid – p.7.

Thus the theoretical background of Europeanization studies is rather diverse and includes different approaches to understanding Europeanization itself. Moreover, depending on certain conditions of the Europeanization process and the specific goals, subjects and objectives of the research, the concept of Europeanization which should be used varies.

Therefore, since we are studying the cases of Slovakia and Ukraine, which belong to different models of Europeanization (Enlargement and Neighborhood, respectively), we understand Europeanization as a complex, multi-dimensional interactive process combining both uploading and downloading logics, according to which certain political, economic and social dynamics at the EU level shape dynamics at the domestic level (policies, agenda-setting, modes of governance, etc.) and, in turn, affect domestic transformation processes. This formulation enables us to combine two practical cases (Slovakia and Ukraine) despite the important differences in their histories of Europeanization.

Europeanization impact: the cases of Slovakia and Ukraine

A comparison of Slovakia and Ukraine must be preceded by some theoretical and practical remarks. Slovakia entered the EU in 2004, while Ukraine is still a part of the European Neighborhood Policy and EU membership for Ukraine isn't on the agenda. This means that parameters for comparing the two cases should be selected while bearing these differences in mind.

Thus, our comparison is made on the basis of the following parameters:

- Political system development: the main trends in the democratization process;
- The position and role of domestic political elites;
- The institutional and coordination structure for European integration and Europeanization processes;
- The role of public opinion in the process of Europeanization.

These parameters are qualitative and not exhaustive. The rather general character of these parameters makes it possible to compare two cases with such different particularities. According to the objectives of this research, after comparison we will be able to conclude which factors facilitate Europeanization and which factors created problems or obstacles for successful Europeanization in both cases.

The chronological framework of this research differs between the two cases. Slovakia is studied from the beginning of its independence history (since the 1993 split of Czechoslovakia) until 2004 (entrance into the EU). After joining the EU, Slovakia fell into the category of Membership Europeanization, which differs from the situation where Europeanization is developing within a country that isn't a member and relates to the EU as an outsider. Ukraine's case is studied from 1991, when it gained independence, to the present as movement towards the EU under neighbor status continues. The model of Ukraine's Europeanization hasn't changed significantly; at least formally, Ukraine is still in the same dimension of Europeanization, while Slovakia post-2004 is not. The different chronological frameworks will enable us to determine which aspects of Slovakia's experience can be useful for Ukraine, which factors facilitated Europeanization's impact on democratic transformations in Slovakia, and whether these factors may be developed or encouraged in Ukraine.

Political system development: the main trends in the democratization process in Slovakia

After the split of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia started its transformation as a newly independent state. Like other post-communist countries, Slovakia also faced the so-called “dilemma of simultaneity” when reforms and democratic transformations in various fields and dimensions had to be conducted at the same time.

Some of these changes that were extremely important as foundations for democratic governance had been made even before the split of Czechoslovakia. Prior to 1992, the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly approved a number of significant legal acts including the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, pro-market oriented laws in the field of economics, and laws on political parties, associations, the right of assembly, freedom of the press, etc.¹⁶

Free and democratic elections, which first took place in June 1990, showed that society tended to support anti-communist, democratic forces aimed at establishing a democratic political regime. This consensus in public opinion enabled the civic movement Public against Violence (VPN) to get support from voters with different ideological orientations¹⁷. The necessity of democratic transformations was understood and supported by society in general.

This is the first important trend in the history of democratization of Slovakia: *the process began with the Velvet Revolution, and important parts of the institutional and legal foundation for democracy were prepared before the split of federal state.*

Nevertheless, after the split of Czechoslovakia, the newly independent Slovakia faced challenges to the establishment of a democratic political regime when more authoritarian political forces came to power in 1992. It was with the start of Vladimir Mečiar’s era in domestic Slovakian politics that Slovakia’s deviation from its Central and Eastern European neighbors’ paths of transition began. In contrast to the Czech Republic, for example, which deepened the democratic process it had started before the split, Slovakia started moving in the opposite direction. The resurgence of authoritarian politics in Mečiar’s term as prime minister was characterized by violations of the rule of law, fusion of political and economic powers, and limitations on free democratic competition between political powers¹⁸.

¹⁶Mesežnikov G. Authoritarianism and democracy in post-communist transformation: case of Slovakia//Transformation process in the Visegrad Group countries and Ukraine: comparative analysis/Ed. by G.M.Perepelytsia. – Kyiv: Stylos Publishing House, 2012. – p. 40

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid. – p.41.

Thus, the second important feature of Slovakia's democratic transition was *the recurrence of authoritarian tendencies in the political system after democratic transition started in the late 1980s*. And it was the authoritarian rule of Mečiar's Cabinet that distinguished Slovakia from other CEE countries proceeding more successfully with democratization, European and Euroatlantic integration. The period of 1992-1998 in Slovakia can be considered a period of "illiberal democracy," when there was a difference between what was stated *de jure* and what took place *de facto* in the political system and in political life in general. Mečiar's regime of illiberal democracy was accompanied by democratic elections, but also disregard of the rule of law, neglect of legal frameworks, and the usage of a power-driven style of politics¹⁹.

The division of the political spectrum in Slovakia in 1992-1998 was mainly connected not with ideological differences between political parties, but with different approaches towards governing and solving social problems, which appeared against a backdrop of economic restructuring and the social difficulties that came with it. Rural and urban electorates differed in their political preferences: pro-authoritarian forces, mainly Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, found support among the rural, less educated, older electorate with a more nationalistic position, while pro-democratic forces included urban voters who were more educated, younger, and had a more liberal and pro-Western point of view²⁰.

Thus the third important trend was *cleavage between authoritarian and democratic forces and their electorates, which happened not because of ideological disagreements, but because of different approaches to building a domestic political system, different strategies of development, and different foreign policy priorities* (i.e. the more nationalistic and isolationist policy of authoritarian forces, and EU and NATO-oriented strategy developed by democratic forces).

The parliamentary elections of 1998 were crucial in the modern history of Slovakia, as democratic political parties won and formed a governmental coalition, the so-called "grand coalition," which acted from 1998-2002. The fourth specific trend in Slovakia's political system development was *the process and result of democratic consolidation that was caused by the necessity to present an alternative to the authoritarian model*. Democratic forces won the elections due to a consensus reached among them, as well as society's demands for consolidation of the opposition forces. Some strategic points – including both domestic and foreign policy issues – were agreed on for all members of the grand coalition. The creation of mechanisms for

¹⁹Mesežnikov G. Authoritarianism and democracy in post-communist transformation: case of Slovakia//Transformation process in the Visegrad Group countries and Ukraine: comparative analysis/Ed. by G.M. Perepelytsia. – Kyiv: Stylos Publishing House, 2012. – p. 42.

²⁰Ibid.

preventing the authoritarian execution of powers, conducting domestic reforms (banking, economic, public administration, judicial and many others) and catching up with Slovakia's neighbors from the Visegrad group (which were proceeding much more successfully in terms of European and Euroatlantic integration) made opposing parties unite for the parliamentary elections of 1998. Due to the pro-European position of democratic forces and Dzurinda's Cabinet reforms, Slovakia managed to fill the gap that existed between it and the so-called Luxembourg group of accession countries (those already invited to start negotiations on accession) in 1997²¹.

Thus Slovakia progressed from an "illiberal democracy" to a "liberal democracy" regime. The democratization of Slovakia's political system was started before Slovakia became an independent state, as many of the important foundations were created in the time after the Velvet Revolution and before the split of federal Czechoslovakia. After that split, Slovakia entered a period of authoritarian resurgence under Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar. An opposing approach to governing was represented by forces supporting liberal democracy and integration with the EU and NATO. Opposition political forces differed mainly in their approaches to general methods of public administration. After the victory of the democratic coalition in 1998, a new period of democratic consolidation started in Slovakia. Domestic democratization became a turning point in the country's political system development as reforms needed for strengthening democracy and integration with the EU and NATO started.

Political system development: the main trends in the democratization process of Ukraine

Ukraine gained independence in 1991, but in the years immediately following independence Ukraine's political system continued to adhere to institutional and legal elements inherited from the USSR. In particular, the Constitution of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1978) remained the most important legal document of the newly independent state. The chain of command consisted of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (i.e. the parliament), authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and local authorities. A cabinet of ministers answered to the

²¹ Govaere, Inge. 2002. Pre-accession strategies to the European Union/Constitutional Implications of the accession to the European Union//Science and Technique of Democracy, No. 31. 2002 – p.44 - Available at: http://books.google.sk/books?id=11Z988T59BkC&dq=Luxembourg+group+of+accession&hl=ru&source=gb_s_navlinks

parliament, which formed the government on the basis of the head of parliament's proposal. The institution of the presidency didn't possess a wide range of competencies at that time²².

The first specific trend in Ukraine's political system development is thus the following:
democratization in Ukraine started within the framework of the general democratization movements in USSR republics that led to the collapse of the latter, but even after Ukraine gained independence, its political system continued to suffer from a lack of consensus on what form of government should be established.

However, the 1992 conflict that occurred between the first directly elected president (Leonid Kravchuk) and the parliament because of a redistribution of powers proved that it was necessary to change the system and redefine which competencies should belong to each of the main authoritative bodies²³. With the early election of the second president of Ukraine (Leonid Kuchma) in 1994, this conflict escalated²⁴. The main question was which institution, the president or the parliament, would have more competencies in order to form and control the government. It was, in simple terms, a question of which form of government – presidential or parliamentary – Ukraine should have. The conflict culminated with the process of writing the constitution of independent Ukraine, as the President aimed to establish a presidential form of government while the parliament (including the majority Communist Party of Ukraine, which was in the opposition to the President) blocked his initiative bill with the aim of broadening the competencies of the legislative branch²⁵. President Kuchma didn't want to compromise with the parliament and didn't want its amendments to be included in the draft of the constitution, which proposed a presidential model of government. The constitution was ultimately adopted by the parliament on June 28, 1996 under the threat of a possible referendum that Kuchma was planning to hold in order to have the constitution adopted via direct vote²⁶. A semi-presidential system was established with the President holding the dominant role.

Despite this, Kuchma then tried to further strengthen the president's role. The form of government during Kuchma's second presidential term (1999-2004) was de facto almost fully presidential, which contradicted the semi-presidential government delineated in the constitution²⁷. Nevertheless, Kuchma's regime wasn't as fully authoritarian as Putin's or

²²Haran, Oleksiy, Sydorchuk, Oleksiy. Transformations process in Ukraine: Historical, Ethnic and Political Factors//Transformation process in the Visegrad Group countries and Ukraine: comparative analysis/Ed. by G.M. Perepelytsia. – Kyiv: Stylos Publishing House, 2012. – p. 58.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid – p.59.

²⁷Ibid – p.63.

Lukashenko's models of governing. In this way Ukraine was different from many other post-Soviet countries. Ukraine differed in the peaceful way it gained independence, the democratic elections of the parliament and President, the possibility of reaching consensus between domestic political powers, and the adoption of the constitution in 1996 as a result of compromise between the President and the parliament. All these elements cemented the nature of Ukrainian politics and the Ukrainian political system at that time as one based on compromise, which made it extremely difficult for one actor (namely President Kuchma) to concentrate all the powers in his hands²⁸. Thus, the second trend in Ukrainian political system development was *the compromise-driven character of its politics, which resulted in failure to develop an authoritarian model, unlike many other post-Soviet republics (especially neighboring Russia and Belarus)*. There was no full-fledged, institutionally developed and stabilized system of balance of powers, but due to disagreements between the economic and political elites, the president and the opposition majority in the parliament, and the ability of the Constitutional Court to act independently from the political pressure of the president, a certain type of balance did exist.

The third important trend was *progress in democratization during the period of 2005-2009*, from the Orange Revolution (which started during the presidential election of November 2004 and resulted in a third round of voting) until the end of Viktor Yushchenko's presidential term at the beginning of 2010. The constitutional reform that took place in December 2004 was conducted due to the necessity of reaching a compromise. President Kuchma wanted to change the center of gravity in the government and strengthen the position of the prime minister (since Kuchma couldn't be elected as president for the third time, he was searching for ways to remain influential in the country's politics), but he didn't have enough supporters among members of the parliament. At the same time, the opposition demanded a third round of elections due to a huge number of falsifications in the last round. These two decisions – one of which was in the interest of the opposition, and the other in the interest of the government, namely President Kuchma – were approved via one vote for two decisions at once²⁹.

This political reform brought new conflict points into Ukrainian politics. The system remained semi-presidential, but the emphasis shifted from the president to the prime minister, who had to rely on a coalition formed in the parliament according to the parliamentary election results. Despite problems with the formation of a governmental coalition, a lack of necessary political experience (which resulted in early parliamentary elections in 2007), and confrontation between

²⁸Haran, O., Sydorchuk, O. Transformations process in Ukraine: Historical, Ethnic and Political Factors//Transformation process in the Visegrad Group countries and Ukraine: comparative analysis/Ed. by G.M. Perepelytsia. – Kyiv: Stylos Publishing House, 2012. – p. 63.

²⁹Ibid – p.64.

President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko, it was a period of democratic development of the political system, based on the need to compromise, negotiate and find common strategic political and economic ground in order to work within the framework of a coalition and form a government.

The fourth trend in Ukrainian political life, related to the period from the 2010 presidential election until the present day, consists of a *rollback of the democratic achievements of the previous years, concentration and centralization of powers in political system and a new shift of the center of gravity to the president*. Authoritarian tendencies have been developing within the Ukrainian political system since 2010. The constitution of 1996 was restored according to the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, which stated that the political reform of 2004 was invalid, and thus amendments to the constitution were invalid too. Ukraine returned to a form of government with the president dominant in the political system. Limitations on human rights and freedoms, pressure on the free media, persecution of opposition leaders, the use of the judicial system as a political instrument, and violations of electoral law – especially during the parliamentary elections of 2012 – are only some problems in the functioning of Ukraine's democracy since 2010. The country's foreign policy vector was changed dramatically, as NATO membership was thrown out of the set of foreign policy priorities as stated in the Law on Foundations of Domestic and Foreign Policy on July 1, 2010³⁰.

European integration in Ukraine has entered a state of crisis due to domestic anti-democratic developments. The signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union depends on the fulfillment by Ukraine of a number of criteria formulated by the Council of the EU on December 10, 2012³¹. The opposition appears to be almost excluded from the process of developing and making decisions of vital importance. In fact, the pro-presidential parliamentary majority consists of the Party of Regions, some majoritarian deputies and members of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which positions itself as the opposition party but almost always votes as the ruling party does. Nowadays the majority in the parliament, the government and the president are representatives of one political force that has laid the groundwork for a concentration of power in its own hands.

The fifth important factor in the Ukrainian political system's development is the currently ongoing *process of consolidation of the opposition on the basis of a general confrontation with*

³⁰Закон України №2411-VI "Про засади внутрішньої і зовнішньої політики, від 1 липня 2010 р. – Режим доступу: офіційний сайт Верховної Ради України: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17>

³¹ Council of the European Union. Conclusions on Ukraine, adopted at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on December, 10 2012. – Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134136.pdf

the regime of current President Yanukovich and the Party of Regions. This consolidation has a large number in imperfections. “Batkivshchyna,” “UDAR” and “Svoboda,” which constitute the so-called United Opposition (OO in Ukrainian abbreviation), suffer from an inconsistent general platform, a lack of consensus in some policy areas and a high level of political ambition on the part of each individual party, which prevents them from deep consolidation. The refusal of the OO to choose a single candidate from the opposition for the first round of presidential elections in 2015 (not in the second, as they agreed) can be considered a result of the lack of agreement among opposition parties. Nevertheless, despite all the problems and contradictions with the unification of opposition, here we are interested mainly in the *possibility* of pro-democratic, pro-European political forces consolidating in order to change the current political regime.

Thus, the Ukrainian political system has been teetering on the edge between democratization tendencies and tendencies towards authoritarianism. In the 1990s, a spirit of compromise in the political system and a lack of mechanisms to pressure non-controlled political actors prevented President Kuchma from developing an authoritarian model. The Orange Revolution triggered a new stage of democratization, party system restructuring, and a more transparent system of governance. Despite confrontations between president and prime minister at those times, it was a rather positive period in terms of the establishment of democracy. But since 2010, the Ukrainian political system has been functioning in light of a rollback of democracy that is making pro-democratic political elites and segments of civil society unite.

So it is possible to conclude that in terms of general trends in their political systems' development, Slovakia and Ukraine have both significant differences and similarities. In particular, Slovakia has witnessed problems similar to Ukraine's current issues with authoritarian elements in the political system. The chronological gap aside, Slovakia in the times of Vladimir Mečiar had rather similar issues with developing a democracy, though the process had started before he came into power. Ukraine has also witnessed the rollback of democracy after a period of activation and intensification of the democratization process. The democratic consolidation of liberal political elites with different ideological backgrounds and the activation of civil society took place in Slovakia, with all those actors united by one strategic aim: to return Slovakia's political life to the field of transparent democratic rules. That consolidation process has started in the camp of Ukraine's opposition forces, but it is still less active and united than Slovakia's. The balancing act between democracy and authoritarianism is common to both cases and took place in both their histories. Nevertheless, Slovakia significantly differs from Ukraine in this regard; Slovakia overcame problems with the functioning of its democracy and returned in 1998 to the pro-democratic, pro-EU and pro-NATO path. Ukraine's case is more dramatic, because after

some rather important achievements in the field of democracy, the current political leaders have managed to concentrate executive, administrative, legislative and judicial powers in their hands, often via violations of the Constitution.

The position and role of domestic political elites in Slovakia

The role of political elites in domestic transformations can't be underestimated. It is very important to learn how the position of domestic political elites matters for the Europeanization process, on one hand, and democratic transformations on another.

At the beginning of the 1990s in Slovakia, as in other Central and Eastern European countries, there was a general public and political consensus about the necessity to move towards integration with the European Union and NATO. CEE was perceived in the EU as part of a common European space, and it was a general point of view that these countries had to become full-fledged members of the EU. It was a strategic EU decision to have each CEE country sign an Association Agreement with the EU separately. There was a clear membership perspective for Slovakia at the very beginning of its path to transformation.

The starting point in Slovakia was thus a clear official EU position and an official agreement between the main political powers to prioritize European integration.

European integration was identical to the idea of modernization for Slovakia; modernization was perceived as inseparable from membership in the EU.³² Despite the fact that all the main political forces formally supported the idea of European integration and Europeanization of the country, in reality not all of them were in favor of European integration³³.

There were thus two important political periods in the history of independent Slovakia before its accession to the EU. The first related to Vladimir Mečiar's rule as prime minister, and the second period began after the victory of the opposition in the parliamentary elections of 1998.

³²From an interview with Alexander Duleba, political scientist, director of Research Center of Slovak Foreign Policy Association, former main coordinator of National Convention on European Future of Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 28, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

³³From an interview with Vladimír Bilčík, political scientist, specialist on EU integration processes, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, expert of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 9, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

I. 1992-1998: gap between de facto and de jure concerning European integration and Europeanization.

The political era of Vladimir Mečiar, which lasted from 1992 till 1998, is characterized not only by authoritarian trends in governance, but also by a gap between the official declaration of movement towards membership in the EU and NATO and actual policies and practices, which contradicted EU standards, EU requirements and criteria for membership.

Vladimir Mečiar even tried to develop in domestic political and public discourse the idea that Slovakia could act as a kind of bridge between West and East, remaining a neutral country like Switzerland. However, that was hardly more than a political game, because Mečiar never officially denied the priority of European integration³⁴. After the split of Czechoslovakia, a fusion of political and economic elites happened in Slovakia, which is why those elites were interested in having their domestic activity be independent of any external obligations. As a result, the populist idea of formal neutrality and preserved close relations with Russia developed in domestic discourse³⁵.

The explanation for the formal “yes” and de facto “no” on European integration was that a certain part of the political elite feared European integration for two reasons. First, they feared a full-fledged Europeanization process would bring democratic and transparent norms, especially in the field of transparent privatization. Second, they feared that opening the political system could undermine their own position³⁶.

After gaining independence, Slovakia received the same conditions for entering the EU as its neighbors the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, but undemocratic developments under Mečiar’s government made the EU issue a warning about the direction of Slovakia’s development. Slovakia faced the risk of being bypassed in the process of CEE countries’ acceding to the European Union³⁷.

As a result of the undemocratic policies of Vladimir Mečiar’s government, Slovakia fell far behind its neighbors. Political criteria were a fundamental obstacle for the Europeanization of Slovakia, and the European Union warned the Slovak government about the possibility of

³⁴From an interview with Alexander Duleba, political scientist, director of the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, former main coordinator of the National Convention on European Future of Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 28, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶From an interview with Radovan Geist, political scientist, essayist, editor of the web portal Euractive.sk. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 22, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

³⁷Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony, Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. – p. 81.

blocking Slovakia's admission³⁸. In 1995–1997 the EU continued to warn the Slovak authorities about the necessity of complying with the criteria and conditions officially defined and agreed upon by both sides. The result of these domestic elites' position, which was contradictory to the European Union's demands, was that Slovakia was excluded from the so-called "Luxembourg Group" of EU accession in 1997. According to the July 1997 European Commission Report on Associating Countries, Slovakia was defined as the only country out of ten associated countries that failed to fulfill not only the economic criteria, but the political criteria as well³⁹. At the Luxembourg summit in December 1997, Slovakia was classified in the so-called "second track" group along with Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia, while Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus were defined as "first track" countries that would begin membership negotiations first⁴⁰. The isolation developed by Mečiar's cabinet in relation to the EU resulted in the loss of the chance to conduct democratization at the same speed as the other countries with the same starting conditions for EU integration.

The situation with Euroatlantic integration seemed much worse, because at the 1998 NATO summit in Madrid, Slovakia wasn't even mentioned as a prospective candidate for NATO membership⁴¹.

In this way, the European Union and NATO issued a concrete assessment of the position and politics of the domestic elites in Slovakia. The position of Mečiar's government was de facto indifference to the pro-European vector, and this significantly hampered both European integration and the Europeanization of the country.

II. 1998 as a turning point in the Europeanization and European integration of Slovakia.

Mečiar's undemocratic domestic policies and his failure to fulfill Slovakia's pro-European objectives paradoxically created the basis for further domestic democratic consolidation in Slovakia in order to change the situation. The parliamentary elections of 1998 were the crucial turning point for the country's development strategy.

The ruling coalition, led by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, was opposed by four political parties that united to overcome Mečiar's forces and form a new government. That coalition was based mainly on a strategic consensus on opposing Mečiar and being pro-

³⁸Ibid. – p.98.

³⁹Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Martin Bútora and Thomas W.Skladony. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. – p.98.

⁴⁰Ibid – p.99.

⁴¹ Slovakia 1998-1999: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšin, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1999 – p. 167.

democratic⁴². A particular feature of that consolidation is that the united forces had different ideological backgrounds, but that didn't matter much in terms of the coalition. The EU factor was one the major issues for the opposition, which issued a call for wide public mobilization for the elections⁴³.

The center-right Slovak Democratic Coalition, centrist Party of Civic Understanding, center-right Party of Hungarian Coalition and leftist Party of the Democratic Left constituted the opposition coalition, united on the basis of the following principal positions:

- The necessity of conducting needed, if unpopular, domestic reforms, especially economic ones;
- Deep and intensive integration with the EU in order to catch up to the more successful Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland;
- Return to a transparent democratic process and methods of domestic governance⁴⁴.

Government and opposition political elites proposed different approaches to Slovakia's development with regards to European integration. While Mečiar represented a traditionalist approach (to keep Slovakia out of the Europeanization process), the opposition forces proposed a modernization approach, claiming that they would be able to make Slovakia part of the EU⁴⁵. The opposition won the parliamentary elections of 1998 and formed a government with Mikuláš Dzurinda as prime minister.

Civil society and opposition forces were involved in the democratic consolidation. The European Parliament reacted with a resolution which stated the necessity of applying a new and more flexible approach towards Slovakia in light of the new domestic political circumstances⁴⁶.

Again the position of domestic political elites appeared to be significant for the process of Europeanization and European integration. In contrast to Mečiar's government, the new ruling

⁴²From an interview with Alexander Duleba, political scientist, director of the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, former head coordinator of the National Convention on the European Future of Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 28, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁴³ From an interview with Juraj Mesík, external expert of World Bank, lecturer at Comenius University, essayist, civic activist, environmentalist, former chairman of Green Party in Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 21, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁴⁴From an interview with Alexander Duleba, political scientist, director of the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, former head coordinator of the National Convention on the European Future of Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 28, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁴⁵Interview with Radovan Geist, political scientist, essayist, editor of web-portal Euractive.sk. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 22, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁴⁶Slovakia 1998-1999: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšyn, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1999. – p. 179.

coalition demonstrated the political will to fulfill Slovakia's obligations and conduct reforms necessary for European integration. Here the role of political elites was extremely important and had a positive impact on encouraging Europeanization in the country.

Dzurinda's government started work on the development and implementation of concrete reforms. The European Commission in its 1998 report stated that the new government had the potential to change the country's standing in relation to EU political criteria, which was the main problem for Slovakia⁴⁷.

Getting back into the good graces of the EU political elites was a no less significant task for the new government, and Slovak diplomacy in 1999-2000 was concentrated on achieving a positive evaluation of Slovak democratization and Europeanization efforts⁴⁸.

The elaboration of an Action Plan, the creation of a Working Group between the European Commission and the Slovak government, and the incorporation of the *acquis* norms into national legislation contributed to Slovakia's progress in the field of European integration. In October 1999 the European Commission stated in its "Regular Report on the Preparedness of Slovakia for EU Entry" that Slovakia had fulfilled the basic criteria needed for opening entry negotiations, including fulfillment of the political criteria regarding democracy, rule of law and human and minority rights⁴⁹. Entry negotiations officially started in February 2000, opening the way for the technical procedures necessary to prepare to join the EU.

The political elites' position at this stage was even more crucial than earlier. Due to the consolidation of domestic elites, especially in the parliament, Slovakia made remarkable progress in the entry negotiations. In particular, Slovakia managed to close 22 *acquis* chapters by December 2001, fully catching up with its Visegrad partners⁵⁰.

The goal of being in the first wave of enlargement contributed very much to the further consolidation of the political elites in Slovakia in order to close all the chapters and comply with the "roadmap" deadlines proposed by the European Commission for countries aiming to enter the EU in 2004⁵¹.

⁴⁷Ibid. – p.184.

⁴⁸ Slovakia 2000: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2001. – p. 233.

⁴⁹Ibid. – p. 243.

⁵⁰Slovakia 2001: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2002 – p. 281.

⁵¹Ibid. – p.285.

This fact mobilized domestic civic and political forces in order to be among the “first wave” countries. This was another point at which the political will of domestic elites played a significant role.

In light of our theoretical perspective, it is interesting to define how conditionality, as a mechanism utilized by the EU, and domestic political will are interconnected. Conditionality is considered to be the most powerful external mechanism of Europeanization used by the EU to influence non-member states⁵². But what is the impact and effect of conditionality if there is no strong domestic political will as a supporting factor? Conditionality is considered the most powerful mechanism based on the direct impact the EU can have on the national government according to the logic of consequences: the “compulsory impact and compliance mode of governance”⁵³.

In Slovakia before 1998 the effect of Europeanization was indirect⁵⁴. We can assume this is largely due to a lack of strong domestic political will needed to strengthen conditionality from the inside. After 1998, Europeanization’s effect on the domestic transformation of Slovakia became direct, as European integration became the top foreign policy priority not only in theory, but also in practice⁵⁵. Conditionality, despite its potential to transform domestic reality, isn’t successful without the domestic political will to absorb Europeanization, at least in the form of institutional and policy reforms. The Slovak history of Europeanization and European integration processes proved that domestic political will defines to what extent the mechanisms and opportunities provided by conditionality can be used. In Slovakia, external incentives needed to be implemented and supported by internal actors.

The position and role of domestic political elites in Ukraine

As previously mentioned, the starting conditions for Europeanization and European integration in Ukraine and in Slovakia were different. In contrast to Slovakia, Ukraine didn’t get a European membership perspective after gaining independence. This factor was and still is extremely important for many domestic issues, including the formulation of political elites’ position. In

⁵²Schimmelfennig, F. Europeanization Beyond Europe. //Living Rev. Euro. Gov. 2 (2007), 1. Publ. by Connecting Excellence on European Governance (CONNEX) on 31 July, 2007 – p. 7. – Available at: <http://europeangovernance.livingreviews.org/Articles/lreg-2007-1/>

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴ From an interview with Radovan Geist, political scientist, essayist, editor of the web portal Euractive.sk. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 22, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁵⁵Ibid.

contrast to Slovakia, in Ukraine the question of foreign policy priority even at the official level was an open one. During almost the entire period of Ukrainian independence, European and Euroatlantic integration was not a strategic choice made on the basis of agreement between political elites.

After gaining independence, Ukraine proclaimed its pro-European choice in the decree “On the Main Directions of Foreign Policy of Ukraine,” which was adopted on July 2, 1993 by the Ukrainian parliament. That document proclaimed future membership in the EU as a prospective goal of Ukrainian foreign policy on the condition that it wouldn’t hamper the national interests of Ukraine⁵⁶. (The decree has not been in force since July 20, 2010). Nevertheless, this idea didn’t become a strategic basis for the start of European integration policies in Ukraine. The period between 1991 and 1994 (from the proclamation of independence until the second presidential election) was a period of establishing the foundations of the domestic political system and political competition between communist and democratic forces in the parliament. Nevertheless, the foreign policy positions of the main domestic political actors can be characterized as following: the communists of the so-called “239 group,” which was in the majority, were in favor of an Eastern integration direction, particularly with other post-Soviet republics. The democratic forces (the so-called National Council, which made up the democratic opposition in the parliament) were also not strategically pro-European; they were more interested in national state-building, and domestic issues were more important to them than the issue of integration into the EU, although its standards and values appeared to be attractive.

Thus, from the very beginning, Ukraine’s relationship with the EU developed as one of partnership, not future membership, and was aimed at deepening bilateral cooperation in various fields and sectors. This was proved by the development and signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Ukraine and the EU in 1994 (although it didn’t come into force until full ratification in 1998). This agreement was the main document providing a legal basis for bilateral relations between the EU and Ukraine. The PCA was completely different from the Association Agreements which CEE countries signed with the EU, on the basis of which they started their integration into the European Union.

These are the general elements underlying the difference between the legal, political and institutional basis of Slovakia–EU and Ukraine–EU relations, which created the background for

⁵⁶ Постанова Верховної Ради України №3360-12 «Про Основні напрями зовнішньої політики України від 2 липня 1993 р. (втратила чинність від 20 липня 2010 р.). – Режим доступу: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3360-12/conv>.

the different behavior of domestic political elites in these countries concerning the European integration issue.

Leonid Kuchma: idea of “Eurasian space”

During his presidential campaign the second president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, raised the issue of a “Eurasian space,” which would entail forging much closer relations with Russia and giving the Russian language the status of the official state language. But after Kuchma was elected, he changed his position to one of “multi-vector diplomacy.” In practice, this meant movement from Russia and the Eurasian space toward the West, with a focus on state-building. In general, Kuchma followed this logic of multiple vectors during both his first (1994–1999) and his second presidential terms (1999–2004). However, the policy didn’t provide a concrete and well-defined foreign policy choice or give clear priority to a certain direction of integration⁵⁷. Ukraine’s relations with West and East were more or less balanced. It was during Kuchma’s period that Ukraine signed important international agreements such as the aforementioned PCA with the European Union on one hand, and the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership with the Russian Federation on the other. Nevertheless, Kuchma’s position didn’t facilitate Europeanization processes within the country. The PCA didn’t create wide opportunities for complex reforms and overall transformation.

As stated above, despite being a very powerful EU instrument, conditionality can’t be fully successful in influencing domestic political reality if there is no domestic political will and capacity to absorb external processes and facilitate Europeanization’s impact on domestic transformations. Ukraine in Kuchma’s era didn’t have the type of relations with the EU through which conditionality or other instruments of direct impact could successfully be used. In addition, the policy of “multi-vector diplomacy” meant that political elites were not aiming for Europeanization of the country. Having many vectors means taking half-steps towards each strategic foreign partner. In this situation, domestic political elites were more involved in domestic state-building and struggling for power within domestic political system.

Viktor Yushchenko: lost European hopes

⁵⁷ Хоменко С. Епоха Кучми: десять неоднозначних кроків//Офіційний сайт Служби ВВС: Україна. – 9 серпня 2013 – Режим доступу: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2013/08/130809_kuchma_epoch_sx.shtml

During his election campaign in 2004, Viktor Yushchenko appealed for European standards and reforms to be implemented in Ukraine, for European values to be widespread in Ukrainian society, for social justice and fighting against corruption, and for the general democratization and Europeanization of Ukraine. His presidential term was the most promising in terms of Ukraine's proceeding on the way to European integration. Nevertheless, neither the Orange Revolution itself nor its results – the coming to power of democratic forces – were strong arguments for the European Union to entertain the prospect of Ukraine's membership in the EU.

In 2004 Ukraine became part of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which has been an instrument for the EU to deal with a wide range of countries that differ in terms of their development and aspirations in regard to the EU. From Ukraine's point of view, this policy was unsatisfactory because it placed Ukraine in the same category as countries which didn't have plans to join the EU and/or are ineligible for EU membership (like Arab countries). The fact that Ukraine belonged to the ENP shaped the formal basis of bilateral relations, adding new programs and mechanisms for bilateral cooperation, but nevertheless the spirit of these relations remained that of a neighbor partnership. The Orange Revolution had proved that democratization processes could take place within the country. That was the moment when the European Union could have changed its approach towards Ukraine, which had officially proclaimed its European aspirations. However, that didn't happen. Ukraine entered a new phase of political and social reality, one that provided a favorable background for reshaping its relations with the EU. One possible option was giving the prospect of membership to Ukraine.

The most positive signal to Ukraine came from the European Parliament in a resolution passed on January 13, 2005. The EP in that resolution called “on the Council and the Commission to consider at the same time revision of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan, which must take into account the new situation, thus giving the new Ukrainian Government the opportunity to renegotiate the Plan in light of its deep aspirations for European integration”⁵⁸. Moreover, in the same resolution the EP recalled the “provisions of Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union, which state that EU membership is an option for all European countries that satisfy the relevant conditions and obligations”⁵⁹. However, these proposals were not developed in any other documents, particularly in the Action Plan between Ukraine and the EU. Adopted in February 2005 (just in a month after the EP's positive resolution), the Plan contained no mention of European prospects for Ukraine. The draft of the Plan was prepared before the presidential

⁵⁸European Parliament resolution on the results of the Ukrainian elections, January 13, 2005 – Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2005-0009&language=EN>

⁵⁹Ibid.

elections, but despite the results of elections, the Plan wasn't changed. Thus, when domestic will appeared, there was no suitable reaction on the side of the EU.

After that, Ukraine faced the challenge of competition and confrontation between certain democratic political forces which were counterparts during the Orange Revolution. Competition between President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Tymoshenko and parliamentary crises led to inefficiency in any attempts to conduct complex reforms, and thus to the incapacity of domestic political elites to make good progress on domestic changes. In the situation with Ukraine, the inflexible position of the EU proved that progress in the fields of Europeanization and European integration would mainly depend on positive and effective domestic changes. Ukraine failed to do that, to a great extent because of the unstable political situation, with cleavages between the President, the Prime Minister and the parliament. Thus, political forces which were democratic in their nature and were in favor of European and Euroatlantic integration failed to fulfill the most important domestic condition needed for a successful process of Europeanization: unity, consensus and an agreed strategic approach towards transformation of the country from inside. Since domestic will and transformation capacity had not been met with a positive reaction on the part of the EU, the domestic conditions weren't fulfilled and the Europeanization process lost a huge part of its potential to influence the domestic reality of Ukraine. The EU appeared to be neither closed to Ukraine nor open, as it needed to be in order to push domestic elites to a more united and coherent position. Due to long-term political crises, even the legislative basis of the first stage of reform implementation wasn't created on the necessary scale. The promotion of Ukraine as a prospective EU member, which President Yushchenko tried to propagate in the West, was hampered by domestic political struggles and lack of necessary Ukraine-driven reforms.

Thus, the Europeanization policy of President Yushchenko appeared to be counterproductive, and the rather passive and contemplative position of the EU was counterproductive too. As a result, not just the process but even the necessity of European integration and Europeanization came under question during the 2010 presidential campaign of one of the candidates: Viktor Yanukovich.

Viktor Yanukovich: to be or not to be pro-European politician?

All these problems in Ukraine–EU relations, and especially the apparently indifferent position of the EU, were used by Viktor Yanukovich in his election campaign, which he based on issues

polarizing Ukrainian society. The main electorate of Yanukovych was in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, mainly pro-Russian and Russian-speaking voters. Yanukovych emphasized that if the West wasn't interested in Ukraine, the latter should turn towards Russia. The main effect of such an anti-Western election campaign was polarization of the country and reinforcement of the split that appeared during the Orange Revolution.

After Yanukovych became president, he started to backslide from democracy and cripple the democratic achievements the country had managed to reach before 2010 even amid political instability. These problems with democracy threatened Ukraine's progress on European integration, since negotiations on a new, enhanced agreement instead of a PCA (which was approaching its 2008 expiration date) had already begun. The development of an EU–Ukraine Association Agreement was in progress, as was a visa liberalization process. It is interesting that when anti-democratic trends appeared in Ukraine, the EU became much more interested in closer and deeper relations. Yushchenko's attempts to spur the abolition of visas for Ukrainians didn't get the needed support of the EU⁶⁰. When the danger of losing democratic achievements in Ukraine appeared, the EU started more actively attempting to influence the situation in Ukraine.

As a result, the Association Agreement, whose destiny will be decided in November 2013 at the Vilnius summit, was proposed as a complex roadmap for deep and comprehensive integration between Ukraine and the EU in both the political and economic fields.

Since 2010 the EU has more frequently and clearly reacted to the domestic development of Ukraine. In general, it is possible to say that from the beginning of 2010 to the middle of 2013, EU–Ukraine relations and Europeanization in a broader sense were in deep crisis because of the destructive role of domestic political elites and their position towards the EU. While proclaiming officially that European integration was the most significant foreign policy priority, in fact the Ukrainian authorities' policy was not pro-European. In light of the topic – the role of domestic political elites – this period (until the middle of 2013) can be viewed as the best example of how important the position of domestic elites is for the development of Europeanization processes.

Backsliding from democracy, limitations of freedom of the press, monopolization of power, violations of the law and Constitution, adoption of legislative acts contradicting the Constitution of Ukraine (such as the Law on Referendum, one of the most dangerous of these acts), fusion of economic and political powers, problems of selective justice, and persecution of political

⁶⁰For more on that, see policy papers prepared by the Stefan Batory Foundation: Jakub Boratynsky and Anita Szymborska, *Neighbours and Visas. Recommendations for a Friendly European Union Visa Policy* (Warsaw, September 2006); *Visa Policies of European Union Member States. Monitoring Report* (Warsaw, June 2006)

opposition's leaders are only some of the domestic results of authorities' policies within the country. These trends became real obstacles for EU–Ukraine relations and led to several very critical European Parliament resolutions on the situation in Ukraine, raising general dissatisfaction on the part of the EU and member states' leaders with the state of the Ukrainian political system. All this happened despite the fact that the new law defining Ukrainian foreign policy priorities has been in force since 2010. The Law “On Foundations of Domestic and Foreign Policy” was adopted on July 1, 2010 (initiated by the ruling powers and President Yanukovich) and specified that while Ukraine wouldn't aim to join NATO anymore, European integration remained the primary direction of integration according to the Law⁶¹. Nevertheless, the situation was different in reality.

The 2012 parliamentary elections had become the litmus test of democracy in Ukraine. However, violations of the appropriate counting votes procedures, problems with defining the final results and cases of falsification led to a rather critical report from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with a number of recommendations to be satisfied (in both interim and final reports)⁶². After initialing the text of the Association Agreement in March 2012, such developments were vitally important for future decisions on how to proceed with bilateral relations. On December 8, 2012, the Council of the EU (in the format of the Foreign Affairs Council) adopted Conclusions on Ukraine, defining three main fields where Ukraine had to show tangible progress in order for the Association Agreement to be signed. Those fields are: 1) elections, including adoption of the Electoral Code, implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations regarding the disadvantages and problems which appeared during the parliamentary elections of 2012, guaranteeing equal access of all political competitors to media coverage, etc.; 2) solving the problem of selective justice and creating mechanisms for preventing selective justice in the future; 3) implementation of reforms according to the Association Agenda⁶³. Later, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and the ENP, Štefan Füle, presented 19 criteria for signing the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.

The Association Agreement is not the main topic here and deserves separate research, but it is important to note as evidence of how the European agenda was influenced by the position of domestic elites on one hand, and how European issues and the prospect of Europeanization influenced domestic political elites on the other. Europeanization's impact on domestic

⁶¹ Закон України №2411-VI “Про засади внутрішньої і зовнішньої політики, від 1 липня 2010 р. – Режим доступу: офіційний сайт Верховної Ради України: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17>

⁶² For more information on the topic, see OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, January 3, 2013. – Available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/98578>

⁶³ For more information on the topic, see Council of the European Union Conclusions on Ukraine. – December 10, 2012. – Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134136.pdf

transformations in Ukraine became significant at the point of the deepest-ever crisis in EU–Ukraine relations at the beginning of 2013, when the EU defined its position as a very strict one and demanded that Ukraine fulfill concrete criteria in order to have the Association Agreement signed.

Ukraine is currently witnessing a kind of mobilization and cooperation between the opposition and the authorities in order to make at least some measure of progress in significant areas and to sign the AA this year in Vilnius. United Opposition (“Batkivshchyna,” UDAR and “Svoboda”) have demonstrated the ability to reach a compromise in the name of European reforms and to vote for the majority of so-called “Eurointegrational” laws together. Civil society has also mobilized and pushed politicians towards this kind of cooperation. United Opposition’s processes of mobilizing and uniting are based on certain strategic ideas agreed upon between ideologically different parties and supported by all three. European integration and the Europeanization of Ukraine are among those ideas shared and supported by all. Thus European integration issues are also important for unification and mobilization of the opposition, though the general basis for this unification is competition with the current political regime, wherein power is monopolized by the president, “his” majority in the parliament and “his” government.

Speaking of the role of conditionality, it is necessary to underline that in the case of Ukraine there have been some specific trends. On one hand, conditionality really didn’t matter much due to Ukraine’s status as an ENP-covered country, although the option of joining the EU was open and realistic from the point of view of eligibility. Conditionality was not a strong instrument used by the EU when it came to Ukraine. On the other hand, conditionality became more important when Ukraine started to backslide from democracy and the European integration path in practice. The real precedent of using strict instead of weak conditionality towards Ukraine was the aforementioned decision of the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU on December 10, 2012, and appeared later on Füle’s list of 19 requirements to be satisfied by Ukraine in order to sign the Association Agreement. What Ukraine has been witnessing since mid-2013 is more or less a conditionality relationship with the EU, where strict requirements are given by the EU and further progress in bilateral relations depends on the manner in which Ukraine implements those requirements. Obviously, the European agenda has pushed Europeanization and to some extent a return to democratic standards.

To make some interim conclusions about Slovakia and Ukraine in this part of the paper, it must be emphasized that while the position and role of political elites in these countries differ to a great extent, nevertheless there are some similarities. The main difference is that in Slovakia, at

least on a formal, official level, no one of the main political parties was against European integration and the necessity of moving towards EU membership. This was a facilitating factor for the Europeanization process. But on a realistic level, not all the political forces were in favor of European standards being implemented in Slovakia, as this could hamper their domestic position, power and influence. In the period of Vladimir Mečiar, Slovakia officially proclaimed its interest in EU membership, but authoritarian trends and a lack of domestic political will made conditionality a rather weak and ineffective instrument. Democratization and Europeanization were among the most important issues on the basis of which opposition forces united and started reforms after their victory in the parliamentary election of 1998.

In Ukraine there was no strategic position shared by all political elites on the priority or character of relations with the EU. In contrast to Slovakia, even on an official level there was no real consensus among political elites. Ukrainian policy embodied a kind of pendulum on this question: multi-vector diplomacy under President Kuchma, then a clearly pro-European position under President Yushchenko and other so-called Orange forces – which was accompanied by the rise of democracy within the country at the same time – then the anti-Western and pro-Russian slogans of the current President Yanukovich with the rollback of democracy, the gap between the de facto and de jure dimensions of European integration, and the slow return to the EU path in order to sign the Association Agreement. The period of Mečiar's rule in Slovakia can be compared with Yanukovich's era in Ukraine: formally "yes" to Europeanization and thus democratization, but practically "no," because Europeanization in both cases was largely identical to undermining a political system based on monopolization and undemocratic use of power within the country. Nevertheless, despite his true motives, Yanukovich has started fulfillment of at least some of the EU requirements, and the impact of Europeanization on democratization of the country has a chance to become significant.

The institutional and coordination structure for European integration and Europeanization processes: the case of Slovakia

The institutional and coordination basis matters much more for European integration than for Europeanization, one can suppose. But nevertheless, the impact of Europeanization on domestic transformations can't be successful if there is no good structure with the help of which or on the basis of which this impact can be implemented into practice. Thus it can be said that a good organization and coordination structure is a channel mechanism that makes Europeanization's impact possible and defines to what extent it will be effective. In this section of the paper we

won't go deep into descriptions of all the institutions involved in the process of Europeanization-related changes and policies. Instead we propose to look at the general logic of coordination, and the coherence and complexity of this process from an organizational point of view.

It was already mentioned in the previous part of the paper that the impact of Europeanization on Slovakia's transformation started when domestic political will appeared and real reformation was already being initiated and conducted from the inside. This began in 1998, when Dzurinda ousted Mečiar from the post of prime minister. However, the coordination structure for Europeanization and European integration had already been created when the new government was formed. Technically, people – specialists in how to implement pro-European reforms – were already in place before the new government came to power. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs had been involved in negotiations for several years. Thus in 1998, when the highest levels of domestic political will appeared, there were already skilled people who knew how to facilitate an intensive and quick transformation. This was very valuable in the period before 2000 – the official start of negotiations on accession. The main discussion within the country at that time centered around:

- What do we have (mainly in terms of a legislative basis) and how much needs to be done?
- To what extent should we implement this or that requirement?⁶⁴

Thus, among concrete institutions on coordination, the most important was the *Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia*. It was responsible for the general coordination of the process of fulfilling accession requirements, controlling the implementation of reforms and negotiating the terms of accession⁶⁵. A very important obstacle to the Slovak MFA's functioning was a series of rather frequent leadership changes in the mid-1990s⁶⁶, adding difficulty to an already highly difficult process. In fact, from 1993 to 1996 there were six different foreign affairs ministers, which didn't facilitate EU-Slovak relations⁶⁷.

After the turning point of 1998, the Slovak MFA became a strong coordination center which, like an umbrella, covered all the directions of domestic transformations needed for European

⁶⁴ From an interview with Vladimír Bilčík, political scientist, specialist on EU integration processes, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, expert of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 9, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁶⁵ From an interview with Vladimír Bilčík, political scientist, specialist on EU integration processes, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, expert of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 9, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁶⁶ Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. –p.82

⁶⁷ Ibid.

integration of the country. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs was at the top of the coordination system.

Domestic ministries can be considered the next level in the coordination structure. Sectoral ministries worked on development of concrete measures, initiatives, laws, and implementation of standards, although general coordination of how the EU-related agenda was implemented fell under the MFA's purview⁶⁸. The ministries took individual positions on various chapters that had to be closed for accession to the EU⁶⁹.

The position of *Deputy Foreign Minister for Integration* at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was a distinctive one in this structure. In particular, his competency included overseeing the EU pre-accession funds; he was also responsible for domestic communication (mainly with the public) on European integration and Europeanization's changes. For example, he was responsible for developing a communication strategy for the referendum of 2003 (on joining the EU). The government as a whole, on one hand, and Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a separate and very active body on the other, can be regarded together as a good pair which worked effectively in tandem for European integration policy⁷⁰. This is because of the great significance of the Government in European integration policy; it had a huge impact on EU-Slovakia relations when Vladimir Mečiar's Cabinet concentrated executive power in its own hands after Kováč's presidential term ended⁷¹. Despite the fact that, in terms of the implementation of reforms, the position of the president was rather weak, it was valuable in terms of diplomatic work and the representation of Slovakia abroad that a pro-European president tried to counterbalance the authoritarian and disinterested prime minister.

When EU integration really started in 1998, the National Program for the Adoption of Acquis Communautaire (NPAA) was developed. Coordinating the implementation of this program was the responsibility of the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Integration. 29 working groups topically coinciding with chapters-related agendas were created and scattered among ministries and other central authorities' bodies. These groups were coordinated by the Deputy Foreign

⁶⁸ From an interview with Andrea Elscheková Matisová, director general of the section of European affairs at the MFA, former head of the EU representation in Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 11, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁶⁹ From an interview with Vladimír Bilčík, political scientist, specialist on EU integration processes, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, expert of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 9, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁷⁰ From an interview with Jan Figel', Vice-chairman of the parliament, chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement, former state secretary (vice-minister) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia's main negotiator with the EU.

⁷¹ Slovakia 1998-1999: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšin, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1999 – p. 177.

Affairs Minister⁷². As a result, these working groups made the general system of coordination even clearer. In the Action Plan adopted in February 1999, institutional security of the integration process was stated among the most important priorities⁷³. Besides that, the Action Plan was meant to ensure effective implementation of the NPAA, optimize the use of EU financial aid, provide education for civil servants in the area of integration processes, and identify government strategy for communication in the integration field⁷⁴. It was proof of the creation of a clear and coherent system of coordination and institutional support for integration processes on different levels.

The Slovak National Council (the parliament) was less active in this process in the sense of being the driving or coordination center, but was extremely important in the process of creating and approving legislation, which was part of the general process of European integration and helped spur Europeanization. The parliamentary Committee on European Integration and the Joint Committee of the European Parliament and the National Council were important firstly for their legislative expertise on the EU-related laws, and secondly for communication and negotiation between the political elites of Slovakia and those of the EU⁷⁵. In the field of foreign policy, the National Council intensified its activity in the period from 1999 to 2000. At that time, the parliamentary European Integration Committee significantly strengthened its control over integration processes and domestic preparations for accession⁷⁶.

However, coordination of European integration was far from perfect, and suffered from internal inconsistencies and problems. For example, the MFA of Slovakia was quite simply overcrowded; there was duplication and overlap of organizational functions by different executives and departments⁷⁷. The Foreign Policy Section which existed in President Kováč's office was cancelled by the next president Rudolf Schuster, significantly weakening the president's role in foreign affairs⁷⁸. Another important problem was a lack of coherence that existed not only inside some institutions, but also between different actors involved in foreign policy issues. There was a long-term conflict between the executive branch (Mečiar and his

⁷² Slovakia 1998-1999: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšyn, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1999 – p.181.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. – p.182.

⁷⁵ Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. – p.83

⁷⁶ Slovakia 2000: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2001. – p.238.

⁷⁷ Slovakia 2000: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2001. – p.236.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

government) and the president, which really hampered European integration policy and Europeanization processes in Slovakia in the mid-1990s.

Nevertheless, even with these inconsistencies, the general system for coordination of European integration was already created in Slovakia even before pro-European forces came to power. Under the democratic government that preexisting system was simply made into a working one. Domestic political will again appeared as a vitally important domestic condition for the success of Europeanization processes. As soon as politicians aimed at joining the EU formed a government, the system of coordination started working. As some argue, there were no serious obstacles for Europeanization to have an impact on domestic transformations in Slovakia because there were no more political obstacles after 1998. Civil society supported the European future of Slovakia, and public opinion was pro-European at that time⁷⁹. Taking all that into consideration, the only one really important question left was how to coordinate the process, in which all the main actors were interested⁸⁰. In light of the necessary “catching up” policy, the coordination structure was rather clear and functional in Slovakia. This was a factor facilitating the general process of Europeanization and its impact on the transformation of Slovakia.

The institutional and coordination structure for European integration and Europeanization processes: the case of Ukraine

To begin, it is necessary to again clarify that the institutional facilitation of Europeanization and European integration processes in a given country will probably depend on the general relations between that country and the EU. In particular, the accession process to a great extent defined the model of the institutional basis for European integration coordination in Slovakia. It can be assumed, that in the case of Ukraine, there are differences predetermined by the fact that it formally falls within the European Neighborhood Policy framework and had no membership perspective as a driving motive for reform. Nevertheless, it is both possible and necessary to look more precisely at how the coordination of European integration and Europeanization is organized in Ukraine and whether it works.

⁷⁹ Interview with Andrea Elscheková Matisová, director general of section of European affairs at the MFA, former head of the EU representation in Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 11, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The institutional ensuring of the European integration process is defined primarily in the Strategy of the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (developed and adopted by the president in 1998 with several amendments, the last of which was made in 2011)⁸¹.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the EU dictated the creation of several joint bodies:

- The Council on Cooperation between Ukraine and EU;
- The Committee on Cooperation between Ukraine and EU;
- The Committee on parliamentary Cooperation⁸².

The main responsibility of the Council was defined as supervision of the PCA implementation and solving any other issues arising in bilateral relations⁸³. The Committee on Cooperation is responsible for providing the Council with all necessary information and assistance for its effective functioning⁸⁴. The Ukrainian parts of these joint bodies are staffed by representatives of the Ukrainian government, and the Ukrainian prime minister is the head of the Ukrainian delegation to the Joint Council on Cooperation⁸⁵.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine acts in the system as a legislative body, defining the foundations of domestic and foreign policies and working on European integration issues within its Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on European Integration⁸⁶. Of course, the main responsibility for adoption of European-oriented laws is in the parliament's hands.

The president of Ukraine has a rather strong position in the general coordination of European integration and Europeanization processes. This position was even more strengthened after the return to the Ukrainian Constitution of 1996 and the semi-presidential form of government with

⁸¹ Указ Президента України «Про затвердження Стратегії інтеграції України до Європейського Союзу» від 11.06.1998 №615/98. – Режим доступу: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/615/98>

⁸² Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/ Інституційне забезпечення європейської інтеграції – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?showHidden=1&art_id=230525707&cat_id=223236991

⁸³ Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/Рада з питань співробітництва між Україною та ЄС – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article%3fart_id=224364185&cat_id=223337121

⁸⁴ Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/Комітет з питань співробітництва між Україною та ЄС – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article%3fart_id=223311290&cat_id=223310528

⁸⁵ Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/ Інституційне забезпечення європейської інтеграції – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?showHidden=1&art_id=230525707&cat_id=223236991

⁸⁶ Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/ Інституційне забезпечення європейської інтеграції – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?showHidden=1&art_id=230525707&cat_id=223236991

the president's role dominating. The president conducts the overall coordination and supervision of foreign policy, guides the Strategy of the Integration of Ukraine into the EU and represents the country at the highest level of bilateral political dialogue: the Ukraine–EU annual summits⁸⁷. According to his constitutional competencies, it is the president who signs the legislative acts which are adopted in the parliament, signs international agreements, nominates the prime minister to the parliament, and appoints members of the government on the basis of the prime minister's proposal⁸⁸.

The prime minister nowadays heads the Ukrainian part of the Joint Council on Cooperation and the Coordination Council on Adaptation of Legislation of Ukraine to Legislation of the EU⁸⁹. Moreover, the prime minister as a head of the main executive body has competencies to control how the sectoral ministries and other central executive bodies fulfill their individual roles. Domestic coordination of “Eurointegrational” reforms are conducted in the framework of the Ukrainian part of the Joint Council and Joint Committee⁹⁰, which are staffed by members or representatives of the Government.

At first glance, it seems that the coordination and institutional security of European-related policies and activities is rather developed and clear in Ukraine. Technically, it is more or less established and capable for coordination activities. In general the system looks as following:

- The government, simply speaking, is responsible for the executive part of the work, domestic coordination and monitoring of the effectiveness of European integration; the prime minister as the head of executive branch leads at the same time the Ukrainian part of the Joint Council and of the Coordination Council on Adaptation of Legislation; governmental officials who are responsible for domestic policies' development and implementation are members of the joint bodies. Thus, executives at the domestic level are fully involved in the formulation of the EU-Ukraine agenda and have opportunities to make domestic policies and European integration policy coincide.
- The parliament deals mainly with what measures should be adopted for progress in EU–Ukraine relations. Under the current form of government, the parliament can't be

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Детальніше див. Розділ V Конституції України. – Режим доступу: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80/page2>

⁸⁹ Дані з офіційного сайту веб-порталу органів виконавчої влади України/ Інституційне забезпечення європейської інтеграції – Режим доступу: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?showHidden=1&art_id=230525707&cat_id=223236991

⁹⁰ Ibid.

omitted in the political process, but it is not the driving body and it mainly has to adopt what is supported by the president and the government;

- The president can actually be considered the most important political link in this structure. Despite the fact that it is the government who conducts the greater part of coordination work, it is the president who should be regarded as the more influential unit. This is because, under the present modification of the semi-presidential model, the possibility of a government totally opposed to the president is almost impossible. The president chooses whom to nominate to the post of prime minister, decides whether this or that person is suitable for a minister's position, and controls the executive chain of command. The president appears to be on the top, as the actor with the potential to directly or indirectly control other bodies involved in coordination process.

On one hand, this system has some advantages, such as the possibility to push the process forward from the very top of the coordination structure. This has been happening in Ukraine recently as the country is trying to fulfill at least some requirements in order to sign Association Agreement. It would be impossible without the President's political will, as the government and majority in the parliament are made up of his supporters. On the other hand, the main disadvantage of such a system is that, if there is no political will and forceful decision-making at the highest level, then the whole system of coordination will start to slow. In this situation, external impulses and stricter conditionality gain an even greater importance, because conditional pressure from the outside can intensify coordination and institutional ensuring of European integration, much like what happens in Enlargement Europeanization cases. Another disadvantage of this system is the fact that it is less flexible and clumsier than desired. Ideally, the president shouldn't be the last and ultimately supervisory link (both officially and unofficially) in the coordination structure, as well the prime minister shouldn't. The best possible solution is the assignment of a discrete person responsible for European integration who will coordinate the general process. There are many different options available; it could be the job of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration or even the Minister. The most important thing is that this post should be a separate one, but should exist at the highest level of the executive branch and with a wide circle of competencies in its area. There has been only one attempt to implement this idea: Oleh Rybachuk was assigned as Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration in the first government of Yuliya Tymoshenko in 2005, but that government was only in operation from February to September 2005. No Cabinet of Ministers either before or after Tymoshenko's first government has included a separate post for European

integration, though in the second government of Tymoshenko Grigoriy Nemyrya was a Deputy Prime Minister responsible for foreign policy in general.

Thus, from a technical point of view, the Ukrainian system of coordination and institutional ensuring of European integration was founded in the late 1990s according to the Strategy of Integration of Ukraine into the EU. This system was broadened by adding some new bodies as a response to changes in the bilateral relations agenda. Nowadays, the coordination system in Ukraine can be rather effective, but its effectiveness depends to a large extent on political will at the highest level, because after the return to the constitution of 1996, the president is both formally and informally the main supervising link in the system. The president can encourage as well as slow the general process of support and coordination of European integration and the Europeanization process. The most optimal way to increase the effectiveness of the coordination structure is to make it more transparent, functionally less dependent on the political will of any officials, and clear about the division of competencies between different actors involved.

The role of public opinion in the process of Europeanization in Slovakia

Public opinion is one of the main topics of interest to this paper because public attitude towards certain issues can either facilitate or slow transformation processes. Public opinion very often appears to have some connection to the positions of political elites, which can try to react to people's preferences, manipulate public opinion, influence public opinion, etc. Public attitude toward strategically important issues is a significant domestic factor that also influences the success and practical implementation of certain ideas, policies and transformations which are on the agenda. In this part of the paper, we will look at the general attitude of the public towards European integration, dynamics of changes in public opinion, and links between political elites' positions and public opinion about European integration (i.e. the electoral dimension of public opinion).

The Institute for Public Affairs measured public attitude towards the European Union according to two chief criteria: the credibility of this institution among citizens of Slovakia, and public support for Slovakia's efforts to join the European Union⁹¹.

At the beginning of the 1990s the credibility of the EU was relatively low in Slovakia, and in 1993, when Slovakia became an independent country, most citizens had a rather vague idea

⁹¹ Slovakia 2000: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2001. – p.223.

about what the foreign policy priorities of Slovakia should be⁹². However, the situation changed in the first years after gaining independence, and trust for the EU began to prevail over distrust. More people became proponents of the view that a pro-Western orientation was more advantageous than, for example, some kind of “third way.”⁹³ This positive attitude towards the EU was further strengthened by consensus among political elites as well as by the EU’s clear and open policy toward Slovakia’s membership⁹⁴.

In the period of Mečiar’s administration from 1994 to 1998, when Slovakia drifted away from democracy, the pro-Western orientation of the population became even stronger⁹⁵. In particular, in 1993 57% of Slovak citizens had confidence in the EU as an institution, while 28% didn’t. In 1994 the numbers had changed to 48% and 28% respectively. In 1995, 55% and 20%, and in 1997, 48% trusted the EU while 22% didn’t⁹⁶.

In the case of a hypothetical referendum where people would have to vote for or against Slovakia’s integration into the EU, in 1995 a public opinion poll showed that 59% of citizens would have said “yes” to joining the EU, and a 1997 poll showed 56%. This result was identical to 82% of affirmative participants to the hypothetical referendum⁹⁷.

In 1996-1997 the issue of foreign policy was very popular in public discussion, and was encouraged by the growing understanding that there was a huge gap between what was proclaimed by authorities and what was indeed done⁹⁸. People understood that the ruling coalition was not able to conduct European and Euroatlantic integration effectively and successfully. In particular, in November 1996 54% of the Slovak population thought that the ruling coalition wouldn’t lead to Slovakia’s integration into Euroatlantic structures⁹⁹, and 58% of Slovaks thought that the main reason for the expected exclusion of Slovakia from the first wave of NATO enlargement was the ruling coalition’s refusal to provide more democratic policies, despite numerous warnings¹⁰⁰.

Warnings from the Western partners to Slovak authorities proved that Slovakia was running the risk of falling outside the broader integration process in which its neighbors were having more success. As a result, the arguments of opposition forces became more convincing to the broad

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid. – p.224.

⁹⁶ Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. – p.74.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid. – p. 73.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

public¹⁰¹, a fact which played a crucial role in the election results of 1998. But we should keep in mind that there were no differences in attitudes towards the EU between followers of different political parties. In particular, in July 1997 66% of voters for the ruling coalition (HZDS-SNS-ZRS, led by Vladimir Mečiar), supported Slovakia's membership in the EU. Despite different electoral preferences, voters of different political parties were in favor of entering the EU. (See Table 1 below.)¹⁰² There was a difference in the share of those who supported joining the EU, but among voters of all political forces "yes" to EU membership prevailed over "no" to integration into the EU.

Table 1. **Do you support the integration of Slovakia into the EU? (%)**

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, July 1997

Political affiliation	Yes	No	Don't know
HZDS-SNS-ZRS	66	25	9
Slovak Democratic Coalition	93	4	3
Hungarian Coalition	92	1	7
SDL'	90	8	2
Non-voters	57	20	23
Undecided	67	14	19
Total population	76	14	10

Thus, particularly crucial features of public opinion towards the EU in Slovakia before 1998 are as follows:

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid. – p.75.

- The pro-Western orientation among the population was strengthening during the first years of independence, along with the understanding that the ruling coalition could not integrate the country into the EU and NATO and as a result Slovakia was decelerating in the field of European integration in comparison to its neighbors;
- There was broad consensus to support efforts on joining the EU across all segments of Slovak society (across groups differentiated by means of age, sex, education, place of living, electoral preferences, etc.)¹⁰³. The majority of men and women, lesser and better educated people, and citizens from rural and urban areas were in favor of joining the European Union.
- European integration was supported not only by the majority of the population, but also by the majority of opinion-makers in Slovakia. According to Eurobarometer data from October 1996, 84% of opinion-makers expressed a positive attitude towards integration into the EU¹⁰⁴.

The European integration issue was one of the most important for mobilization of opposition voters in the 1998 elections, and for the mobilization and unification of opposition forces themselves. It was a strategic point which was supported as one of the foundations for mobilization of the opposition. Public support for European integration in this context held major importance¹⁰⁵. The opposition to Mečiar blamed him for falling behind the schedule of the integration process and appealed to the broad public to mobilize around the elections against the ruling coalition¹⁰⁶. It was during the 1998 election campaign when the interests of a certain part of the political elite and the broad public coincided.

After the electoral victory of the opposition, a paradox appeared in the field of public opinion. In November 1998 52% of the Slovak population expected an improvement in Slovakia's chances to join the EU, but at the same time general support for Slovakia's efforts to join the Union dropped; while in October 1997 this support was on the level of 74% of population, in January 1999 it was fixed at 62%¹⁰⁷(see Table 2). This drop was mainly due to the disappointment of HZDS and SNS followers, as these parties had lost power. At that time the difference between

¹⁰³ Slovakia 1996-1997: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Martin Bútora and Thomas W.Skladony. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1998. – p.75.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ From an interview with Radovan Geist, political scientist, essayist, editor of the web portal Euractive.sk. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 22, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

¹⁰⁶ From an interview with Juraj Mesík, external expert of World Bank, lecturer at Comenius University, essayist, civic activist, environmentalist, former chairman of the Green Party in Slovakia. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on August 21, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

¹⁰⁷ Slovakia 1998-1999: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšin, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 1999 – p.152.

levels of support for European integration among voters of different parties was larger than ever before, but among followers of every party there were still more supporters of European integration than opponents¹⁰⁸.

Table 2. Do you support Slovakia's efforts to join the EU? (%)¹⁰⁹

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999-2000

	January 1999	June 1999	October 1999	March 2000	August 2000
Yes	62	66	66	70	72
No	22	24	25	20	19
Don't know	14	10	9	10	9

After this drop in support for European integration, the indicator increased again. Until Slovakia's accession to the EU in 2004, public support was rather stable at more than 70%. In October 2001 79% of Slovak citizens supported the integration efforts of Slovakia¹¹⁰.

In general, despite broad public consensus on EU membership and prevailing support across all demographic categories, support was higher among better-educated and younger people. While 84% of Slovak students supported European integration, only 52% of pensioners were in favor of it¹¹¹. Nevertheless, 52% is a very high rate which made this age group another overall supporter of integration.

Thus, first a relative and then an absolute majority of the Slovak public supported European integration. In what particular way did this influence the Europeanization process? What was the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. – p.153.

¹⁰⁹ Partial representation of the data given in Slovakia 2000: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2001. -p. 225.

¹¹⁰ Slovakia 2001: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed.by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2002 – p. 220.

¹¹¹ Ibid. – p. 224.

role of public support for European integration? Two main conclusions can be made in this regard.

First, it was important for the consolidation of society from the inside. Making European integration a priority is not just a foreign policy, but also a mainly domestic decision. The positive attitude towards EU integration among the majority of Slovak citizens preserved the society from internal cleavages and made any attempted public manipulation on the basis of integration issues hopeless for politicians. Democratization of the country was in the interest of the whole society, and Europeanization in the case of Slovakia and its CEE neighbors appeared to be deeply interconnected with democratization. These processes of democratic transformation and Europeanization were considered inseparable elements of the modernization of the country. Because of that, threats to European integration and Europeanization were regarded as threats to modernization and democratic transformation in Slovakia, and vice versa. That is why the foreign implications of the domestic policy and anti-democratic development under Mečiar became strong arguments against his holding political power.

Second, public opinion was important to the political elites' position, as the political elites' position was important to public opinion. This means that different political parties reaching a consensus that Slovakia had to move towards membership in the EU in turn encouraged consolidation of the public in regard to the issue. On one hand, support for European integration among political forces contributed to increasing public support for it; on the other hand, when public support for integration crystallized and became rather high, political elites – even those who were not interested in deep transformation and Europeanization in Slovakia – were limited in their activities by the understanding that the public had a concrete attitude towards this question and wouldn't accept policies opposite to its expectations and needs.

Third, in Slovak society – especially during the last years before accession – there was a kind of "EU-phoria"¹¹². Slovakia rather smoothly passed through the pre-accession referendum on joining the EU, and it was the only referendum in the history of independent Slovakia which was valid. This was caused to some extent by the fact that serious discussion of the possible disadvantages and threats of integration was not on the agenda¹¹³ and hadn't yet begun at the time when Slovakia was closing the last chapters and holding the referendum on membership. Discussions about membership were positive, and problems which would probably arise after

¹¹² Slovakia 2002: Global Report on the State of Society/Ed. by Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson. Publ. by the Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic 2003. – p. 233.

¹¹³ Ibid.

entering the EU were not discussed as actively as the possible benefits¹¹⁴. At the same time, citizens' expectations from membership in the EU were mainly positive and related to socio-economic issues; people expected the socio-economic situation in Slovakia to improve due to its accession to the EU¹¹⁵.

Thus there were many factors – including overall support across demographic categories for EU integration, a consensus of support among political elites (though only formal support in some cases), the impossibility of manipulating public opinion to divide society, and last but not least, the lack of strong opponents to European integration in mainstream politics – that made public opinion matter tremendously for the Europeanization of Slovakia, creating a background that supported and facilitated the process from inside the country.

The role of public opinion in the process of Europeanization in Ukraine

Public opinion in favor of European integration and membership in the EU and NATO mainly crystallized in the early 2000s. The current attitude of Ukrainian society towards European integration is deeply interconnected with domestic political, economic and social developments which took place in the late 1990s-early 2000s and later. It is only in the 2000s that the issue of foreign policy priorities has really been added to the agenda of public discussion.

Some specific features of Ukrainian public opinion towards the EU and European integration are:

- Regional differences in citizens' attitudes towards European integration;
- Age-specific differences in public opinion;
- Lack of feeling that Ukrainians are Europeans – i.e. the issue of self-identification in light of European integration.

According to statistics from the Razumkov Center, from August 2002 to January 2005 the number of citizens who considered relations with Russia to be a foreign policy priority prevailed over the number of citizens who supported deeper relations with EU member states. Then came the short period of euphoria after the Orange Revolution when support for relations with the EU increased. However, in the period from September 2005 to October 2011 more people again

¹¹⁴ From an interview with Richard Ďurana, director of the INESS economic think tank. The interview was conducted by Maria Zolkina on September 4, 2013 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

regarded relations with Russia as a priority. The highest support for relations with Russia in the period of 2002-2011 was registered in November 2009 (52.5% of the population); at the same time, support for relations with EU states was at its lowest point in the same period (23.8%). But after that, support for EU integration began to grow while support for closer relations with Russia started dropping¹¹⁶.

From the end of 2011 to the present, the number of supporters of EU membership has been greater than the number of opponents. For example, in May 2013 42% of Ukrainians chose EU membership as the direction in which Ukraine should move, 31% chose membership in the Customs Union, and 13.5% stated that Ukraine should enter neither the EU nor the Customs Union¹¹⁷. Support for the European integration vector has been prevailing over support for joining the Customs Union since 2011 (see Table 3)¹¹⁸.

Table 3. In which direction of integration should Ukraine move?

(Source: Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Foundation)

	October, 2011	February, 2012	December, 2012	May, 2013
Entering the EU	43.7	38.6	42.4	41.7
Entering the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan	30.5	29.7	32.1	31.0
Entering neither the EU nor the Customs Union	9.3	11.7	10.5	13.5
It is difficult to say	16.4	20.0	15.0	13.7

¹¹⁶ Dynamics, provided by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Center. – Available at: http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=305

¹¹⁷ National public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the sociological service of the Razumkov Center on May 17-22, 2013. The sample included 2010 respondents over 18 years old from all regions of Ukraine. The theoretical error of the sample is 2.3%. Results are available at: <http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/kfviewiierjvioji.htm>

¹¹⁸ Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Foundation's comparative data from a press release with comparative sociological data. – Available at: <http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/ukraini---22-dumka-gromadjan.htm>

Nowadays orientation towards the EU is prevailing in Ukrainian society, but it cannot claim an absolute majority of citizens, and the generally positive picture of growing support for European integration is darkened somewhat by issues like regional and age-specific differences in people's attitudes towards foreign policy priorities.

Regional differences

There are significant and very clear regional differences in public attitudes regarding the direction of integration in which Ukraine should move.

The majority of Eastern and Southern Ukraine is oriented towards joining the Customs Union. In particular, 50% of Eastern citizens and 39.5% of citizens in the Southern region support the integration of Ukraine into the Customs Union as of mid-May 2013¹¹⁹ (this regional dimension is presented in Table 4 below).

Table 4. In which direction of integration should Ukraine move?

	West	Centre	South	East	Ukraine in general
Entering the EU	72,2	48,8	32,9	20,7	41,7
Entering the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan	7,4	21,9	39,5	50,4	31,0
Entering neither the EU nor the Customs Union	10,2	15,3	13,8	13,5	13,5
It is difficult to say	10,2	13,9	13,8	15,5	13,7

Support for the idea of entering the EU in Western and Central Ukraine is significantly higher compared to other regions. In the West and center of Ukraine, the majority of citizens consider

¹¹⁹ National public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the sociological service of the Razumkov Center on May 17-22, 2013. The sample included 2010 respondents over 18 years old from all regions of Ukraine. The theoretical error of the sample is 2.3%. Results are available at: <http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/kfvieviiervjioji.htm>

European integration to be the most important direction for integration. In particular, 72% of the Western region's citizens support European integration. Moreover, the number of people who are undecided is the lowest in the Western region. Thus, this region has become the most pro-European region in Ukraine. In Central Ukraine, meanwhile, 49% of people support movement towards joining the EU.

Age-specific differences

Besides these regional differences, there are also age-specific differences in attitude and perception of integration. Youth generally support the European integration of Ukraine; 54% of young people (18-29 years old) in Ukraine support this integration option rather than the Customs Union. At the same time, the oldest age group (people 60 and older) supports entering the Customs Union; 45% of people in this age group make their choice in favor of the Customs Union, and support for European Union membership among these people is the lowest – only 30%¹²⁰.

Lack of feeling that Ukrainians are Europeans – the issue of self-identification in light of European integration

According to public opinion poll results as of May 2013, only 34% of Ukrainian citizens feel like Europeans, while 55% don't. Nevertheless, compared to the 2008 results, there is a positive dynamic – namely, in 2008 only 25% of Ukrainians felt like Europeans. Since then, this indicator has increased by 9% while the number of people who don't feel European has decreased to 55% from 70%¹²¹. This means that the self-identification of Ukrainians has been changing, even with the escalation of EU-Ukraine relations in 2010-2013.

Young people again differ from other age groups as the most “European-like” age category. Particularly, 43% of young people (18-29 years old) consider themselves to be Europeans, while people over 60 feel less like Europeans than any other age group¹²².

¹²⁰ National public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the sociological service of the Razumkov Center during May 17-22, 2013. The sample included 2010 respondents over 18 years old from all regions of Ukraine. The theoretical error of the sample is 2.3%. Results are available at: <http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/kfviewiierjvijoji.htm>

¹²¹ National public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the sociological service of the Razumkov Center during May 17-22, 2013. The sample included 2010 respondents over 18 years old from all regions of Ukraine. The theoretical error of the sample is 2.3%. Results are available at: <http://dif.org.ua/ua/publications/press-relizy/kfviewiierjvijoji.htm>

¹²² Ibid.

The biggest grouping of people feeling like Europeans is in the Western region of Ukraine (50% of citizens), while in the East is the largest number of those who don't feel European (62% of the region's citizens)¹²³.

So what role does public opinion play in the Europeanization process of Ukraine? How does public opinion influence Europeanization processes?

First, there are clear division lines in the public opinion of Ukrainian society. People's attitudes towards European integration differ by region and age indicators. This means that there is no broad public consensus about the necessity of European integration. A relative majority of European integration supporters exists among the citizens of two parts of Ukraine: the West and the center. Eastern and Southern Ukraine are not pro-European regions in their majority.

Second, this situation creates a window of opportunity for some civic movements and political parties to manipulate public opinion and spread myths and stereotypes about European integration. The lack of societal consensus discourages political forces from reaching a strategic consensus among themselves, providing fertile ground for the usage of polarizing instead of consolidative slogans and ideas. The effects of this societal division were seen in the presidential elections of 2004 and 2010. Current President Yanukovich got his electoral support in 2010 from the East and South of Ukraine, which are generally pro-Russian regions. Now that he has begun trying to fulfill the European Union's requirements in order to sign the Association Agreement, he and his political forces will have to explain to their voters why they have changed their foreign policy orientation towards the West and not towards Russia as they promised.

Third, the young generation of Ukrainians may become the generation of Europeanization. The majority of young people all over Ukraine supports European integration, feels more European than representatives of other age groups, and sees more advantages in European integration than others do. Even in the East, the majority of young people support the idea of entering the EU. This means that Europeanization of Ukraine and integration into the EU may become a uniting idea which will consolidate Ukrainian society in the near future.

¹²³ Ibid.

Conclusion

Europeanization has become a rather broad and diverse field of study which proposes various definitions of Europeanization, approaches to its understanding, and methodologies for conducting research. One the most complicated subjects to study is Europeanization in non-member states, particularly in countries which are defined as neighbors of the EU even if they are in theory eligible for membership.

In this paper, the impact of Europeanization on democratic transformations was studied in comparative perspective, taking into consideration two cases: Slovakia (before accession to the EU) and Ukraine (up to the present). In this particular research, Europeanization was understood as a complex, multi-dimensional interactive process combining both uploading and downloading logics, according to which political, economic and social dynamics at the EU level shape those at the domestic level, thus effecting transformation processes at the domestic level. This formulation made it possible to combine two practical cases (Slovakia and Ukraine) which belong to different modes of Europeanization – Enlargement Europeanization (Slovakia's case) and Neighborhood Europeanization (Ukraine's case). All significant peculiarities and differences predefined by these models of Europeanization were taken into account in the process of analyzing the two cases.

The impact of Europeanization on democratic transformations in Slovakia and Ukraine was analyzed according to four indicators:

- Political system development: the main trends in the democratization process;
- The position and role of domestic political elites;
- The institutional and coordination structure for European integration and Europeanization processes;
- The role of public opinion on the process of Europeanization.

The main tendencies in Slovakia's political system development were the start of democratization processes even before the split of Czechoslovakia. After gaining independence, Slovakia faced a recurrence of authoritarian tendencies under Vladimir Mečiar's rule. Another important feature of Slovakia's democratization process was that the primary cleavage between political forces in the 1990s was not about ideology, but about differing approaches towards building a domestic political system, domestic rule and development of foreign policy. The

consolidation of pro-democratic forces was another important aspect because it enabled Slovakia to turn towards democratization and Europeanization.

In Ukraine the main trends in political system development included a democratization process which led to Ukraine's independence, but was followed by a period of inconsistency and long-term struggles to decide what the form of government should be and how the system of checks and balances should function. Despite the rather strong position of the president in the political system, Leonid Kuchma didn't manage to build a clear authoritarian model, as happened in some other post-Soviet republics. Conflicts between parliament and president made the system of Ukrainian politics more compromise-based, and from the end of 2004 until 2010 Ukraine witnessed an encouraging democratization process. Though the political system suffered from confrontations among the president, prime minister and parliament, it was a rather important period for Ukraine's development of democratic practices and principles. After this period, Ukraine again entered a period of pulling away from democracy and European integration. However, this has pushed the Ukrainian opposition toward consolidation, which is a positive trend.

In general, both Slovakia and Ukraine have undergone a balancing act between democratic and authoritarian tendencies (Slovakia up to 1998, Ukraine until the present day). In both cases, domestic political tendencies predefined and caused the crisis in the field of European integration. The slowing of European integration in Slovakia was the result of the domestic rule of Mečiar's administration, as happened to Ukraine after 2010 and led to anti-democratic developments within the country. In both cases, European integration and Europeanization were synonymous with democratization of the domestic political and economic reality, which can't co-exist with the monopolized, non-transparent and corrupted system of governing which ruling elites may try to build. In both cases, the consolidation process among opposition forces began despite ideological differences among them. In Slovakia, Europeanization was considered an integral part of the transformation and democratization of the country, while in Ukraine this point of view has been crystallizing among political elites and in society up to the present day.

The position of domestic political elites had an extremely important impact on Europeanization in both cases. In Slovakia, as an accession country, even the most powerful EU-driven mechanism – conditionality – lost a huge part of its potential effectiveness when there was no political will to absorb Europeanization at the domestic level (during Mečiar's period). The indifferent position of domestic political elites towards Europe led to a crisis in Slovakia's relations with the EU and hampered its European integration policy.

In Ukraine the situation was more difficult because, in contrast to Slovakia, in Ukraine there was not even a formal consensus among political elites about the priority of European integration and Europeanization. When domestic political will appeared in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution, there was no adequate reaction from the EU. Thus, the mobilization and consolidation of domestic political elites is deeply interconnected with Europeanization's success. The favorable or unfavorable position of political elites towards the Europeanization process defines whether the latter can influence domestic democratization of the country, and if yes, then to what extent. It was determined that in both Enlargement and Neighborhood Europeanization cases, the position of domestic political elites is extremely important. If political elites see the danger of losing the chance to integrate with Europe, they can be pushed by this understanding towards consolidation. This happened in Slovakia when there was a threat of being excluded from the first wave of enlargement, and it has been happening in Ukraine in order to mobilize support for signing the Association Agreement, despite all the problems in bilateral relations between the EU and Ukraine. Thus, the type of domestic rule and domestic political elites' position can either hamper or encourage Europeanization from inside. The findings on Ukraine prove that conditionality in Neighborhood Europeanization cases (though it is not a powerful mechanism in such cases) can move from weakness to strength precisely because of domestic undemocratic developments within the country.

The institutional and coordination basis of the Europeanization process significantly influences the impact of Europeanization on domestic transformation. Nevertheless, a coordination system is ineffective and non-operational if it depends on political will and readiness to start the implementation of European-oriented norms. Technically, the coordination and institutional basis in Slovakia was created before 1998 when democratic and pro-European forces came to power, but that system didn't work as there was no political decision to follow the EU's requirements. In Ukraine, the coordination and institutional system needs to be clearer in terms of designating a responsible coordinator (as right now the coordinator is de facto the president of Ukraine) and making the system less dependent on any specific institution or official.

Public opinion about European integration can either facilitate the process of Europeanization or create additional obstacles for it. Public attitudes towards European integration in Slovakia and in Ukraine were found to be significantly different. In particular, while in Slovakia there was a broad societal consensus about the necessity of integration into the EU, in Ukraine there are clear regional and age-related differences in public attitude towards European integration. The public consensus in Slovakia created a favorable background for movement towards deeper integration, a tolerant attitude towards painful reforms, and encouragement of positive expectations from EU

membership. In Ukraine, on the contrary, the lack of public consensus makes manipulating public opinion possible and enables certain political forces to question the idea of European integration in general.

Thus, on the basis of conducted research we can distinguish factors which facilitate and encourage Europeanization's impact on democratic transformation and factors which hamper this impact.

The main hampering factors which can be determined on the basis of this paper are as follows:

A gap between what is proclaimed by political elites (ruling elites), and what is indeed done.

This gap lays the groundwork for distrust of authorities both within and outside of the country, and for possible isolation of the country from integration processes and the circle of democratic states. Superficial fulfillment of a country's obligations creates a situation where populism appears to be the only way out for political forces which have to explain to their voters why the country isn't successful in its transformation.

Dependence of the Europeanization and European integration coordination system on the political will of a specific actor. As mentioned above, the effectiveness of coordination always depends on political will to provide a domestic "yes" to the commencement of transformation. However, if the system isn't flexible and transparent, and especially if it depends on the will of one concrete unit of the system, it won't be totally effective, even with that actor's will. A system of balances is needed in this field, as in the political system in general.

Manipulation of public opinion. Manipulation of public opinion has primarily social implications. Such manipulation becomes possible when there is no broad consensus in society about where the country should move. Manipulation then becomes an instrument in the hands of politicians or civil activists to cause polarization rather than seeking to unite and consolidate society. In this respect, the position of political elites and public opinion appears to be connected: politicians develop their position, their messages and their agenda according to what public opinion allows them to do with this or that problem.

The following factors, on the other hand, support and encourage Europeanization's impact:

Broad consensus in society, including not only public support for European integration, but also strategic consensus among political elites and other opinion makers;

Domestic political will, enabling greater efficiency and success of conditionality. Domestic political will to acquire and implement EU standards can either support conditionality at the

domestic level or hamper conditionality's potential to influence the domestic reality. Even in accession countries conditionality, which is the most powerful EU mechanism, can't be effective without domestic political will. Even in neighboring countries where conditionality is inherently very weak, conditionality can become stronger due to a certain positioning of domestic political forces (as in case of Ukraine, where domestic political elites backslid from European integration and the EU then made its requirements, offers and rewards more clear than ever). Conditionality can work as a trigger for domestic political forces to consolidate and unite in the name of progress in the field of European integration. Moreover, a rollback of democracy on the part of domestic powers will only serve to increase people's support for European integration, rather than decreasing support. The cases of Slovakia and Ukraine bear this out (e.g. the public opinion changes in the eras of Mečiar and Yanukovych, respectively).

A clear and technically well-established institutional and organizational basis for Europeanization and European integration, providing quick, smooth and professional implementation of what is on the integration agenda, thereby making Europeanization's effects possible.

Thus, despite methodological difficulties, cases of Neighborhood Europeanization can be compared with cases of Enlargement Europeanization, as long as some obvious peculiarities of each category are kept in mind. Findings on Enlargement Europeanization can be applied to Neighborhood Europeanization cases in order to develop a methodological basis for research on the latter.

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