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**THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN
SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP
1990 – 2010**

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ATHENS 2010

Executive Summary

For years, the only thing Poland and Ukraine shared was a troublesome past. After 60 years, neither side has forgotten about the atrocities that both Poland and Ukraine conducted during WWII. Ukrainians carried out an insurgency which led to the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Poles in Ukraine and Southeastern Poland, while Poland launched an operation to resettle Ukrainians who lived in Southeastern Poland to other regions in the country.

However, this did not discourage the two sides from starting a special partnership almost immediately after Ukraine's independence. This partnership flourished especially after mid-1990s, and since plays a major role in Poland's foreign policy, depicted by Poland's many initiatives aiming at bringing Ukraine closer to Western institutions. For Ukraine, the partnership is important more to the eastern part of the country, which used to be part of Poland in the interwar period, than to the western, which is more Russian-oriented.

Despite the neighbourly relations the two nations achieved in the last decade, the partnership encounters many problems in the context of politics, economy, and society. However, as long as the goal of both states is Ukraine's further integration into the West the partnership will remain untouched. It is not very likely to change even despite the outcome of the 2010 Presidential elections in Ukraine.

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Introduction

The emergence of the Newly Independent States which followed the dissolution of the USSR presented the pre-existing European countries with new neighbours. In most cases, those new states, and their boundaries, were well received and respected. However, these new states, along with the Central and Eastern European countries, had to undergo a transition, both economic and political, and had to try hard in order to catch up with the Western democratic countries. Ideally, these countries would need an ally and a companion in this hard journey. Within this framework, Poland and Ukraine developed very close relations, which evolved into a special partnership.

In international politics, “special partnership” is a term used for very close bilateral relations between states. Such a relationship is funded, maintained and reproduced by the involved parties on the base of shared interests and values, and plays a significant role in their foreign policy agendas.

For many, such a partnership between Poland and Ukraine might seem –at best– strange. And that is because of their turbulent past, which included an atrocious insurgency by both parties during the last years of and immediately after WWII, followed by a resettlement of ethnic Ukrainians living in Southeastern Poland to the Northwest of the country, and a rather devastating resettlement of ethnic Poles in Ukraine to Siberian gulags.

Miraculously, all this was forgotten on the night of December 1, 1991, when Poland was the first state to recognise Ukraine’s independence. For almost two decades the partnership between the two states has been flourishing, leading many to compare it to the Franco-German axis, on which modern Europe is based. In the same way this successful cooperation since the end of WWII has laid the foundation for stability in Western Europe, so the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation

and cooperation could have become a pillar of stability in Central and Eastern Europe.

The main difference between the two 'strategic axes' is the fact that France and Germany, on the one hand, had at the time thriving economies, and formed a structure around which European integration was coiled. In this manner, the Franco-German partnership was one that brought many states together. On the other hand, both Poland and Ukraine were at the time –and to some extent still are– developing countries, with ruined economies, struggling to success reforms. And, initially, the partnership's goal was no other than keeping Russia away from both; it was a matter of national security. In a later stage, however, the two Eastern (or Central) European countries managed to evolve their relationship, which was then expanded in order to reach more matters: politics; economics; society; energy. With its ups and downs, this partnership managed to play an important role in the agendas of both parties, and led Poland, the stronger of the two, to pursue policies that would assist its partner in accomplishing its journey towards the West; a journey which the former had already completed. Although Ukraine still has many steps to make in order to even be considered as a Western country, Poland is there to assist it.

Today, the partnership between the two neighbours seeks a new identity and tries to establish new goals. The goal of this report is to present the new era of the Polish-Ukrainian partnership, by referring to the historical facts that led to its formation, the factors that shaped it, its ups and downs, and the impact it has both in its direct neighbourhood and in international institutions. Moreover, the report elaborates not only on the political sphere, but also on the economic, social, and military aspects of this important axis.

Chapter one presents the historical context of the relations between the two nations, which is necessary in order to understand how sensitive issues of the past still influence the public opinion on both sides of the border. Chapter two

continues the retrospect, however does so by commencing after the fall of the communist regimes, thus demonstrating the official relations of the two independent states. Moreover, it briefly describes Poland's latest initiative in the EU framework, the Eastern Partnership. Chapter three constitutes an analysis of the events that took place in the previous years, and makes some reference to the bilateral military relations. Chapters four and five are about the economic aspects of the partnership: while the first one elaborates on bilateral trade, foreign direct investments, and transborder cooperation, the second points on the energy cooperation between Poland and Ukraine. Finally, Chapter six analyses the perception and relations between Polish and Ukrainian peoples, the role history plays in the framework of the partnership, the recent reconciliation process, and the visa regime.

Historical Background

Looking at the map of contemporary Europe, it is hard to remember how different it looked twenty years ago, when countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, or the Baltic States did not exist; at least, not in the form we know them today. But it is even harder to remember, or rather to imagine, how Europe looked seventy years ago.

In 1945, before WWII was over, the Allies met in Yalta in order to reset the borders of the post-war Europe. Among other nations affected by that Conference, Poland found itself somewhat moved to the West: it received former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line; at a cost, however, as it lost its Eastern provinces to Ukraine. Those lands were Polish for centuries and cities such as Lviv were important urban and cultural centres. Thus, this “move” was accompanied by a resettlement of thousands of Polish and Ukrainian people, population transfers and insurgency, and brought more tension to a region already torn by conflict.

Tensions between Poles and Ukrainians date back several centuries, as the two peoples interacted at every civic, economic, and political level for hundreds of years. Since medieval times, the histories of Ukrainians and Poles have been closely interrelated and interdependent. For centuries, both peoples lived within the same political entity –be it the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, or the Polish Republic of the interwar period–, thus nurturing and developing strong historic, cultural and personal links, and exerting reciprocal influence.

However, in the 19th century, with the rise of nationalism, the ethnicity of citizens became an issue, and the conflicts erupted anew after WWI, as both claimed the territories of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. After the Austria-Hungary was dissolved, Ukrainian attempts to expand westward led to the Polish-Ukrainian War (1918-1919), which ended with a ceasefire signed in 1919, and granted Eastern Galicia to Poland.

The 1919 Treaty of Versailles revoked Polish statehood, but did not define the frontiers between Poland and Soviet Russia, thus leading to the Polish-Soviet war (1919-1921), an armed conflict between the USSR on the one side, and Poland and the Ukrainian People's Republic on the other. The aim of the belligerents was to expand their territories and their influence over them. On April 21, 1920, the two sides signed a military alliance accepting the Polish-Ukrainian border on the river Zbrucz. The 1921 Peace of Riga, which ended the war, adjoined Volhynia and Eastern Galicia to Poland, while the rest of contemporary Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union. After a long series of negotiations, in 1923 the League of Nations decided that Eastern Galicia would be officially incorporated into Poland.

The political conflicts escalated in the 1930s as a result of a cycle of terrorist actions by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, formed in Poland. Collective punishment meted out on thousands of mostly innocent peasants resulted in exacerbation of animosity between the Polish state and the Ukrainian population. At the onset of WWII, and soon after the annexation of that area into the USSR in 1939–1941, new doors of opportunity for Ukrainian nationalists began to open.

In August 1939, days before WWII broke out, Germany and the USSR signed a Treaty of Non-Aggression, widely known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Among others, the Pact drew Poland's eastern border with Ukraine, by forcing Poland to concede its eastern territories to the USSR. In the same time, Moscow began to annihilate and deport Ukrainians, local Poles and Jews from the territories and the Soviet propaganda cleansed the interpretations Polish and Soviet Ukrainian histories of references to long-standing multicultural traditions in the ethnic borderlands. Direct cross-border contacts between the Ukrainian SSR and Poland were broken, and watch towers and barbed wire was installed in order to separate the Soviet citizens from those from the satellite states. This was aiming at

controlling interaction between the bloc's satellite states and restricted free movement for ordinary citizens between Poland and Ukraine.

In the summer of 1943, the ethnic tensions in Volhynia (which since 1941 was under Nazi occupation) boiled over. As the German Army was retreating from the USSR, they were garrisoning the cities, but could not obtain control over the countryside, which was plunged into chaos. This power vacuum resulted in the emergence of insurgency in Western Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was formed, the aim of which was to restore an independent Ukraine. On the Polish side, the Home Army (AK) was fighting the German forces, and after its formation, the UPA. There were also other groups operating in the region, such as Soviet partisans.

Part of this insurgency were the Volhynia massacres, which took place mainly between late 1943 and 1944. The killings, orchestrated and conducted by the UPA together with other Ukrainian groups and local Ukrainian peasants, resulted in over 50,000 Polish civilians being brutally murdered. Taking into account the 1939 deportations of local Poles to Siberia, and the wipe out of the Polish population by the end of the war, the casualties of the Polish side are estimated between 60,000 and 400,000. The Polish retaliation resulted in the death of 15,000 to 20,000 Ukrainians.

In the meantime, the 1945 Yalta and Potsdam Conferences had officially set the boundaries of Poland: the Oder-Neisse line was set as Poland's western boundary, while the Curzon line¹ as the eastern. Overall, Poland lost 187,000 km², and was compensated by being given 112,000 km² of former German territories. As a

¹ The Curzon Line was a demarcation line between the Second Polish Republic and Bolshevik Russia, first proposed on December 8, 1919 by British Foreign Secretary, George Curzon, 1st Earl Curzon of Kedleston. Although it did not play any role in establishing the Polish-Soviet border in 1921, a close approximation of the Curzon line is the current border between the countries of Belarus, Ukraine and Poland.

result, Ukraine's territory was expanded by 163,000 km², much of which came from Poland.

In order to crush the Ukrainian underground resistance, Polish authorities launched in 1947 the Operation Vistula (pol. *Akcja Wisła* or *Akcja "W"*), a forced resettlement of Ukrainians leaving in southeastern Poland, conducted by the Polish military and security units. From April 28 to July 31, 1947, over 200,000 Ukrainians were resettled from Southeastern Poland to the newly acquired territories in Northern and Western Poland.

Officially, the operation was aiming at destroying UPA, which had been fighting the AK and murdering ethnic Poles in southeastern Poland, and at depriving the UPA units of support among the local population. The pretext was the assassination, on March 28, 1947, of the Polish General Karol Swierczewski, allegedly by the UPA. However, the operation was prepared well in advance, as the preparations had started since January 1947. The settlers were to constitute no more than 10 percent of the population in any one location, and the eventual goal was their assimilation into the Polish majority.

Finally, Operation Vistula was terminated in July 1947, and proved to be successful, as UPA was unable to uphold its resistance against AK. Only after 1956, when limited organisation activity was permitted, the Polish government recognised the existence of the Ukrainian community. At the same time, only a few thousand were allowed to resettle in their ancestral homeland.

The Timeline of the Partnership

During the four decades of the Cold War, official Polish-Ukrainian relations were limited, and developed mainly through Moscow. However, unofficially, since the early 1970s, dissidents in both nations had recognized the benefits of cooperation in their struggle against the Soviet hegemony. In the 1980s, *Solidarność*, the Polish trade union, helped in channeling funding, publishing materials and expertise to Ukraine, even when Poland was under martial law. Almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, *Solidarność* and *Rukh*, the Popular Movement of Ukraine, began preparing the formal groundwork for a new era of relations.

Thus, when on July 16, 1990 the Ukrainian parliament adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, Poland was the first country to recognise it, by passing the relevant resolution by both chambers of the Polish Parliament, the Senate and the *Sejm*, on July 27 and July 28, 1990, respectively. The recognition was followed by Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski's visit to Kiev in October 1990, during which the two parties signed a joint Declaration on Basic Principles and Directions of the Development of Polish-Ukrainian Relations. Among others, Article 3 of the Declaration clearly stated that neither state holds any territorial claims towards the other and would not hold any such claims in the future, and recognised the inviolability of the borders.

On August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian parliament proclaimed the country's independence, and only two weeks later, an official delegation visited Poland, making the latter the first foreign state to be visited by a delegation from independent Ukraine. Thus, it is no surprise that Poland became the first state to

recognise Ukraine as an independent state, only hours after its official declaration on December 1, 1991.²

By 1992, the two states had already exchanged diplomatic representatives and had established official bilateral contacts. Moreover, in order to highlight the importance of developing close relations with Ukraine, Poland struggled to sign a formal treaty which would provide complete regulations for bilateral relations with Ukraine before signing a similar one with Russia. This was achieved during Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk's visit to Warsaw on May 18, 1992. The Treaty on Good Neighbour Relations, Friendship and Cooperation created a solid base for developing bilateral cooperation in all areas, and constituted a clear example of how the contemporary geopolitical priorities could overcome historical facts and common memory.

Among others, the Treaty provisioned the mutual confirmation of the inviolability of the common border; a pledge to solve any disputes by peaceful means only; and the renunciation of the use of force and the threat to use force in bilateral relations in present and in the future. It also awarded comprehensive rights to ethnic minorities, as Art. 11 gave minorities in both countries the right to maintain, express and develop their national and cultural identities, languages and religions, while ruling out any discrimination and giving them fully equal legal status.

This Treaty was ratified during Polish PM Hanna Suchocka's visit to Ukraine in January 1993, during which she and her Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma signed six additional agreements concerning cooperation in science and technology, border enforcement, taxation, and other trade-related matters, and established a Polish-Ukrainian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

² Although the Ukrainian Supreme Council had announced the country's Declaration of Independence on August 24, 1991, the latter was introduced to the nation's confirmation by referendum only on December 1, and was approved by over 80% of votes.

However, the Treaty was opposed in both Poland and Ukraine, by political parties and local authorities in Poland, and by nationalist organisations in Ukraine.

In the meantime, President Kravchuk was seeking to reinforce Ukraine's geopolitical status in Central Europe. In this direction, he proposed Ukraine to join the Visegrád Group,³ a group of the most pro-Western post-Communist states, in order to integrate the country into the Western institutions. However, his initiative was met with cold response, as the involved states were afraid that starting a relationship with Ukraine could delay their entry into the EU and NATO.

Upon seeing that it would be difficult for Ukraine to join any existing institution, in February 1993, President Kravchuk proposed the creation of the Central and East European Security Zone, a consultative mechanism including Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic republics, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, and Austria. The initiative was not supported by Poland, who had already started negotiations to enter NATO.

Nonetheless, Poland clearly supported Ukraine's efforts to join the Central European Initiative (CEI),⁴ and, in 1992, Poland proposed Ukraine's accession into the Initiative. Warsaw's lobbying proved to be successful, as Ukraine joined the CEI on May 31, 1996.

³ The Visegrád Group is an alliance of four Central European states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), aiming at cooperation and furthering their European integration. All four members became part of the EU on May 1, 2004.

⁴ The Central European Initiative (CEI) is a political, economical, cultural and scientific international organisation founded in 1989. Since its beginnings, the mandate of the Initiative has been to help transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe in their effort to integrate further with the EU and achieve a higher level of socio-economic development. In a post-enlargement context, the CEI has shifted in focus towards those Member States remaining outside the EU. Its 18 member states are: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, FYROM, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

In May 1993, Presidents Lech Wałęsa and Leonid Kravchuk signed ten more agreements promoting cooperation in immigration, trade, law enforcement and nuclear reactor safety. However, the most important was the establishment of the Consultative Committee of the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine, the aim of which was to promote policy coordination within and between the two governments in order to accelerate the development of the relationship. In addition, for the first time, the two heads of states formally used the term “strategic” to characterise the Polish-Ukrainian partnership.

However, after mid-1993, the Polish-Ukrainian relations started encountering serious problems. Ukraine’s delay in implementing economic and political reforms widened the gap between it and other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, leading to an increased political and social instability in the region. Thus, from 1993 to 1995 there was a breach in Polish-Ukrainian relations, as Poland –and other countries of the region– became increasingly concerned about internal instability in Ukraine, its stance on nuclear weapons, and the possible implications of an unstable Ukrainian-Russian relationship. Moreover, the growing mutual misunderstandings on NATO enlargement led the CEE countries to interpret that Ukraine was objecting their accession into NATO.

The ascent into power of the left-wing SLD-PSL coalition in autumn 1993 did not change much in Polish-Ukrainian relations, which remained stagnant. However, two important documents were signed during the Ukrainian foreign minister’s visit to Warsaw in 1994: a Declaration on the Rules for Shaping the Polish-Ukrainian Partnership, which was identifying the partnership as a significant element in the pan-European security system; and the Accord on Cooperation Regarding Protection of Memorials and Burial Sites for Victims of War and Political Persecution.

Polish-Ukrainian relations remained frozen until 1995 as it was pointed out above. Ukraine’s new President, Leonid Kuchma, had focused on ensuring Western

sources of financial support for his economic reforms, paying little attention to Poland and other CEE countries. Even the Consultative Committee of the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine had not convened for almost a year.

The situation started to change in 1996, when Ukraine returned its nuclear arsenal to Russia, and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This helped it draw security assurances and financial assistance from Western governments and international institutions, thus laying the necessary foundations for a more stable Polish-Ukrainian relationship. Moreover, in June 1996, President Kuchma paid a visit to Poland, during which a series of decisions were taken on the future of the partnership. During this visit, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine discussed issues related to the accession of both countries into international organisations, and Kuchma confirmed that Ukraine would not oppose Poland's accession into NATO. Among other initiatives discussed at this meeting was the creation of a free trade area between Poland and Ukraine. Finally, the two administrations signed an Agreement on Abolishing Visas; an Agreement on Cooperation Regarding Protection and Return of Items of Cultural Value Lost or Illegally Moved during WWII; and a declaration on establishing the Polish-Ukrainian Social Forum.

President Kuchma's visit to Poland fueled the strategic partnership and gave a momentum to its concept. In the following years, Polish-Ukrainian relations became much more dynamic than ever before. Poland's new President, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, although initially tentative, quickly demonstrated that the closer ties he pursued with Moscow would not be established at the expense of Ukraine. As a result, four meetings of the two presidents took place in early 1996, making the Consultative Committee of the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine a regular and productive forum. This led the Polish Foreign Minister, Dariusz Rosati, to note that "Polish-Ukrainian relations have never been as good as they are now."

Generally, the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine was significantly broadened since mid-1996. In June 1996, the two parties signed a joint memorandum on Strategic Partnership between Poland and Ukraine, which stipulated that the two countries should support each other diplomatically, step up bilateral intergovernmental contacts, create a joint committee on European integration within their foreign ministries, and hold more joint military exercises. This new momentum in the partnership made analysts describe 1996 as the year of “Ukrainian Renaissance in Poland.”

This rather fast development of Polish- Ukrainian relations was followed in 1996 by frequent visits, new agreements, and various joint actions. Among other agreements signed during this period are the Accord on Mutual Supply of Weapons, Military Equipment and Technical Military Services (October 1996); Agreement on cooperation in the areas of culture, science and education (May 1997); Statement on mutual agreement and reconciliation (May 1997); Agreement on creating a joint military unit (battalion) for participation in peace-keeping and humanitarian operations (November 1997); Accord on the re-construction of the Cemetery of the Eagles in Lviv (January 1998); and Agreement on Cooperation regarding fight against organised crime (March 1999). Moreover, the two parties proceeded with many joint actions, such as a joint protest against the authoritarian policy of President Lukashenko in Belarus (November 1996).

The close relationship between the two parties can be seen also from the fact that in 2000, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine met as many as five times. Moreover, in August 2001, President Kwaśniewski participated in the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of Ukraine’s independence, while PM Jerzy Buzek, at the meeting of the chiefs of cabinets of the Visegrád Group countries, raised the issue of the Group’s cooperation with Ukraine.

In December 2002, Poland, already a candidate state for accession to the EU, presented a non-paper which included proposals for the Eastern dimension of EU

policy. Among other, it stated that the level of relations between the EU and Ukraine should not be lower than that between the EU and Russia, and that Ukraine should be offered clear prospects for its accession to the EU, given of course that it complies with the Copenhagen Criteria.⁵ The project envisaged five areas of cooperation: enhanced political dialogue, assistance in the transformation process, development of economic cooperation, energy cooperation and cooperation in justice and home affairs.

In late 2004, the Ukrainian presidential elections took place. The two candidates were Viktor Yanukovych, the pro-Russian Prime Minister, and Viktor Yushchenko, an Europeanist former Prime Minister and leader of the Our Ukraine coalition. The first round took place on October 31, 2004, and the outcome was the win of Yushchenko. In the second round, however, it was Yanukovych who won, with a 49%.

However, there were widespread speculations that the elections were fraud, and in late November 2004, Yushchenko's supporters gathered on Kiev's Independence Square protesting against the fraud. The so-called Orange Revolution had begun. During the protests, Polish politicians visited Kiev and the main square, and gave speeches. Among them were President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and former President Lech Wałęsa. Finally, Ukraine's Highest Court decided that the second round should be repeated. The winner of this round was Viktor Yushchenko, with a 52%, thus becoming the new President of Ukraine.

Overall, Poland's role in the Orange Revolution was very significant. From the very beginning, it urged the fellow EU countries to condemn the fraud and support the Ukrainian people in demanding a rerun. Polish politicians, the media

⁵ In June 1993, the European Council decided at its Copenhagen Summit that countries from Central and Eastern Europe which wish to become members of the EU have to fulfill the appropriate conditions, known as the Copenhagen Criteria: stable institutions that guarantee democracy, legality, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; working market economy, capable of competing effectively on EU markets; capable of accepting all the membership responsibilities, political, economic and monetary.

and ordinary citizens enthusiastically supported Yushchenko and opposed the election fraud. Moreover, Polish MEPs called the European Parliament to give Ukraine the prospect of future EU membership. On November 25, former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk delivered a speech before the Polish *Sejm*, urging Poland not to recognize the election result and help solve the political crisis. On the same day, former Polish President Lech Wałęsa went to Kiev to publicly express his support for Viktor Yushchenko. He was later followed by a number of Polish MPs from different parties, and, on the next day, by President Kwasniewski, who jointly with Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, mediated during the Orange Revolution.

In the following years the partnership continued to evolve gradually, and Poland's accession to the EU on May 1, 2004, gave Ukraine a new momentum and provided the country with a strong EU member state partner. Moreover, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine met plenty of times, and acted towards national reconciliation.

In March 2008, Polish PM Donald Tusk visited Kiev, and asserted that Polish-Ukrainian relations are at the core of Polish foreign policy. During this visit, the two parties signed a series of agreements: an agreement on small border movement; a protocol of intention on bilateral cooperation concerning the process of Ukrainian integration with the EU; and an agreement on cooperation in matters of civil service.

In the last two years, Presidents Lech Kaczyński of Poland and Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine have intensified their contacts. On March 14, 2008, during President Yushchenko's visit to Warsaw, the two parties signed an agreement on cooperation in the area of health. President Yushchenko revisited Poland in November 2008 in order to attend the official ceremony of Poland's independence 90th anniversary, during which he and his Polish counterpart discussed the present

shape of bilateral relations, and President Kaczyński confirmed Poland's consistent support to Ukraine's integration with the EU and NATO.

Only ten days later, on November 22, 2008, President Kaczyński visited Kyiv to attend the commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Great Famine in Ukraine, while on January 14, 2009, the two Presidents met in Wisła, Poland, and suggested that an urgent meeting of all parties involved in the gas conflict should be convened in Prague in order to resolve the crisis. Only two weeks later, on January 28, 2009, Lech Kaczyński held a meeting in Wrocław, Poland with the President Yushchenko and the PM of the Czech Republic Mirek Topolánek in order to discuss the details of the contracts for the deliveries of Russian gas signed the previous month.

Finally, on September 8, 2009, during President Yushchenko's visit to Poland, the two parties signed a ten-point road map for bilateral relations, covering politics, economics and historical memory. During the meeting, Presidents Kaczynski and Yushchenko agreed that the visit had "enormous meaning" for the Polish-Ukrainian partnership, which should serve as a model for the EU. The purpose of the visit was to sum up bilateral relations ahead of Ukraine's forthcoming presidential elections and to confirm the strategic partnership between the two neighbours. Among others, the two Presidents discussed energy-related issues, and the preparations to co-host the Euro 2012 football championship. During the same visit, President Yushchenko participated in the opening of a memorial to the victims of Ukraine's famine of 1932-1933 at Warsaw's Wola Cemetery, and met local leaders of the Ukrainian minority in Przemyśl.

The Eastern Partnership

As already mentioned, even before itself one, Poland has been trying to present the EU members states with a policy that would assist the Union's eastern neighbours. The first initiative in this direction was the 2002 non-paper on the

EU's eastern dimension. In this context, on May 26, 2008, Poland and Sweden jointly presented the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a EU policy aiming at improving the EU's political and economic relations with six of its eastern neighbours: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The project involved visa facilitation (with prospects for visa-free movement), a free trade zone for services and agricultural products (including a date to be fixed for completion of the free trade area), as well as closer cooperation in the fields of transport, environment, and border control.

For Poland, EaP constitutes an attempt to place the traditional objectives of Poland's eastern policy within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). As such, it is a significant policy reversal as regards the ENP, which was previously criticised in Poland for its alleged ineffectiveness and privileging of the Southern dimension, and counterbalances the Union for the Mediterranean, launched by France. Generally, EaP is part of a more general attempt by Donald Tusk's government to "Europeanise" Polish foreign policy through coalition building with both old and new EU member states.

The project has raised doubts both in Poland and among EU countries, and even some of the countries EaP addresses are concerned about it. Most importantly, Ukraine is unsettled by the fact that EaP does not offer any European perspective to the participating countries, and, as the country's Foreign Minister has stated, any form of neighbourhood policy without membership perspective cannot be satisfying. Truth is that EaP treats the East as a uniform entity, which on the one hand is beneficial in terms of acquiring funds for major regional and trans-national projects, but on the other puts Ukraine into one basket with countries such as Azerbaijan or Armenia, whose chances for membership are practically non-existent at the moment. However, Polish diplomats believe that, thanks to the EaP, the EU will attach more importance to its Eastern neighbours, thus significantly increasing the chances for the future membership of Ukraine and Moldova.

The Polish-Ukrainian Partnership: Analysis

The turbulent past Poland and Ukraine share made many analysts believe that a functioning relationship between the two countries, in the international context, was not possible. Thus, when in the early 1990s the relationship started evolving, as the “prophecies” speaking about a resurgence of the conflict between the two parties had not come true, it was seen with mistrust. Although initially the bilateral relations had not acquired any special nature, during the 1990s both countries started to comprehend the importance of this relationship, especially by means of defining the future position of Russia towards Europe, and favouring the establishment of Central Europe as a separate geopolitical component. In this context, the relationship between Poland and Ukraine is a unique example of the perception that the past and common sense are much less important to most political parties when it comes to geo-political priorities.

The relationship itself started to flourish in the mid-1990s. The most significant about it was the fact that it brought stability to the region, and managed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines in Central Europe, by maintaining the cohesion between different European geographic spaces and promoting the linkage of Eastern Europe to the integrative process in Western Europe. In order to accomplish those functions, Poland and Ukraine initiated and participated in various initiatives of cooperation at both sub-regional and regional level.

Interactions between authorities, elites and societies of both states acquired increasing dynamism, mainly due to the extensive institutionalisation of the bilateral relationship, which was followed by multiple political contacts between political leaders of both countries. This gave both parties the opportunity to show that their attitudes were directed towards the solution of divergences in a cooperative mood, especially in the very sensitive issue of national reconciliation, leading to stable and durable interactions in a number of issues at different levels.

Thus, it is natural that this relationship occupied an important position in the foreign policy agendas of both Poland and Ukraine, despite the fact that the level of each party's commitment to maintain and expand it was not the same. Initially, Poland was more worried about Ukraine than Ukraine about Poland, since in Ukraine, the strategic partnership with Poland mattered only to a narrow political elite in the western part of the country, while Polish objectives were widely shared in Poland.

But, what was it that motivated the two parties to pursue a special partnership like this? The main reason Warsaw decided to build a close partnership with Kiev and support an independent Ukrainian state was the correlation between Ukraine's independence and Poland's national security. In the eyes of the Polish policy makers, the emergence and survival of an independent Ukraine would be catalyst in the final disintegration of the USSR and would undermine Russia's attempts to take over USSR's imperial position.

Apart from Russia's "containment," Poland also wanted a stable and prosperous Ukraine, since political and economic failure in the latter could unleash an influx of refugees to Poland. At the very least, they would use Poland as a halfway stop to the West. In the worst case scenario, such a situation could lead to Ukraine's reintegration into Russia. Hence, Poland would once again find itself alongside an imperial Russia.

For these reasons, the basic aim of Poland's foreign policy was to contribute to the establishment of a stable, democratic, market-economy and pro-European Ukraine. In order to achieve this, Poland used its international advocacy in favour of Ukraine, which was considered as one of the fundamental assumptions for the partnership between the two countries. Poland strongly supported Ukrainian accession to the Council of Europe and the CEI, and repeatedly supported

Ukrainian integration to NATO, the EU, and other forms of sub-regional and regional cooperation, such as the Visegrád Group and the 2002 Riga Initiative.⁶

This rapprochement is in the national interests of both countries, as the existence of an independent Ukraine helps to consolidate Polish independence, while the existence of an independent Poland helps to consolidate Ukrainian independence. This interdependence can be explained not only by geographic and historical considerations, but also by the geostrategic interests of both countries. As Belarus merges with Russia, bilateral cooperation is becoming even more significant to both Warsaw and Kyiv. Poland wants to secure stability on its eastern borders and to see in Ukraine a democratic and friendly neighbour that is supportive of its desire to join NATO and the EU, while Kyiv needs Poland's experience and advocacy in its own efforts to integrate into European and subregional institutions. In addition, both countries share common interests in assuring the rights of their national minorities still living within each others' territories.

However, if Polish foreign policy towards Ukraine had from the very beginning goals and certain methods to achieve them, Ukrainian policy towards Poland was vague and ill-defined, reflecting the overall problems of Ukrainian foreign policy in defining its orientation. Although President Kravchuk understood Poland as a crucial reference point that proclaimed the pro-European international orientation of Ukraine, his successor Leonid Kuchma followed a "multi-vector" foreign policy. The goal of this policy was to combine the benefits of the cooperation with Russia and of the integration with Western institutions, in which Poland constituted a mean to come closer to regional and international institutions.

In the early 2000s, the special partnership between the two countries assisted Ukraine in overcoming –to some degree– the increasing marginalisation in the EU

⁶ The Riga Initiative, initiated in 2002 by the Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, aims at avoiding new divisions in Europe following the EU and NATO's enlargements, by establishing a forum for co-operation among Central, Eastern, and Southern European countries.

and US foreign agendas. Poland had been openly supporting Ukraine's accession to both NATO and the EU, and had committed to act on behalf of Ukraine in those organisations.

Today, Poland's current government of Donald Tusk has been heavily criticised that it has neglected bilateral relations with Ukraine, and some analysts even declare that Polish-Ukrainian relations are ruined. However, as the government argues, any progress on the European perspective for Ukraine can only be achieved in Brussels.

In any case, Poland's political influence on Ukraine is still much weaker than that of Russia. Even in the mid-1990s, when the Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership was flourishing, the bond between Ukraine and Russia was stronger. However, after the two gas crises, Ukraine has been seeking to turn away from Russia, energetically and politically, for the latter of which Poland might be a good option. At the same time, Poland realises the need of a cautious approach in shaping the relations with Ukraine, in order not to jeopardize its sensitive relations with Russia.

Ukraine's relations with Russia were one of the main reasons why Ukraine had reservations regarding NATO's enlargement. It was afraid that NATO might divide Europe again, and that Ukraine would either be pushed into a buffer zone between the two military blocks, or it would remain an isolated country between the hostile Russia and the West. For this reason, Ukraine was interested in searching for a compromise between NATO and Russia. Thus, when NATO launched Partnership for Peace⁷ those reservations were softened. Nonetheless, Ukraine was still nervous about the possibility of deployment of nuclear weapons in Poland and the Czech Republic. In 1996, President Kuchma reassured NATO's

⁷ Partnership for Peace (PfP) is a NATO programme aimed at creating trust between NATO and other European and former Soviet states, launched in January 1994. As of 2010, 22 states participate in the Partnership. Ukraine joined the PfP in February 1994.

Secretary General that Ukraine would not oppose NATO's enlargement, provided that no nuclear weapons would be deployed on the territories of new NATO members and the enlargement process would be carried in a transparent way and in consultation with Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, the country's PM, Jevhen Marchuk, had warned that the enlargement process should not become confrontational against Russia, in order to avoid tensions. However, he had emphasised that Ukraine did not consider Poland's entry into NATO to be a dangerous move.

Generally, military cooperation between Poland and Ukraine has developed dynamically. During Polish Defence Minister's visit to Kiev, the two parties signed an agreement on military cooperation, including the organisation of military exchange programmes and the sharing of military training facilities. In May 1993, during President Wałęsa's official visit to Kiev, an agreement on notification in case of nuclear failures and cooperation with regard to nuclear safety and radio logical protection was signed. Moreover, Poland also showed much interest in getting spare parts from Ukraine for much of its Soviet-made military equipment. Finally, in October 1995, the two parties created a joint Ukrainian-Polish peacekeeping battalion (POLUKRBAT).

The Economic Cooperation

Both Poland and Ukraine encountered a difficult period during the transitions in their economies they pursued in the early 1990s, as a result of the dissolvment of the USSR. However, the fact that Poland decided to take the hard way, by pursuing a shock therapy, helped the country's economy stabilise by the mid-1990s. On the other hand, Ukraine decided to take the easy way, and, as a result it is still encountering severe problems.

Immediately after the fall of the communist regime, Poland underwent a transition period, in order to catch up with the world economy. Thanks to the Balcerowicz Plan, named after the country's then Minister of Finance, the government pursued a severe, but effective, shock therapy, introducing tight fiscal and monetary policies. Although the consequences for the economy and the people were devastating during the first two years (1989 – 1991), it helped Poland evolve into one of the most robust economies in Central and Eastern Europe. The country's 1991 GDP growth rate of -7% rose to 2.6% in 1992 and to a further 7% in 1997. In the following years, Poland's pace of growth declined, as an effect of the financial crisis in Russia. However, in 2002 it started gradually increasing again, with a 1.4% in 2002 and a 3.8% in 2003. In 2004, just before Poland's accession to the EU, there was a widespread fear that prices would skyrocket. Therefore, Poles started to stock up on goods, buying household appliances, cars, construction materials and even food. In order to meet this growing demand, companies increased production and built up a huge surplus. This provided Poland with a GDP growth of 5.34%. In the following years, Poland's GDP growth remained over 6.0%.

Poland managed to be less affected by the 2008 financial crisis than the rest of its fellow EU member states. Among the reasons behind Poland's relatively good performance are its comparatively small domestic and external imbalances before

the crisis, the large domestic economy, a relatively un-leveraged banking system, and less buoyant credit and housing markets in recent years. Nonetheless, there were also capital outflows, rising interbank interest rates, reduced liquidity and a rapid depreciation of the Polish zloty.

The situation in Ukraine is much more different. Ukraine was in a constant recession during the 1990s, mainly due to the lack of significant structural reform and due to external shocks because of its dependence on Russian energy supplies. In 1991, the country's GDP growth rate was -8%, it reached -9% in 1992, and hit a low in 1995 with a -22%. During the following years, the government succeeded in eliminating most tax and customs privileges, bringing more economic activity out of Ukraine's large shadow economy, which led to a positive GDP growth in 1999. Year 2000 brought the first signs of economic growth in Ukraine, after ten years of economic decline, with GDP growing by 5.5%, which then reached a 12.1% in 2004. The 2004 Orange Revolution was followed by a decline in growth rate, led by strong demand, high export prices and undervalued exchange rate. Exports were affected by falling demand and prices for metals on world markets, while investment was affected by both the failing growth and government's policies. Until the 2008 financial crisis, Ukraine's annual GDP growth had been over 7.0%.

Contrary to the Polish, Ukrainian economy was exceptionally hard-hit by this crisis, despite the fact that Ukraine's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2008 has helped mitigate protectionist pressures. In the first half of 2009, real GDP dropped by around 20%, reflecting the collapse of steel output and the contraction of the construction and retail sectors. Ukraine's prospects for recovery in the near term are constrained by weak external and domestic demand. Deep institutional and structural reforms will lead to a fast and sustainable pace of economic growth in the long term, but the institutional environment will be improved, with the public sector spending more efficient. More investments are

needed, in areas such as fighting corruption, developing the capital markets, and improving the legislative framework.

The economic cooperation between Poland and Ukraine officially began on April 4, 1991, when the two parties signed the bilateral Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation.⁸ However, the economic and political situation the two states encountered in the early 1990s did not allow them much bilateral trade. A notable change for the better took place in mid-1995, when Ukraine made progress with economic and political reforms: the government achieved macroeconomic stabilisation, introduced a new currency, adopted the first democratic constitution, and made serious steps to liberalise its foreign trade. As a result, in the following years, trade and economic cooperation between Poland and Ukraine –as well as between Ukraine and other partners– were steadily growing.

Trade volume between Poland and Ukraine has developed rapidly: \$280 million in 1993, \$550 million in 1994, and more than \$1 billion in 1995; in 1996, it further increased by almost 50% and stood at about \$1.5 billion.⁹ As a result, at the time, Ukraine had become Poland's third largest trade partner (after Germany and Russia), while Poland was one of Ukraine's most important trading partners. Given the generally low quality of most Ukrainian and Polish products in comparison with EU standards, and consequently their low competitiveness on Western markets, the two countries found it easier to sell many goods to each other.

However, no matter how impressive those figures might seem, the bilateral trade, seen as a share of the total trade volume of both countries, was at a relatively low level. Ukraine remained heavily shackled to Russia (which accounted for 41% of Ukraine's foreign trade) and to the CIS countries (60% of Ukraine's total import

⁸ The agreement came effective only on March 11, 1994.

⁹ The figures are 30-40% lower than the actual trade, as they do not include (illegal) unregistered cross-border trade.

and 54% of its export), while Ukraine's share of Poland's total trade volume was less than 5%.

The structure of the Polish-Ukrainian trade was in the 1990s heavily dominated by mineral products: the major portion of Polish exports to Ukraine consisted of coal (40% of Poland's total exports to Ukraine) and agricultural products and consumer goods (16.6%), while 54.5% of Ukrainian exports to Poland were ore and various metals. At the same time, mutual intra-industry links were practically non-existent, apart from the agreement on joint production of Polish "Bizon" combine harvesters in western Ukraine.

Despite the fact that in the following years the Polish-Ukrainian partnership flourished on the political level, the economic cooperation between the two countries was far from matching their economic needs and potentials. Poland comprised only 2.7% of Ukraine's total export and 3.3% of its total import and in 1998, due to the negative repercussions of the Russian financial crisis on Ukraine, the bilateral trade decreased by 10%, with the decline of the exports to Poland reaching -17.67% and the Ukrainian imports -11.52%.

In 1999, Ukraine's economy was still characterised by the absence of structural changes, intra-regional disproportions, unfinished privatisation, the persisting crisis of non-payments, and the growing domestic and external debt. Business environment remained over-regulated, unstable and non-transparent, and consequently most businesses opted to operate in the shadow sector, while neither foreign nor domestic substantial investments were coming.

The table below shows the volume of the bilateral trade between Poland and Ukraine from 1994 to 1999.

Polish imports and exports from and to Ukraine (in million US\$)				
	Imports	Change in %	Exports	Change in %
1994	150		123.2	
1995	130.9	-12.73	237.1	92.45
1996	362.7	117.08	510.7	115.39
1997	380.3	4.85	549.9	7.67
1998	313.1	-17.67	486.2	-11.52
1999	301.4	-3.736	258.5	-46.8
Note: Change in % compared to the previous year				

It was not until 2004 that the trade between Poland and Ukraine regained its lost potential, with the increase of Ukrainian exports to Poland by 41.43% and of the Polish exports to Ukraine by 32.8%, compared to 2003. And that was only the beginning. Although in 2005 there was a slight decrease in the Polish imports from Ukraine by 1.68%, the exports increased by 27.91%, while the following year Polish imports from Ukraine increased by 29.23% and the exports to Ukraine by 53.30%, compared to the previous year. As the table below shows, this pattern continued until 2008, when the total volume of the bilateral trade reached \$8.78 billion.

Polish imports and exports from and to Ukraine (in million US\$)				
	Imports	Change in %	Exports	Change in %
2003	734,222		1.523.452	
2004	1,038.456	41.43	2.023.387	32.80
2005	1,020.986	-1.68	2.588.213	27.91
2006	1,319.438	29.23	3.967.792	53.30
2007	1,693.541	28.35	5.511.254	38.89
2008	2,351.734	38.86	6.436.719	16.79
Note: Change in % compared to the previous year				

The 2008 global financial crisis has affected to a great degree the bilateral economic cooperation. The value of Poland's exports to Ukraine from January to June 2009 decreased by 54.1% compared to 2008, reaching \$1.51 bil,¹⁰ and accounted for only 2.51% (3.8% in 2008), decreasing Ukraine to Poland's 10th most important importer (8th in 2008). Simultaneously, Poland's participation in

¹⁰ In the same period, the value of Poland's global exports was \$60.54 bil, decreased by 32.5% compared to 2008.

Ukraine's imports was 4.9% (5.1% in 2008), making Poland Ukraine's 6th most important supplier (5th in 2008).

However, Poland is not Ukraine's only partner with whom trade has been decreased. In the first half of 2009, Ukraine's total import decreased by 53.4%, while import from the EU by 52.6%. More specifically, imports from the UK fell by 50.2%, from the Netherlands by 48.4%, from Italy by 54.7% and from Germany by 51.6%. Moreover, imports from other fellow Central and Eastern European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, were decreased by more than 60%. Simultaneously, imports from non-European countries were also reduced, ranging from 13.6% (Kazakhstan) to 82.0% (South Korea).¹¹ Only Uzbekistan managed to double its exports to Ukraine.

This drop in the volume of exports affected the trade structure, totally changing its balance, as products that used to dominate the structure dropped sharply. More specifically, electric-machinery, which used to constitute the majority of Polish exports to Ukraine, fell to 24% (37% in 2008); machinery exports also reduced to 15.9% (16.4% in 2008); mineral products to 3.5% (5.3% in 2008); and cement to 2.9% (4.1% in 2008). On the other hand, there was an important increase in agricultural products and consumer goods to 15.7% (8% in 2008). Moreover, there was an increase in chemicals to 12.1% (7.8% in 2008); artificial products to 10.2% (9.0% in 2008); paper products to 7.4% (5.2% in 2008); ore and various metals to 13% (12% in 2008); and light industry products to 6.8% (5.4% in 2008).

Two factors stand behind this sharp fall in Polish exports. The first one, and most important one, is the reduction of the number of vehicles exported, which was decreased to 8.1% (20.5% in 2008). Vehicles export was the most lucrative for Poland, and this drop affected to a great extent the country's total exports to

¹¹ Imports from Kazakhstan were reduced by 13.6%; from the USA by 46.4%; from Turkey by 54.5%; from Belarus by 56%; from China by 57.0%; from Russia by 58.6%; from Japan by 78%; from Turkmenistan by 79%; and from South Korea by 82.0%.

Ukraine. The decreased demand for cars in Ukraine is the result of higher car prices, difficulties connected with securing a loan, and import duties on cars from abroad. The second factor, which explains the decrease in the export of building materials, is the fact that, due to the economic crisis, Ukrainians built fewer houses.

The value of Ukraine's exports to Poland in the first half of 2009 was \$390.8 mil, reduced by 67% compared to 2008.¹² Ukraine's imports to Poland accounted for 0.6% (1.14% in 2008), making Ukraine Poland's 26th most important supplier. Ukraine's global exports were reduced by 46.8%, and so did its exports to the EU (by 53.8%), Italy (by 63.3%), and Turkey (by 62%). However, there was an increase in exports to Asian countries, and especially to China, India, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Iraq, Vietnam, South Korea, Philippines, and Turkmenistan. In Europe, there was an increase in exports only to Spain. As a result, Poland's participation in Ukraine's exports was 2.68% (3.5% in 2008), ranking 10th among Ukraine's most important markets (4th in 2008).

Regarding the structure of the trade, there was a decrease in steel products to 29.8% (40.2% in 2008); in minerals to 10.7% (22.6% in 2008); in chemicals to 8.3% (10.4% in 2008); and in consumer goods. On the other hand, agricultural products rose to 18.3% (8.7% in 2008); machinery to 13.6% (6.2% in 2008); furniture to 12.1% (6.2% in 2008); and so did grease and oil products.

As far as the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) are concerned, from 1990 to 2000, the annual average of inward flows to Poland was \$3.7 bil, while that of outward flows was only \$51 mil. In the same period, Ukraine's annual average of inward flows was \$34 mil, and of outward flows only \$5 mil. The reason behind the lack of investments in Ukraine during that period was the high inflation, the lack of ownership guarantees, an extensive tax system, corruption, inability to purchase

¹² In the same period, the value of Poland's global imports was \$65.5 bil, reduced by 39.5% compared to 2008.

land, complicated and ever-changing regulations, lack of credit insurance, and bureaucracy. Generally, the uncertain economic situation, the political instability, and the low financial potential of both countries and their recurrent state budget problems have discouraged potential investors.

The table below shows the FDI in Poland and Ukraine in selected years:

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Overview (in million US\$)						
		1990 - 2000*	2005	2006	2007	2008
Poland	Inward	3,705	10,249	19,591	22,612	16,533
	Outward	51	3,399	8,875	4,748	3,582
Ukraine	Inward	346	7,808	5,604	9,891	10,693
	Outward	5	275	-133	673	1,010
Notes: (*) Annual average						

In the second quarter of 2009 there was a significant increase in Polish direct investments in Ukraine, which rose by 24.5% (or \$167.7 mil), reaching a total value of \$851.8 mil. Overall, this increase accounted for 11.7% of the FDI in Ukraine during this period. Only France, the Netherlands and Cyprus¹³ invested more. The kingpin behind this increase was the capital increase in Kredobank, launched by the Polish PKO BP bank, to which the former belongs. The 1 bil grivna (or \$130 mil) of the capital were a large proportion of the Polish investments during this period. As a result, the Polish direct investments that took place between April and June 2009 made Poland the 12th biggest foreign investor in Ukraine (13th in the first quarter of 2009), accounting for 2.2% of the FDI in the country (1.9% in the first quarter of 2009).

Trans-border cooperation between Poland and Ukraine is coordinated by the Regional Center for Cross-Border Cooperation, established in 1992, and the Inter-Government Coordination Council for Inter-Regional Cooperation, established in 1996. This type of cooperation mainly takes place via the Carpathian Euroregion and the Bug Euroregion.

¹³ The high percentage of Cypriot investments in Ukraine is due to off-shore companies.

The Carpathian Euroregion was created in February 1993, and it consists of two voivodeships in Southeastern Poland, districts located in the Western and Southwestern Ukraine, and neighbouring districts in Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. The Bug Euroregion was created in September 1995, and includes three voivodeships in Eastern Poland, districts in Northwestern Ukraine, and districts of Western Belarus. Cooperation within Euroregions is carried out between state administration bodies and local self-government units, and it focuses on urban development, transportation, ecology, natural disasters prevention and rescue, education, health service, culture, sport, recreation, and tourism.

Moreover, apart from the cooperation in the Euroregion context, there are also direct contacts between cities. This kind of trans-border brings local communities closer, and helps them to overcome prejudice and historical grievances and stereotypes. Thus, new social bonds are created which represent a more permanent link in the partnership between Poland and Ukraine and are more important for “ordinary” people than the partnership declared “from the top” between politicians.

Cooperation in the Energy Context

Both Poland and Ukraine –especially the latter– hold strategic energy infrastructure and are currently very important transit countries of Russian hydrocarbons to Europe. However, they are also highly dependent on Russian gas and oil. This dependence is a sensitive issue in both countries for political and security reasons: for Poland, it is perceived as a remainder of Poland's control by Russia and as a crucial instrument of the Russian foreign policy; for Ukraine, Russian dominance of the energy sector in the region and Russian attempts to bypass Ukraine as transit country have increasingly been perceived with concern. Although to a different extent, both countries aim to diversify imports to reduce their dependence from Russia, maintain their condition as transit countries, and avoid the entry of Russian companies in their energy sector, while simultaneously they try to attract investments from Western countries.

Poland perceives Ukraine as a vital partner in achieving these goals, since Ukraine's position makes it an important transit state for energy supplies both from Russia and from alternative exporters, such as the Caspian Sea region and the Middle East. On the other hand, for Ukraine, Poland is important, as it strengthens its international position: since 2000, Poland has pressed for taking into account the Ukrainian interests in the EU energy talks with Russia, and has rejected the interconnection between Yamal¹⁴ and Bratstvo¹⁵ pipelines, which would endanger Ukraine's political independence.

In this context, Poland has set as a priority the construction of the Brody-Płock-Gdańsk expansion of the already existing Odessa-Brody pipeline, a 674km oil pipeline built in 2001. The pipeline had not previously secured sufficient

¹⁴ Yamal is a 4,196 km natural gas pipeline which connects natural gas fields in Western Siberia, Russia with Germany, via Belarus and Poland. The pipeline, which was completed in 1997 but came fully operational only in 2005, has a capacity of 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) annually.

¹⁵ Bratstvo, meaning Brotherhood, is a natural gas pipeline connecting Russia with Europe via Ukraine. It was built in 1964, and was put into operation in 1967.

capacities of oil supply, and as a result, in July 2004, Ukraine accepted a proposal of Russian oil companies to reverse the pipeline flow, making it transfer Russian oil southwards to the Black Sea and from there to Mediterranean destinations. Thus, the pipeline is used for export from Odessa rather than westward to Central European markets as originally planned.

The new Odessa-Płock-Gdańsk pipeline can offer Poland an alternative source of energy supply. Thus, Poland has been seeking EU support for it and its inclusion into the Trans-European projects. In May 2003, the European Commission signed with Poland and Ukraine a declaration on the Euro-Asian Oil Transport Corridor Project, which included the Odessa-Brody-Płock pipeline, while, in March 2005, a Polish-Ukrainian consortium of companies was created to construct the new pipeline.

In 2008, the European Commission, which financed the pipeline's feasibility study, decided to give a new momentum to the project. However, it encountered problems such as lack of suppliers, lack of demand, delays in investment, necessity of reversing the pipeline flow, and security and stability problems in Georgia. The last factor is really important, as the oil destined to Odessa has to be first transited from Baku to Supsa via the Baku-Supsa pipeline, which is then transported to Odessa by tankers and put into the pipeline. However, Georgia's political destabilisation, combined with Russia's attempts to present Georgia as "dangerous for business," has frozen investments.

Energy cooperation between Poland and Ukraine should not be addressed only in the context of the Odessa-Brody-Płock-Gdańsk pipeline. Energy cooperation with Ukraine should be a priority for the EU, and the latter should be directly involved in the development of energy and transport infrastructures in Ukraine, securing stable and reliable energy supply for itself. Poland pursues the integration of Ukraine within Western structures, which would enable the exploitation of energy resources in both countries. In this direction, Poland supports Ukraine's

accession to the Energy Community, and lobbies for the synchronisation of Ukraine's electrical system with the UCTE system (Union for the Coordination of Transmission of Electricity), which co-ordinates the oil transportation interests of twenty-four EU member states. This would both enable the transmission of excessive amounts of energy and facilitate a swift reaction to any future energy crisis, thus giving Ukraine an alternative other than Russia. Moreover, in February 2006, only a month after the 2006 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute, Poland proposed the creation of a "European Energy Pact," which would be assisting the states the energy security of which is threatened.

Poland should support Ukrainian efforts to increase energy effectiveness and productivity, which might create opportunities to enhance mutual business relations. Along with business aid, Poland could offer its technological know-how, while Polish experts, scientists, and academics could conduct the projects together with their Ukrainian counterparts. Co-operation and interpersonal contact might be very important in encouraging skilled Ukrainian people, especially engineers.

The Social Factor

The previous chapters analysed the political partnership and the economic cooperation between Poland and Ukraine, and reached the conclusion that the turbulent past does not play a major role. However, it is very important to see how the peoples of the two nations understand this partnership, and to elaborate on the social aspects of it.

As already mentioned, there is a difference in the degree to which either country is interested in the other. In Poland, relations with Ukraine are a matter of importance to the whole nation, whereas in Ukraine, interest in Poland is confined only to the western part of the country. There are two factors that determine this imbalance: the composition of the population; and their shared history. As far as population is concerned, all over Poland live either Poles expelled from Ukraine by the USSR, or Ukrainians resettled to Northwestern Poland during the 1947 Operation Vistula. These people –or their descendants– still have interest in the lands they come from and in the people they have left behind. Simultaneously, for centuries Poland had been a state of which western Ukraine was always an integral part. Western Ukraine, and particularly Lviv, is an important repository of the architectural treasures of Polish culture. Generally, Poles see with great sentiment the territories in the East than once used to form Poland.

Generally, there is a series of issues that are regarded as sensitive in the context of the Polish-Ukrainian relationship and still influence the public's opinion. Such are considered Bohdan Khmelnytsky's 17th century uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Two Nations; the struggle for the control of the borderland between the infant Polish and Ukrainian states in the aftermath of WWI; the treatment of the Ukrainian minority in Poland between the wars and the growth of Ukrainian paramilitary organisations; and the ethnic cleansing of

Polish and Ukrainian minorities from areas of mixed settlement during and after WWII.

The last of those, the ethnic cleansings that took place in the 1940s, were the reason behind one of the most explosive cases in the framework of the Polish-Ukrainian partnership. In 2003, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine decided to commemorate the 1943 Volhynia massacre in a joint ceremony that would take place in Ukraine. However, Ukrainian veterans sealed their side of the border in advance of the ceremonies only to prevent the Polish veterans from crossing the border. For Ukrainians, every commemoration of those events favours Poland, as no mention is made of the persecution of the Ukrainians by the Polish state between 1918 and 1939, nor of the 1947 Operation Vistula. On the other hand, Poles apprehend the 1943 Volhynia massacres as nothing short of genocide.¹⁶

However, as mentioned, this incident was only one in a series of such difficult situations. The one that became very important during the 1990s –or at least it was presented as important by the media– was the reopening of the Cemetery of Eaglets (pol. *Cmentarz Orłąt*). The cemetery was originally constructed during the interwar period in Lviv (which at the time belonged to Poland) to commemorate the Lwów Eaglets (pol. *Orleta Lwowskie*), the young Poles who defended the city during the Polish–Ukrainian War (1918-1919). When Lviv came into Soviet hands in 1944, the cemetery was neglected for over forty years, and fell into a considerable state of disrepair. After 1989, the Polish government requested the right to restore the cemetery, which was granted by the Ukrainian authorities. At the end of the 1990s, the cemetery had been restored in way that reflected its troubled history, and a memorial to the Ukrainians who had fought for independence from Poland and the USSR was constructed next to the Polish war graves.

¹⁶ For both the Volhynia massacres and Operation Vistula, see Chapter II.

Despite the fact that the Cemetery had been open for several years, in 1999 the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine agreed on its “re-opening,” namely an official ceremony of reconciliation designed to demonstrate that both sides had decisively put the past behind them, and to commemorate dead on both sides. However, the Lviv city authorities refused to participate in the national government’s plans, until the Polish side consented to restore the graves of Ukrainian partisans in southeastern Poland, with the inscription “Warrior for a Free Ukraine” on the gravestone. This move was less evidence of anti-Polish feeling in western Ukraine, and more a ploy of frustrated local politicians to make a bid for the national political scene in what turned out to be a publicity coup. This proved to be right when, a few months later, a joint mass took place in the cemetery, officiated by the cardinals of both the Roman and Greek Catholic churches, without any protests.

Another similar case was the restoration of the former Greek Catholic cathedral in Przemyśl to Ukrainians. In 1991, Pope John Paul II decided to return the Greek Catholic cathedral in Przemyśl with its distinctive dome to the Greek Catholic church. However, this was met with resistance by local Polish nationalists and veterans of the Polish-Ukrainian conflicts, who erected barricades and organised a hunger strike. The Pope was forced to back down, and handed the Greek Catholic community the Garrison Church, a church without any significance to them. In 1996, the distinctive Greek Catholic dome of the cathedral was removed “for safety reasons,” although it was more likely that local hard line anti-Ukrainian Roman Catholics wanted to expunge memories of a shared Ukrainian past from the town’s skyline.

One will notice that the background of those cases is either Lviv or Przemyśl. Although before WWII both belonged to Poland, in the aftermath of WWII, the two major urban centers were separated by the new state border: Przemyśl found itself on the Polish side, and Lviv on the Ukrainian. Quite ironically, each city

constitutes an important symbolic role for the nation on the other side of the border: Poles consider Lviv as one of the most important historical centers of Polish nation, and Ukrainians regard Przemyśl as an important historical Greek Catholic diocesan centre.

Lviv (pol. *Lwów*) is the capital of the region of Galicia in western Ukraine. For hundreds of years the city was the cultural centre of the Kingdom of Poland and then of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was returned to Poland immediately after WWI, but in 1939 (officially in 1945) it became part of the USSR and subsequently of the Ukrainian SSR. What followed was the appellation of the Polish population of the city, which was then urbanised by Ukrainians from rural areas around the city, and from other parts of the USSR.

Przemyśl is situated in Eastern Galicia in Poland, and, historically, was an important centre of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church, but essentially became part of the independent Poland in 1918. During WWII, the Ukrainian minority resented Poland's "nationalising" policies and many Ukrainians took advantage of the Nazi occupation of Poland to fight –with Nazi support– for their independence. After the war, the Polish communist authorities deported Ukrainians to the USSR, or dispersed them around Poland during Operation Vistula.

Despite the fact that the incident with the Przemyśl cathedral addresses the antagonism between the Roman and the Greek Catholics, the most competitive relations were between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Poles are Catholic in heritage, and Ukrainians are predominantly Orthodox. Religious tensions were heightened during and after WWII, when the Soviet government seized Catholic churches in Ukraine and the Polish government seized Orthodox churches, aiming at prompting the migration of the Polish and Ukrainian minorities.

After the fall of the communist regimes, disputes over church properties reflected the tensions between these two religious communities. Catholics in Southeastern Poland have refused to return several properties to their Orthodox counterparts, and the Orthodox Church in Ukraine has been similarly hesitant in returning properties to the Catholic community. Nonetheless, these disputes exist at the community level and, thus, are unlikely to impair the Polish-Ukrainian relations at the state level. The two governments have intervened in these disputes, and properties have been returned to their pre-war owners. In any event, the Orthodox population in Poland and the Catholic population in Ukraine are too small to constitute an internal threat to their host nations and the predominant churches.

Attitudes towards the past are fluid, and the influence of the past on the present varies over time. Many stereotypes of the past are still alive among both Poles and Ukrainians. While Eastern Ukrainians have traditionally been inclined more towards Russia and remain largely ignorant of the Polish-Ukrainian relations, Ukrainians in the West of the country, which before 1939 was a part of Poland and where nationalism has directed to a large extent against Poland, still harbour strong anti-Polish feelings. At the same time, many Poles still perceive Ukrainians negatively. In this regard, the two peoples still have to go a long road to achieve the desired reconciliation.

In recent years, the two parties have been trying to close historical accounts. The very first time when the issue of reconciliation was touched at an official level was in August 1990, when the Polish Senate passed a resolution condemning Operation Vistula. In response, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a statement of understanding of the Polish Senate's resolution as a serious step towards the correction of the historical injustice towards the Ukrainians in Southeastern Poland, and condemned the criminal acts of the Stalinist regime towards Poles.

In May 1997, Presidents Kwaśniewski and Kuchma signed a Declaration of Understanding and Reconciliation in order to move beyond mutual recrimination, while in April 2002, President Kwaśniewski officially condemned Operation Vistula. However, he openly rejected the notion that the operation should in any way be linked to the 1943 Volhynia massacres. In July 2003, the two Presidents met in Pavlivka, Ukraine to commemorate ethnic Poles murdered there by the UPA in 1943. Continuing this reconciliation approach, their successors, Presidents Kaczyński and Yushchenko met in May 2006 in Pawlokoma, Poland where they unveiled a memorial dedicated to the over 360 ethnic Ukrainians killed there by a Polish military group in 1945. Finally, in 2007, they condemned Operation Vistula as a violation of human rights, and President Yushchenko attributed the responsibility of the conducting the operation to the “totalitarian communist regimes.”

The Visa Regime

In March 1998, along other Central and Eastern European countries, Poland started negotiations towards its accession to the EU. During those negotiations, the EU imposed on the involved countries strict conditions, in order to reduce the openness and strengthen the control of its future external borders. As a result, Poland had to harmonise its visa policy with the common visa policy of the EU, which included the introduction of visa requirements for, among others, Ukrainian citizens. Additionally, it had to adopt the EU common external trade regime and abandon all previous bilateral trade arrangements with its non-EU neighbours. The biggest pressure came from France and Germany, which urged Poland to introduce stricter visa regulations and tighten control on its eastern borders. More specifically, France raised concerns arguing that Poland’s eastern border was porous for immigrants and contraband and that it would not be ready to serve as the Schengen Area’s eastern limit, after Poland had joined the EU.

Until then, Poland and Ukraine retained a non-visa regime, based on an agreement signed on June 25, 1996, which was slightly amended in 1997, when Poland introduced tougher measures in order to prevent illegal trade through its eastern borders. The new policy which Poland had to introduce sparked debates in Poland, as it was regarded as an exemplary case of the negative consequences of the accession into the EU. Many asserted that such a reform would have a negative impact on cross-border trade and cooperation, travel and human contacts, and the situation of national minorities. This would further widen the economic and psychological distance between Poland and Ukraine, artificially pushing the latter eastward rather than anchoring it more firmly in Central and Eastern Europe, thus increasing the danger of its regional isolation. Finally, since Poland's experience and achievements were the best indication of the need for continuation of market reforms in Ukraine, a non-visa-free border regime between the two countries would have a major psychological impact on Ukraine, its people and the reform-minded and Western-oriented political forces in the country. Ukrainians also shared the same concerns, adding that visas would set up a new "paper curtain" between the enlarged EU and its Eastern neighbours.

Poland tried to normalise the transition for Ukrainians, by delaying as much as possible the introduction of visas, seeking the maximum permeability and openness of the Polish-Ukrainian border, and preparing a model that would reduce possible constraints. Finally, in July 2003, the two parties signed an agreement on the visa regime stating, among others, that all kind of visas for Ukrainian citizens were free of charge, while Poles travelling to Ukraine were exempted from visa obligations. There were also various facilities foreseen for Ukrainian citizens: Ukrainians with Schengen visas were exempted from transit visas, diplomats of both countries were excluded from the visa obligations, and multi-entrance visas for five years were introduced, along with visas for citizens who participated in "regular bilateral contacts" in fields like economy, culture, science, education, and sport. Essentially, visas were introduced on October 1,

2003, and despite a short drop in the movement of people, the intensity of the border crossing kept being high.

Conclusions

The “strategic partnership” between Poland and Ukraine elaborated in this report represents a new phase in a relationship historically characterised by conflict. And despite the fact that vociferous anti-Polish or anti-Ukrainian minorities exist in both countries, the turbulent past Poland and Ukraine share is unlikely to cause any major tensions between the two countries.

However, this does not mean that history does not still play a major role. In January 2010, President Yushchenko posthumously granted the Hero of Ukraine title, one of the country’s highest honours, to Stepan Bandera, a leader of Ukrainian nationalist forces during WWII. In 1943, Bandera’s supporters conducted a campaign of terror against Ukraine’s Polish population, which resulted in the massacre of at least 80,000 Poles. Some historians argue that Bandera’s fascist followers had cooperated with Nazi invaders. Both Poland and Russia expressed outrage at the decision, while President Kaczyński noted that such actions were aiming “against the historical unity process between Poland and Ukraine.” In Ukraine, the decision was supported in the western part of the country, where many see Bandera as a hero, but it was greeted with disbelief in eastern Ukraine, where Bandera is viewed as a pro-German collaborator and a traitor.

There are also some grounds for concern about the future of the partnership. While the need for close mutual cooperation is now generally recognised among the Ukrainian and Polish political elite and intellectuals, the public at large remains ignorant and uninvolved in the process. As a result, there is a perception gap in both countries. Additionally, many stereotypes of the past are still alive among both Poles and Ukrainians, especially those in western Ukraine. At the same time, a significant segment of Polish society continues to perceive Ukrainians negatively. The two peoples still have to go a long road to achieve the desired reconciliation.

As far as economic cooperation is concerned, despite the recent growth in bilateral trade and investments, it is far from reaching the level of the Russian-Ukrainian cooperation: Poland has no energy resources, it is not a strategic market for any of Ukraine's raw exports, and Polish companies do not have any political lobby in Ukraine. Simultaneously, Polish business and banks face big problems in Ukraine such as non-repayment of VAT and pressure from the local authorities, and few in Ukraine are seriously interested in what Poland can offer in establishing a Western style of doing business or gaining access to Western markets.

At the political level, Poland's initiative to launch the Eastern Partnership indicates that it still considers supporting Ukraine's European aspirations as a priority. The neighbourly relations the two states have achieved in the last decade can show the way. However, Poland can still do more in order to assist its neighbour in its struggle to reform its political system, and many analysts accuse Poland's foreign policy towards Ukraine for not being supportive enough. They mention the lack of support in Ukraine's pursuit to enter the Visegrád Group, the visa regime, and the limited economic support. They argue that Poland should try to play for Ukraine the role Germany once played for Poland.

The presidential elections that took place in Ukraine in January (first round) and February (second round) 2010 are not likely to change much regarding Ukraine's foreign policy towards Poland and the special partnership between the two states. In what has been according to Western institutions an "impressive display of democratic elections," the outgoing President Viktor Yushchenko was defeated in the first round with an extremely poor 5.45% of the vote.

Viktor Yanukovich, the bad guy in the 2004 presidential elections, won in the second round with a 48.95% of the vote, against 45.47% for his rival, the outgoing Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko. The most important challenge for the new administration will be to transform Ukraine's economy and domestic affairs. Ukraine is in the midst of a serious economic crisis with a GDP decline of 16% in

2009, skyrocketing inflation, heavy unemployment and unprecedented fall in living standards. Moreover, the rule of law is elusive, courts remain corrupt and the parliament resembles a trading platform for business tycoons in which deals are made and seats bought and sold.

As far as Ukraine's foreign policy is concerned, although Yanukovich is known as a pro-Russian politician whose mother tongue is Russian, his administration has set integration into the European institutions as one of its priorities. For this very reason, the new President's first official visit was to Brussels rather than to Moscow. However, unlike Yushchenko, during whose rule relations with Moscow got to their lowest point ever, that does not mean that Ukraine will neglect relations with Russia. Yanukovich says that integration into Europe is Kiev's top priority, but that cannot be done at the expense of relations with Russia. In his own words, Ukraine's relations "with the EU will inevitably involve Russia, and *vice versa*." He sees Ukraine as a mediator between the EU and Russia, rather than a political ally of either bloc.

If Ukraine will indeed follow an EU-oriented foreign policy, this will guarantee that relations with Poland will remain untouched, as long as the goal of both is Ukraine's accession into the EU. On the other hand, should Ukraine abandon its European aspirations and turn to Moscow, the future of the partnership will be hard to predict. In a manner, one could argue that, at present, the Polish-Ukrainian relations are closely related to the relations between Ukraine and the EU. In this regard, openly pro-Western Yulia Tymoshenko would be a more appropriate partner for Poland. However, Polish officials remain optimistic that Ukraine's foreign policy under Yanukovich will not neglect the mutually beneficial partnership.

The latest opportunity for cooperation between Poland and Ukraine is the EURO 2012, the European football championship, which will be held in four Polish and four Ukrainian cities. For both states, this could have immense positive

repercussions, and officials on both sides agree that this can be seen both as one more step toward Ukraine's integration to the EU, and as a good example of mutual collaboration. However, the biggest bonus is that despite all the delays in introducing economic reforms in Ukraine and modernising Poland's infrastructure, the championships could give both countries the incentive for new initiatives, by giving them the opportunity to build new hotels, improve the public transportation and attract foreign investment. Surely, it will further assist the two nations in building a common future, instead of delving into a troublesome past.

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