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**UKRAINE AS A FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITY OF ESTONIA:  
A FEATURE OF NEO-REGIONALISM**

Bachelor's Thesis

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I declare I have written the bachelor's thesis independently.

All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Both Estonia and Ukraine often have been mentioned by academicians together in terms of comparative research on different aspects of intra-national activities, and, almost all the time, in the context of post-Soviet developments. Contrarily, this thesis is aiming to investigate the linkages and ties between Estonia and Ukraine in the context of neo-regionalist tendencies noted in Central-Eastern Europe. This research claims that Estonia-Ukraine interconnectedness is a feature of activity, in which Estonia, while trying to actively participate in the interlinked processes of neo-regionalism in Central-Eastern Europe, predominantly frames its relations with Ukraine on the formal basis of foreign policy priorities. In itself, it is a remarkable relationship-building pattern for the aforementioned region, as despite their lengthy period of common history, for the last quarter of a century Estonia and Ukraine have followed separate and diverse development vectors. This paper investigates and analyses the past and current political, diplomatic, economic, social and cultural interactions between the two countries, in order to explain the above-mentioned processes. Moreover, the turbulent recent period in Ukrainian history – whether due to its political move towards closer relations with the EU, or to its geopolitical conflict with Russia following Moscow’s annexation of the Crimea and intervention in the Donbas – provides an opportunity to analyse emerging trends in Estonian-Ukrainian interactions.

**Keywords:** Estonia, Ukraine, foreign policy, Baltic States, post-Soviet studies, strategic partnership, neo-regionalism.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AA – The Association Agreement

BA – The Baltic Assembly

CDC – The Community of Democratic Choice

CEE – Central-Eastern Europe

CIS – The Commonwealth of Independent States

CP – Communist Party

DCFTA – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area

GUUAM – Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development

EaP – The Eastern Partnership

ENP – European Neighborhood Policy

EU – The European Union

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IR – International Relations

MRP – Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NATO – The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OSCE – The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

USSR – The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WTO – World Trade Organisation

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1900, the regions that would become the countries of Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) had significant geopolitical relevance to the four great European empires of Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey. After WWI had altered the European map, the CEE states obtained sovereignty and independence, while the Russian Empire was transformed into the USSR. The borders of the latter expanded during and after the Second World War, and consequently, the Iron Curtain clearly and physically defined the geographic boundary of Central and Eastern Europe. At the end of XX century, by contrast, the region's geopolitical situation lacked certainty (Dawson, Fawn 2001, 1). Since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the academic world has been debating the issue of CEE security. In the beginning of the 1990s, the debate focused on the direction of development for those nations, which had previously 'experienced' the influence of the former Soviet Union first-hand. Despite their common communist past, these countries moved in different directions in terms of regional integration. Motyl (2001, 87) indicates that such middle-of-the-road post-Soviet countries as Ukraine together with Moldova and the three Caucasus countries appeared to be less dependence-minded compared to the trio of the Baltic States, but in the same time more independence-minded than the Central Asian nations. For example, Estonia, together with Latvia and Lithuania, being called the "Western enclave within the multinational Soviet State" (Misiunas, Taagepera 1993, 1), formed the Baltic Assembly and combined their efforts to express an explicit Western-orientated political vector. In contrast, Russia together with Belarus and Ukraine opted to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Ukraine's entry to the CIS agreement revealed the inability of its ruling elites to prioritise the European development vector (Vernygora, Chaban 2008, 136).

Attempting to link its academic inquiry with the sub-field of post-Soviet studies – an area of research that has never had a shortage of contrasts – this paper will be concentrating on Estonia-Ukraine relations in the context of the former's foreign policy priorities towards the latter. This represents a remarkable pattern in terms of the relationship-building process

between the countries that had experienced a lengthy period of common history. The countries went in separate directions and it led to differentiating priorities in many areas, including foreign policy, security and economics.

Straight after the collapse of the USSR, Estonia and Ukraine were one of the first to recognise each other's (re)gaining of independence. Both countries quickly established a firm partnership, as evidenced by opening embassies on each other's territory and signing several treaties. Ukraine and Estonia also both border Russian territory. In addition, Ukraine and Estonia are home to sizable ethnic Russian populations, which has given Russia plenty of leverage in the process of meddling in Estonian as well as Ukrainian internal affairs (Shlapak, Johnson 2016). However, relations between official Tallinn and Kyiv<sup>1</sup> do not only exist along the distinctly unfortunate dimension of common communist past. Estonia declares Ukraine as one of its foreign policy priorities and supports its Euro-Atlantic integration, and, in addition to that, made Ukraine a designated development cooperation priority country for the period 2011-2015. More significantly, the Ukrainian state has been formally named a priority country for Estonia for the upcoming period 2016–2020 as well (Principles of development cooperation between Estonia and Ukraine 2016).

Furthermore, in recent times, Estonian political and business elites have expressed considerable interest in Ukraine. An investigation of statements and interviews by Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves on Ukraine-related issues discourse demonstrate this increased interest (*Table 1* and *2*). Since Estonia prioritises Ukraine in its foreign policy making process, a question legitimately appears: why is Ukraine important for Estonia's foreign policy makers? And further, what are the key reasons for the Baltic nation's interest in Ukraine? In contrast, the general discourse of Ukrainian foreign policy in a number of successive governments, instead, emphasises the EU as a whole, and almost never focuses on a particular partner within the European supranational entity.

Considering the above, **this paper claims that the factor of Estonia's special interest in Ukraine is a distinguishing feature of neo-regionalism activities in the CEE.** Therefore, a justified objective for this research is to provide an observational overview of Estonia-Ukraine relations, based on evidence taken from existing segments of cooperation, in order to measure a degree of success. Finally, imposing the discussion into the framework of neo-regionalism, the work will observe new trends and possible capacities for further development.

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the Romanised Ukrainian spelling is used for Ukraine-originated geographical names, events and names of personalities.

Therefore, the research sub-questions of the thesis are as follows: How successful are the relations between Estonia and Ukraine? and What are the current trends in Estonia-Ukraine relations?

The significance of this research work is to explore the area of Estonia-Ukraine relations and contribute to the development of interconnectedness between the two nations, bringing the process onto a new level. The theoretical dimension of this analysis is designed to portray the dimensions of the relations concept that is suggested to have direct relevance to the research questions posed at the outset and then combine it a larger framework, in which the majority of interactions under investigation occur. For example, the interactions under study could fit rather well into a neo-regionalism-driven framework. Another aspect, Russia, the country next door for both Estonia and Ukraine, has been repeatedly confronting the two.

In order to answer the research questions of the thesis, the method of process tracing was chosen, as its most common purpose is to provide a sufficient explanation of the particular outcome (Beach, Pedersen 2013, 11). Methodologically, process tracing goes back to the origins and causes, therefore providing a comprehensive guidance for the analysis of case studies. In addition, process tracing serves as an analytical tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence (Collier, 2011, 823). Applying this methodological concept, the study should provide a sufficient explanation of/for particularities in terms of Estonia-Ukraine relations, while contributing to greater understanding of the decision by Estonian policy makers to position Ukraine as a priority-partner. For determining whether a specific hypothesis applies to the case, a wide range of sources concerning the specific case should be examined (George, Bennett 2004, 6). The investigation in this paper will be based on collecting evidence and ideas, qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources and process tracing, in order to analyse and test their validity in relationships. In addition, the Elite interview will be conducted in order to verify the previous findings (Beach, Pedersen 2013, 23).

The thesis will be divided into three chapters. Firstly, the general background of the study will be introduced and the framework for the existing relations between Estonia and Ukraine will be explained. In addition, the research design will be described and the methodological considerations for the research will be provided. Secondly, the analysis of relations' dynamics between the target countries, based on existing interactions and connections will be presented. Thirdly, the important aspects and reasons of bilateral relations in general and Estonia's interest in Ukraine as a foreign policy priority in particular will be summarised. Final-

ly, the conclusions will answer the research questions and suggestions for further research will be listed.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1.1 THEORETICAL DIMENSION: NEO-REGIONALISM IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE**

Europe is a patchy region, for this reason, the phenomenon of regionalism can be found in modern Europe (Vernygora, Chaban 2008, 128). Nye (1968,7) defines **regionalism** as “a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence” and as “the formation of interstate associations or groupings on the basis of regions”. The EU-driven enlargement has further intensified issues of Europe and European-ness – the multiple Europes and their boundaries do not coincide with those of the EU or its Member States (Kuus 2005, 567). The key differentiations of European identity implicate geographical matters, while culture and economics are also involved. Laffan (2004, 96) claims that modern-day Europe incorporates different identities: “market Europe, social Europe, wealthy Europe, poorer Europe – east and west, north and south”. According to Zielonka (2012, 517) the terms “new Europe” and “old Europe” reflect the American perspective. The EU as an institution exists as powerful social construction in contemporary Europe and worldwide, moreover, with external influence on its neighbors (Laffan 2004, 95).

The multi-levelled process of regionalism, as intergovernmental cooperation across several states, has been observed in both the West and CEE; for example, regional groupings within the EU (Vernygora, Chaban 2008, 129). According to Keating (1998, 112), in some European countries regionalism is closely linked to federalism where powerful local authorities co-exist with national ones (for example, Germany). Small powers like Estonia and sizeable actors such as Ukraine contributed to regional developments while being influenced by external powers, including, Russia, the EU and NATO. In addition to the integration within a neo-functionalist paradigm of several CEE actors into international organisations and alliances, like the EU and NATO, the CEE states and their neighbors have also been united together by several regional organisations, which point to the existence of **neo-regionalism** in Europe, exemplified by a number of formations in the region.

### **1.1.1 Post-Soviet era: the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic Assembly**

The countries with a common communist past had moved in the different direction of regional integration. As noted by Motyl (2001, 87), the newly (re)independent states were diverse in their independent policy-making; for instance, Ukraine, Moldova and the three Caucasus countries were less dependence-minded compared to the Baltics, but in the same time more independence-minded than the Central Asian nations. Right after regaining their independence in 1991, the three Baltic States combined their efforts and established the Baltic Assembly – a parliamentary consultative organisation with a straightforwardly Western-orientated political vector. Recently, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves (2015) described the Baltic cooperation as “paying for things together” in order to achieve desired results by participation in projects. Consequently, their joint efforts were successful.

At the very same time, the other post-communist countries were less clear in defining their European perspective. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some of the newly independent states suddenly made a step backwards – in December 1991, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine initiated the establishment of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS). Russian political elites and policy makers perceive the CIS as the tool for promoting the Russian dominance over its members (Motyl 2001, 104). The CIS intensified relations between Russia and the member states. Motyl (2001, 104) argued that even in the case of the dissolu-

tion CIS, political and economic relations with Russia will increasingly become bilateral. Thus, the CIS 'moved' Ukraine backwards from the European prospects while indicating the inability of the Ukrainian political elites to prioritise single and straightforward vector for the country. Some of the CIS Member States became interested in either preserving the remnants of their sovereignty or in pursuing alternative regional arrangements such as the GUUAM group, consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Moldova (Aalto 2002, 151). Russia's interest in the CIS as the sphere of its influence appeared in the Baltic direction as well (Aalto 2007, 24), although, the stronger the Baltic integration process with the West, the weaker the linkages became.

### **1.1.2 The European Neighborhood Policy**

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was developed "in the context of the EU's 2004 enlargement" (ENP Strategy Paper 2004). The establishment was necessary in order to elaborate a comprehensive framework for the relations of the EU with its new neighbors. The ENP is the principal mechanism by which the EU projects its interests and identity in its immediate neighborhood, representing both a multilateral and a regional effort as it combines EU Member States and partner countries under one umbrella.

The EU's neighborhood is no less diverse than the EU itself; therefore, the EU has been striving to create a cohesive approach fully applicable to all neighboring countries were not successful. Since there are two different groups of states at the heart of the ENP, it was split geographically with the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EaP. Whereas the UfM is an international organisation with its own institutional framework, the EaP serves as an instrument for communication and cooperation between the EU and the six partner countries (namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine), within the framework of ENP. Just like the ENP, the EaP emphasises the need for the countries in the region to adopt the EU's rules and norms (Council of the European Union 2009). Thus, the EU currently "exports" its governance system to such countries as Ukraine (Zielonka 2012, 509).

### **1.1.3 The Community of Democratic Choice**

At the same time, the post-communist countries in CEE initiated geo-political developments of their own. The Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) was established in 2005, in Kyiv, and united nine CEE states (Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, and Ukraine), aiming to establish a “forum of cooperation for dialogue [...] to provide support for the further economic and social development [...] and protection of the democratic process” in the region (The Declaration of the Countries of the Community of Democratic Choice).

Joining the CDC for several members of the CIS, for instance, Ukraine, provided bright prospects. The unique characteristics of the regional development of the CDC, as well as conceptual challenges regarding new regionalism in Europe, were researched by Vernygora and Chaban (2008, 134), who defined four key goals of the CDC. Firstly, the common goal of all CDC participants was to abolish their common ‘communist’ past, as well as promote and strengthen democratic principles. Secondly, the CDC for the EU newcomers served as a way to present themselves as capable sources of knowledge about the CEE region. Thirdly, again for the EU Member States, the CDC provided them an opportunity to raise their profiles in Europe and worldwide. Fourth, the CDC members aimed to improve their economic standards. However, the CDC lost its operational capacity after several meetings.

### **1.1.4 The Eastern Partnership and the Association Agreement with the European Union**

The Joint Declaration of the Prague EaP Summit of May 2009 clearly states that the goal of the ‘regional approach’ in the EaP is “the creation of an additional – multilateral – layer of cooperation between the EU and EaP countries to complement the bilateral approach” (Council of the European Union 2009). The focus is on the integration between the European Union and partner countries. The purpose of the regional dimension of EaP is to provide a platform to share information and experience on steps towards reform and facilitate the development of joint activities (Council of the European Union 2009). In other words, the distinguishing feature of the regional approach in the EaP is not the end goal—further integra-



tion of the EaP countries with the EU by facilitating the export of EU norms– but rather the process itself (Bosse 2014, 3).

As mentioned above, the EaP project is the initiative aiming at strengthening the Eastern dimension of the European Union policy within the framework of the ENP. The EaP is closely connected with the ENP in respect of the shaping of Europe’s new geopolitical map as well as principles and ways of acting. The Project assumes the engagement of the above-mentioned countries in the policies and programs of the EU and their integration with structures of the Common Market. The EaP aims to encourage cooperation and ties among the countries in the region to the east from the EU, rather than prioritise their accession to the supranational entity. Another important issue is the peaceful settlement of conflicts (Bosse 2014, 4). The EaP brought to Eastern Europe another type of competition for the same space, and exists between the EU and Russia. What Russia considers its “near abroad” is also the EU’s near abroad. The EaP initiative introduced by the EU’s concerns countries that Russia sees as its own periphery, hence, the EaP has been fiercely criticised by Russia (Zielonka 2012, 518). The EaP as a region-building project has demonstrated that the construction of the region by the EU has reinforced the identity of the region and its countries as a periphery and as objects of EU rule (Bosse 2014, 4).

In 2014, the EU signed an Association Agreement (AA) with three EaP countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. After more than half of decade within the EaP framework achieving the established objectives of the EaP, three countries have reached the intended target – the signing of the AA, thus, the visible functional dimensions of the EaP has been formally recognised by the EU and by these neighbouring countries.

### **1.1.5 Mini-conclusion**

This chapter’s section is devoted to the overview of Estonia’s and Ukraine’s response to neo-regionalism in CEE region. In the context of CEE region during 1990s, the country had two choices to develop within the framework. Right after regaining independence, Estonia together with Latvia and Lithuania established the Baltic Assembly to combine their efforts towards their declared pro-Western vector. Estonian foreign policy has been characterised by consistent activities aiming at integration in the Eastern region and its ideological orientation toward the West. By contrast, right after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Ukrainian

political elites were incapable of adopting a straightforward pro-Western vector, taking active part in creating the CIS instead. Nonetheless, Ukraine has been ambitiously declaring the prospect of membership of the EU, although, the considerable inability of political elites led to wasted opportunities. The CIS distanced Ukraine from European future, in favour of communist ‘nostalgia’ and some short-term benefits.

The widespread of support for the principles of liberal democracy in the Baltic countries indicates national self-determination in the Baltic transformation processes as well as a low level of communist nostalgia (Ekman, Linde 2005, 360-361). Even after Estonia became a member of the EU and NATO, as the advanced actor in the CEE region it still showed a particular interest in the CDC. The CDC was a tool for Estonia to lead the region by the example and increase its role and visibility in the EU and on international arena as well. Unlike the Baltic States, the other CDC Member States were less explicit in the pro-Western vector, thus the CDC could be the tool for realising an opportunity to escape the communist past, in the case of Ukraine, as well as a second chance to pursue a Western political vector. Unfortunately, the CDC did not manage to meet these goals and effectively ceased to exist after several meetings.

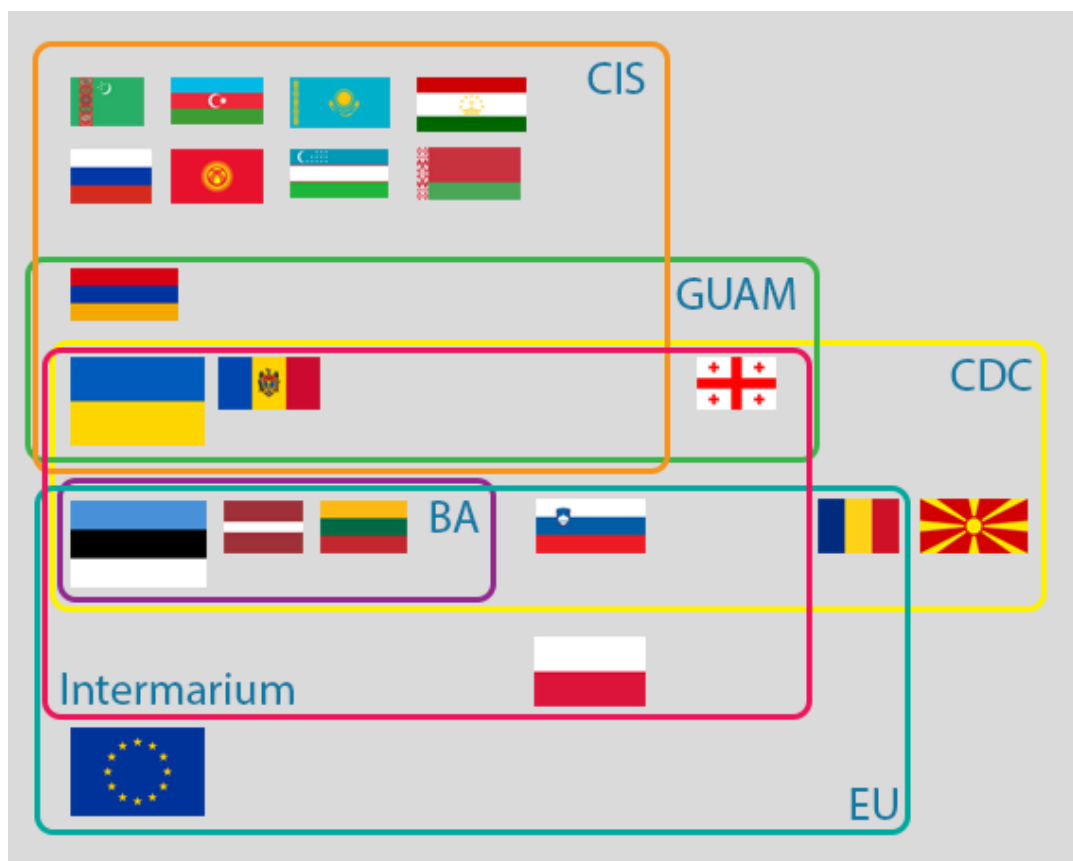


Image 1. Regional groupings in CEE. Designed by author.

Ukraine's subsequent relations with the EU have been shaped by ENP and the EaP, in which it is grouped with some countries that have geographical and economic connections to Europe but no membership prospect with the EU. Since the launch of the EaP, Estonia has been one of its biggest supporters. Ukraine's the most extensive and the most ambitious bilateral document – the AA – closely approached this stage's conclusion of the relations with the EU.

## **1.2 A 'CURSE' OF NEIGHBOURING THE SAME NEIGHBOUR**

### **1.2.1 Post-Soviet Geopolitics**

The borders of Soviet Union changed during and after WWII due to the fact that it was incorporating and annexing new territories. Motyl (2001, 101) states that the boundaries of the USSR's successor states were perceived as transparent by Russia; hence, not only the outer borders, but also those inside the Soviet Union were changing. Such alternations as well as the status quo of some republics led to continuous changes of borders during the Soviet era. As a result of those internal border changes, there were several areas that became the focus of international territorial disputes in the post-Soviet era; for example, for some Finnish experts (Aalto 2007, 23) are still under impression that Estonia claims Ivangorod (Jaanilinn) and Pechory (Petseri), although, it is more a side issue in the outstanding border treaty negotiations with Russia; Crimea was a controversy in Russian-Ukrainian relations in the early 1990s as well. In many cases, armed hostilities broke out; therefore, 'frozen conflict' zones are in abundance: Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Thus, with Russia, the security dilemma in the former Soviet space was almost inevitable.

Estonian elites are afraid of Russia as a successor of a political empire, and as a strong state that has still displayed a high number of imperialist tendencies in its policy-making process (Kuus 2007). In such a context, relations with Russia for the Baltics resulted in the security dilemma and, consequently, according to broad analytics based on both the realist and neorealist paradigms, the whole energy of political elites from CEE region was focused

on preventing potential threats from Russia (Aalto 2007, 43). Therefore, since the beginning of 1990s, Estonian foreign policy has been characterised by consistent activities aiming at integration in the Eastern region and its ideological orientation toward the political West. Tallinn attempted to maximise its national security on its own by integrating into the EU and NATO, which was perceived as empowerment across the region, furthermore, Kuus (2007, 270) claims that NATO membership was the precondition for becoming a subject in international relations. NATO has played an outstanding role in bringing about the stable political situation that appeared in Europe after the end of the Cold War; thus, NATO membership was significant security issue for the Baltics.

In the post-Soviet space, Western policies – NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion – have been seen as ways for worsening relations with Russia (Mearsheimer 2014, 4). Unlike the Baltic States, Ukraine remained military weak country, which is the reason for the most recent conflict breakout in the post-Soviet space – Russo-Ukrainian War (Umland 2016). In the context of Ukraine, Russian fleet presence in Crimea and the renunciation of nuclear weapons in exchange for a guarantee of territorial integrity were the preconditions for the security dilemma (The Budapest Memorandum 1994). Additionally, in 2004, with Orange Revolution, Ukraine's display of democratic development worsened mutual relations with Russia; moreover, the Eastern Partnership initiative, which aimed the integration into the EU-bound economy, was not well accepted by Russia either. The West attempted to promote democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe as well as support the growth of economic interdependence among them, it also sought to incorporate the Eastern European states into international organisations and alliances. As the result, Russian policy makers repeatedly reacted geopolitically, such as occupations and economically, such as energy export cut-offs, which have been used as tool for achieving its foreign policy interests. Raising the issue of the possible NATO partnership/membership for Ukraine and Georgia, resulted in the Russo-Georgian War. Consequently, the lack of military strength of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova reaffirms the fact of existing insecurity in the region at the crossroads between the West and Russia.

## 1.2.2. NATO in Central-Eastern Europe

Geopolitical context in CEE implies the contradicting interests of the West and Russia about the same space and spheres (Zielonka 2012, 518). According to the neorealist paradigm, Russia as former successor perceives negatively the expansion within the Neofunctionalism paradigm – the integration of other actors in the region into supreme international organisations. The offensive realism paradigm by Mearsheimer (2014, 3) indicates clearly negative rhetoric of Russian elites regarding post-Soviet countries involved in the eastward enlargement of NATO and EU, due to their inability to retain hegemony in the region. Mearsheimer (2014, 3) explains that Russia ‘neglected’ the fact of the NATO expansion in 2004, due to its weak stance at that time. Thus, an idea arose that Russia would have to react in order to prevent Western expansion. Although, later Russia meddled with the internal affairs of these states (for instance, in 2007, Russia answered ‘Estonian question’ with the Bronze Soldier case). In addition, it is important to differentiate the means by which Russia and the West use geopolitical terminology. Kuus (2014, 23) claims that Russia relations with the partner countries lead to evoking geopolitics, for instance, the Russo-Georgian War in 2008; the EU acts similarly, although it does not wish to claim the region geopolitically.

A neorealist vision would be that the West attempted to promote democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe as well as support the growth of economic interdependence among them, furthermore, it sought to incorporate the Eastern European states into international organisations and alliances. Motyl (2015) elaborates another point that the Russian response to the Maidan as well as its unbearable need to expand its imperial ambitions is the cause, which resulted in the Crimea annexation and military conflict in the Eastern Europe. As a result, Russian policy makers acted by various means – both geopolitical and economic. According to Umland (2016), the main cause for the recent escalation of tensions in Eastern Europe is the absence of an effective security structure encompassing such militarily weak countries as Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Remembering about its very formal connection with Russia in the past, for Estonia the issue of security became crucial as well. Unlike Ukraine, Estonia is a NATO member, which means that Russian aggression against the Baltic would trigger Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, according to which an attack against any signatory is considered to be as attack against all NATO Member States (Shlapak, Johnson 2016, 3). The Russo-Ukrainian War in eastern Ukraine caused a significant impact on Estonian domestic and foreign policy making

processes. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its military actions in Ukraine have had an impact on NATO policy-makers, who as a result have been reassessing their security capabilities on the "Eastern flank" (McNamara 2015). Landler and Cooper (2016) claim, that Eastern European countries expressed concerns about Russia during the NATO defence meeting. In particular, representatives from the Baltic nations – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – have been asking for a big statement of American military support, officials said. In 2016, US President Obama aims to considerably increase the deployment of heavy weapons, armed vehicles and other equipment to NATO countries in the CEE region. In such a context, Umland (2016) suggests that the best strategy for CEE region, especially for such militarily weak countries as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, would be the 'Intermarium' – an alliance of the countries located between the Baltic and Black Seas.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.1 A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE: DRIVE FOR INDEPENDENCE**

One of the consequences of WWI was the dissolution of four empires. Estonia has been quick in reaction to the issues on independence. Shortly before the end of the First World War, Estonia established its own independent state on the territory of former Russian Empire. In 1917, it was the only national region to which the Russian Provisional Government granted autonomy (Misiunas, Taagepera 1993). Unlike other attempts to establish an independent state on the Russian empire's territory, Estonia was distinguishing by relative success and rapid implementation. Among the less successful attempts was the Ukrainian People's Republic. Ukraine had a brief moment of democratic sovereignty under the leadership of President Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the first parliament, Verkhovna Rada in 1918 (Surzhko-Harned 2010, 638). However, independence was only short-lived.

In 1939 Estonia, along with the other two Baltic States of Lithuania and Latvia, became a part of the USSR because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP) between Germany and the USSR. All the attempts to regain independence failed until the end of the century, as the Soviet Union imprisoned and executed dissidents who sought independence (Surzhko-Harned 2010). According to the MRP, parts of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland (Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, Northern Bucovina, and Galicia) became part of the Ukrainian SSR and are today part of Ukraine.

The Estonian drive for independence was rooted in the reawakening of national identity. In the 1980s, the initial movement towards independence was predictably characterised by nationalism – Estonians could not forget the historical facts of Stalinist deportations and Russification policies that took place in the country during the Soviet regime. In addition, Estonian population strongly remembered the unlawful annexation by Soviet or, more specifically, Russian forces (Surzhko-Harned 2010, 633). Thus, in the second half of the 1980s broad pop-

ular fronts appeared, which occupied the space between CP and dissidents (Misiunas, Taagepera 1993, 311).

The independence of Ukraine came from the emergence of civil and political nationalist movements as well. A huge number of national democratic movements appeared in Ukraine. Despite this, in the late 1980s the catastrophe at the nuclear reactor in Chornobyl greatly affected Ukrainian society. Surzhko-Harned (2010, 638) claims that first nationalist environmental organisation were formed as a result. Unlike in Estonia, the political change in Ukraine did not come from a reformed Communist Party (CP). The Ukrainian CP leader, Leonid Kravchuk, became the country's first President.

## **2.2 POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS**

Right after the collapse of the USSR, Estonia and Ukraine quickly recognised each other's independence and established diplomatic relations. In addition, they quickly established a firm partnership, as confirmed by the opening of embassies and the signing of several treaties. Whereas re-independent Estonia had relatively monolithic political elites who were committed to fostering Estonia's integration into international organisations and alliances, the Ukraine political scene saw different periods during the first years of independence. For instance, instead of getting new elites, the former CP leader became the first President of newly independent Ukraine. Ukraine continued to seek a course between full integration with the West while, at the same time, keeping close relations with Russia. Thus, in order to track the development of Estonian interest about Ukraine, the criteria for analysing the high-level visits of Estonian officials to Ukraine and *vice versa*, would be the terms of Ukrainian Presidents.

Right after the collapse of the USSR, Estonia and Ukraine were one of the first to recognise each other's (re)gaining of independence. Both countries quickly established a firm partnership, as evidenced by opening embassies on each other's territory and signing several treaties. Beginning from the middle of the 1990s for almost a decade neither Estonia nor Ukraine expressed particular interest in the other. Ukraine was heavily engaged into the CIS, but Estonia was gradually shifting its political and economic relations away from the CIS. There were a small number of visits exchanged by both Estonian and Ukrainian politician (*Table 3*).



In 2005, the political change of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine brought the change in Estonia-Ukraine relations as well. Ukraine declared its pro-Western political vector. Estonia, being already an EU member, was participating in the CDC as more advanced actor was aiming to lead the region by example. At the same, Ukraine was declared as Estonian foreign policy priority – since 2006. When the EU announced the launch of the EaP initiative in 2009, Estonia happened to be one of the policy's biggest supporters (Mardisalu-Kahar 2015). The Estonian government has identified the EaP as one of its foreign policy priorities, establishing, for example, the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership in 2011. According to Mardisalu-Kahar (2015), from Estonian public discourse, the EaP is not only the framework for developing bilateral relations with the six partner countries. The key goal is to contribute to the well-being, stability, and democratisation of the EaP countries, thus making the region more prosperous and stable. Within the EaP, the role of Estonia is contributing to the development of target countries in various spheres of political, social and economic life, additionally, increasing the development and cooperation capacity of Estonia (Estonian MFA). Estonia's leading achievements in terms of the ICT sector and particularly e-government and their application within the processes such as EaP could be the way for approaching the moment when Estonia eventually become a truly visible political actor.

Despite the fact that in 2010, Ukraine ended up electing pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. He created a backward gangster state, instead of dedicating himself to setting Ukraine on the path of political and economic reform and European and global integration (Motyl 2013). Nevertheless, Estonia did not lose interest in Ukraine; moreover, the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership was established in 2011, as the one manifestation of the Estonian commitment to the goals of the EaP. A considerable amount of high-level visits was made from each of the sides (*Table 3*). However, signals were sent as well such as the Estonian President's refusal to meet with the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs – which was a diplomatic signal of a different political world (Vernygora 2013). In 2011, Estonian MFA initiated the Strategy paper, detailing a program of cooperation up to 2015, what should have been the year of Presidential election in Ukraine. However, the inability of Yanukovich to choose a European vector, and decision instead to promote joining Vladimir Putin's neo-imperialist project – the Customs Union – led to a critical point – he left the country as the result of anti-regime protests (Motyl 2014).

The newest era of Ukrainian politics indicates the most significant and active Estonian interest in Ukraine. Estonian elites express the considerable rise of the interest in Ukraine.

The investigation of statements and interviews by Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves on the Ukraine-related issues discourse indicate the increased significance (*Table 1* and *2*).

Table 1. Interviews with Estonian President

Year	Total number of interviews	Number of interviews with Ukraine mentioned
2012	19	1
2013	34	1
2014	23	17
2015	27	20
2016	5 so far	1 so far

Source: The Official website of the President of Estonia and author.

Table 2. Statements of Estonian President

Total number of statements (2013-2016)	Number of statements with Ukraine mentioned
12	4

Source: The Official website of the President of Estonia and author.

Most importantly, the Baltics consistently supported Ukraine not only on the bilateral level but also in international organisations. Estonia believes that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine is a reason to implement and prolong economic sanctions. Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas (2015) said:

*As the eastern part of Ukraine and Crimea continue to be occupied and the Minsk agreements for ceasefire have not been fully complied with, the European Union is forced to continue with sanctions against Russia.*

Nowadays, the Baltic States are the biggest advocates of the Ukrainian issue, and have continuously been reminding the international community to stay vigilant and not to allow Ukraine to be forgotten. Therefore, the statements the Presidents of the Baltic States emphasise that under the excuse of fighting ISIS, Russia wants to end its political isolation and to shift the West's focus away from Ukraine. Thus, Estonia declared its straightforward position, but also became more visible on the international arena. Besides, many Estonians in Western organisations are delegated to the cooperation with Ukraine, for instance, MEP Kaja Kallas is Vice-Chairman of the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee.

Moreover, relations on bilateral level were active in recent years; a third of the total high-level Estonian visits were done within the short period of the Poroshenko presidency. Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas (2015) noted when visiting Kyiv that:

*The main reason why we are here today is the demonstration of our support to the restoration of territorial integrity of Ukraine and the acceleration of reforms. It goes about not only our bilateral relations. We are also making every effort for the EU's position of support to Ukraine to be solid and uniform.*

Table 3. Number of visits of Estonian officials to Ukraine; number of visits of Ukrainian officials to Estonia.

The President of Ukraine	Number of Estonian officials visits to Ukraine	Number of Ukrainian officials visits to Estonia
L. Kravchuk	1	2
L. Kuchma	7	7
V. Yushchenko	7	2
V. Yanukovych	6	5
P. Poroshenko	11	2
Total number of visits	32	18

Source: Estonian MFA and Ukrainian MFA.

In total, 50 high-level visits were exchanged. Generally, Ukrainian elites are less active; Estonians paid almost twice more visits to Ukraine. The cause for such a dramatic difference in the quantity of high-level visits lies in the dualistic nature of Ukrainian foreign policy. Investigation of Ukraine's foreign policy priorities indicate that for many years it was oriented to both the West and Russia (Olefirov, De Waal 2012). Russia always remained an important partner for Ukraine. However, right now for the first time in the modern Ukrainian history, Russia is no longer partner for Ukraine.

Ukraine's foreign policy priorities concern the EU and the recent achievements such as the AA as well as the prospect of visa-free traveling with the EU are extremely important to civil society in Ukraine. Ukraine indicated its foreign policy priority to be the EU, but there is no specific relation to Estonia separately. There are no clear mentions of the Baltic region in its foreign policy, such as Strategy Ukraine-2020 (Gerasymchuk 2015). By contrast, Ukraine is going to be in Estonian sphere of interest for another period, as in 2015 Estonian MFA prolonged the strategic goal for cooperation with Ukraine until 2020. Thus, single Estonia out of 28 EU Member States is not indicated as a priority for Ukraine, but Ukraine's involvement in the process of European integration mostly focuses on 'Old Europe'. In addition, Ukraine remains dedicated to the goal of eventual EU membership, although, even from Estonian perspective, the prospect of Ukraine's membership is not possible in the near future (Mardisalu-Kahar 2015).

Yet, the Strategy of National Security of Ukraine does mention the Baltic region, although in a broader context (Gerasymchuk 2015). Kyiv remains devoted to partnership with NATO, as Ukraine is the only non-member country that participates in all NATO-led programs. Additionally, in December 2015, the leaders of defense agencies of Estonia and Ukraine together with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, signed a joint declaration on cooperation in the military sphere.

## 2.3 ECONOMIC DIMENSION

### 2.3.1 Post-Soviet Economics

Following the collapse of the USSR systems in Europe, all countries engaged in the processes of economic transition. Estonian imports and export in 1990s indicated the gradual decrease of CIS importance as trade partner, although the role of the EU was increasing. In general, the Baltic region made rapid progress to market economies and gradually distanced their trade vectors away from Russia (Motyl 2001, 100).

Table 4. Estonia's trade with the EU and CIS

	1991, %	1996, %	1998, %	1999, %
Imports/EU	3	64.8	60.1	57.7
Exports/EU	1	51.1	55	62.7
Imports/CIS	71.9	16.9	14.2	17
Exports/CIS	82.2	25	20.8	13.4

Source: Aalto 2003, 150

The integration into international organisations and alliances is the way to weaken Moscow's influences in countries with communist past and to strengthen their stability and international position. Having escaped from the Soviet past, Estonia managed quickly to embrace a market system after the 1991 Soviet Union collapse, and as a result, now Estonia is a developed country with advanced, high-income economy. Nevertheless, Ukraine developed a hybrid economic system (part market, part state) that performed poorly in the 1990s (Davis 2016, 2). Besides, Kyiv remained dependent on trade with Russia; in the 1990s and 2000s trade with Russia equaled almost the half of Ukraine's total exports (*Table 5*). In addition, thanks to its large Russian-speaking minority as well as its geographical proximity Ukraine remained one of the most important for Russia (Motyl 2001, 100).

Table 5. Ukraine's trade with Russia.

Year	Imports from Russia, %	Exports to Russia, %
1997	26,2	47
2000	22,8	47
2014	23,3	18,2
2015	7,9	4,1

Source: Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine and European Commission

In the beginning of XXI century, Ukraine had a strong economic dependence on Russia, similar to that during the Soviet Union (Motyl 2001, 100). The Soviet economy had a set of obvious formal features such as indirect bureaucratic control, pervasive second economies with related corruption networks or negative value added in industry, for example, obsolete factories in eastern Ukraine (Davis 2016, 2). Ukrainian political elites pursued a strategy to build a national ruling class, therefore, the Western and Russian capital was kept out of big privatisations of nationalised property, accumulating wealth at home and upgrading technologically to prepare the country for membership in the EU and its single market. Ukraine became a low-wage, energy- and materials-intensive exporter of primary goods and semi-finished products in agriculture, energy, chemicals and minerals. Since 2004, new ruling elites invited European investment capital, thus, by 2008 the Ukrainian economy was well penetrated by both Western and Russian investors, although, no diversifying or upgrading was made. Each side was trying to incorporate Ukraine's natural resources, cheap labour and market into a low technological echelon of its own regional chains of production and consumption (Davis 2016, 2).

### **2.3.2 Energy Sector**

One of the key issues for economies of CEE countries is the energy sector. The energy sectors in the countries in the post-Soviet states in CEE are characterised by simultaneous

flows of energy resources and rules: Russia exports hydrocarbons, whereas the EU promotes regulatory frameworks (Wolczuk 2016). Russia's influence in the so-called 'near abroad' is greatly facilitated through asymmetric energy interdependence. Since 1991, the energy lever has been used for putting political or economic pressure on both – Estonia and Ukraine, what subsequently affected most of the Europe as well (Larson 2006). Energy sector reflects diverse objectives of the EU and Russia. Whereas, Russia's interest lies in perpetuating countries' energy dependence on it, not only because of the revenues from exports but also because of the political leverage, the EU is promoting security of supplies, as well as market principles, and energy efficiency, which would lower their dependence on Russia and thereby limit its influence (Wolczuk 2016).

Dependence on energy imports is crucial factor for country's economy, moreover, in the CEE, political developments have a huge impact on energy security. European energy security is highly influenced by Russian energy exports because they are often used as tool for geopolitical strategy, such as supply cutoffs that were used on multiple occasions in order to achieve its foreign policy interests (Tuohy 2015). The numerous of cutoffs against the Baltic and CIS countries since 1991 demonstrate that Russia uses its exports with political intentions – consequently, the reliability of the supplies is questionable. The undesired developments in Ukrainian internal politics in 2004-2005 triggered Russia to increase prices nearly fivefold (Wolczuk 2016). According to Eurostat, Estonia is the least dependent on energy supplies among the EU Member States, despite this, Russian gas constituted all Estonian imports (Kravchenko 2015). However, that is no longer true, due to the Lithuanian LNG terminal.

More than after a decade after initiation of the ENP, the EaP achieved one of its goals – signing the AA between the EU and Ukraine. DCFTA promises bright prospects to Ukraine economics. Regarding the economic integration, the DCFTA is seen as the possible powerful stimulant to the country's economic growth, in addition, approximation to EU legislation, norms and standards. As a core element of the Association Agreement, the DCFTA will create business opportunities in both the EU and Ukraine and will promote real economic modernisation and integration with the EU (Maniocas 2016, 18). Moreover, the long history of Ukraine's elites rhetoric emphasising the importance of Russian gas for Ukrainian industry can be over. Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU's single energy market can create a strong energy-security environment, but only if strategic and commercial goals coincide (Bulakh 2015).

### 2.3.3 Current Economic Interactions

Estonia is indeed continuing to perform better in political, economic and social life than any other country in the post-Soviet space. Estonia’s successes acknowledged in being among the world’s leading nations in various high-validity rankings, whereas Ukraine usually finds its places in the end positions (*Table 6*). According to IMF, Estonian GDP per capita is summing above those of other post-Soviet states (*Image 2*).



Image 2. GDP per capita in post-Soviet space. Source: RFL and IMF



Table 6. Estonia and Ukraine position in rankings.

Ranking	Total number of ranking positions	Estonia	Ukraine
Corruption Perceptions Index 2015	167	23	130
Index of Economic Freedom 2016	178+	9	162
Ease of Doing Business Index 2015	189	16	83

Not surprisingly, that such a dramatic contrast of economic achievements resulted into a huge difference in terms of investments. According to the data of the Bank of Estonia, Estonian direct investments in Ukraine as of 2014 constitute 5% of Estonia's total direct investments abroad. The total of Ukraine's direct investments in Estonia was 56.3 million Euros – not even a half of a percent (0.4%) of direct investments in Estonia. In other words, Estonia invests approximately 4.4 times as much in Ukraine as it receives in return (*Table 7*). However, the dynamics of the direct investment from Ukraine doubled in 2015.

Table 7. Estonian direct investment in Ukraine; Ukrainian direct investment in Estonia.

Year	Estonian direct investment in Ukraine, million Euros	Share, %	Ukrainian direct investment in Estonia, million Euros	Share, %
2014	248.5	5	56.3	0.4
2015	282.6	5.1	133.1	0.8

Source: Bank of Estonia

Table 7a. Estonian direct investment in Ukraine; Ukrainian direct investment in Estonia.

Year	Estonian direct investment in Ukraine, EEK	Share, %	Ukrainian direct investment in Estonia, EEK	Share, %
2001	107,318,000	1.4	32,819,000	0.1

Source: Bank of Estonia

The data (*Table 7a*) on direct investment indicates that in the beginning of XXI century Estonia and Ukraine had less significance to each other, thus, the recent developments indicate growing interconnections. Moreover, beginning from 2014 Ukraine receives more than 1 million Euros annually within the framework of Estonia humanitarian aid for Ukraine; the planned amounts in 2015 and 2016 were as high as well (*Table 8*).

Table 8. Estonia's Humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

	2014, Euros	2015, Euros	2016, Euros
Total, EUR	1,000,000	1,100,000	1,200,000

Source: MFA of Estonia.

For Estonian business, Ukraine seems an attractive market, although, due to the high level of corruption, difficulties<sup>2</sup> occur. Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas (2015) noted that Ukraine is quite interesting for Estonian businessmen and investors. According to him, Estonian investors believe in Ukraine and see a great potential of cooperation, although, the judicial system and regulatory policy should be improved, thus, business activity between the two countries will be substantially intensified.

<sup>2</sup> The common project of SkyMall shopping mall in Kyiv has caused a collision of interests of Estonian investor Hilar Teder with Ukrainian investors, which resulted in Teder having difficulties with Ukrainian justice system. Infrastructure improvement project in Odesa region by Estonian Marcel Vichmann is experiencing some corruption-related difficulties with local authorities.

Despite the fact that Estonia declares Ukraine as an important trade partner, Ukraine ranks only as 21<sup>st</sup> among Estonia’s export partners (Statistics Estonia 2015). Furthermore, it appears from watching the dynamics of earlier years that the role of Ukraine as Estonia’s trade partner is decreasing significantly (*Table 9*). Within less than 5 years the share of exports decreased in two times; moreover, the share of imports from Ukraine is has fallen from 1.4% to 0.3%, in other words, the share has decreased in more than 4.5 times.

Table 9. Trade between Estonia and Ukraine.

Year	Estonia’s exports in Ukraine, millions Eur	Share, %	Estonia’s imports from Ukraine, millions Eur	Share, %
2012	118.5	0.9	197.0	1.4
2013	101.2	0.8	87.3	0.6
2014	65.7	0.5	57.2	0.4
2015	55.5	0.4	47.9	0.3

Source: Statistics Estonia database.

In general, the share of trade between Estonia and Ukraine could not be called significant for any of them. However, the DCFTA promises bright prospects to Ukraine to become more visible on the European market, particularly on the Estonian one.

Ukraine’s significance for Estonia is visible not only on the bilateral level of economic relations but also on the international arena as well. Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russo-Ukrainian War triggered a reaction from the international community in the form of economic sanctions and Estonia declared one of the biggest support for such policy – a tough line towards Moscow. As the result of Russian counter-sanctions, the exports to Russia decreased significantly in all EU countries, however, one of the highest rates of decline was in Estonia – 65.9% (European Parliament 2015). Despite this, Estonia’s straightforward positions in terms of sanctions remain the same. From an economic point of view, all these factors overall have had little impact the Estonian economy, as it was used to the volatility of the

Russian side. In the past Russia of invented certain economic barriers when the two countries experienced tensions in relations, therefore, Russian market remains unreliable for Estonia (Kravchenko 2015). Moreover, Tallinn, unlike many other capitals of the EU countries, blames a decline in bilateral trade with Russia not on the import ban alone, but also on the complex impact of such factors as Russian economic downturn, ruble devaluation and deterioration of Russian consumer's purchasing power (Kravchenko 2015).

## **2.4 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION**

### **2.4.1. Ethnic Composition**

The similar backgrounds in terms of their Soviet past contributed to the ethnic and national composition Estonia and Ukraine. Estonia and Ukraine have experienced the destruction of cultural and national heritage under Soviet rule, brought along with Russification. That resulted in the ethnic and national diversity and large Russian minority in Estonia as well as Ukraine; however, attitudes towards the minority is quite different. In Estonia, the Russian population is considered transient (Surzhko-Harned 2010, 632). In Ukraine, however, the relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian populations is much more complex because of the deep historical ties and the obscured territorial and ethnic divisions between the two.

Language, as the core cultural value and cultural identity marker (Zubrytska 2005, 8) was one of the key issues in the (re)independence period of both Estonia and Ukraine, but also served as background for Russia to interfere in internal affairs on numerous occasions. Apart from the historical difference in the “cultural fit” of the Russian language in Ukraine and Estonia, Ukraine’s stronger economic and political connections with Russia contribute to the persistently high status of the Russian language (Lindemann, Kogan 2013).

The presence of Russian minorities led to the fraction in the attitude towards important aspects. The results of Ukraine’s independence referendum in 1991 indicate the lowest favor in the East and Crimea, which are home to large Russian populations. Ukrainian crisis raised concern among academic community that states contiguous to Russia could experience similar developments in the near future; thus, the same scenario could be implemented in Estonia. Nevertheless, these speculations have thus far proven to be false. However, there are key divi-

sions: a majority of ethnic Estonians (78%) believe that Russia should be blamed for the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, whereas ethnic Russians in Estonia (68%) have completely opposite view. Thus, the Estonian speaking community remains largely coherent in its view and support for the Ukraine in the crisis, remarkably, the grassroots initiatives (such as *Vaba Ukraina*) have been organised.

## 2.4.2. Ukrainians in Estonia

Nevertheless, Ukrainians remained the second biggest ethnic minority of Estonia, though the number has changed significantly over last quarter of decade. The proportion of ethnic Ukrainians in Estonia has decreased almost in two times from 1989 (*Table 10*).

Table 10. Ukrainian population in Estonia.

Year	Total population of Estonia	Number of Ukrainians	Share of Ukrainians, %
1989	1 565 662	48,271	3.1
2000	1 401 250	29,012	2.1
2012	1 325 217	23 285	1.7
2015	1 313 271	22 562	1.7

Source: Statistics Estonia Database.

Table 11. Immigration from Ukraine to Estonia.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Immigration, people	91	184	192	237	112	272	206	340	428

Source: Statistics Estonia

However, the new trend of immigration from Ukraine is increasing (*Table 11*). Residence permits for employment were issued to a total 1,659 foreigners in Estonia last year, with the greatest percentage of permits being issued to Ukrainian nationals (Police and Border Guard Board 2016). Moreover, due to armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, 60 percent (30) of the 50 asylum applications submitted in Estonia during 2015, were received from Ukrainian citizens (Estonian MFA, 2015). Prominent achievements of Estonia in the field of Information Technology contribute to Estonian image on international arena. E-residency is gaining considerable popularity among Ukrainian entrepreneurs, constituting approximately 6 percent of total applicants; also, it could be assumed that Ukrainians are aware of Estonian achievements. Furthermore, the creation of material about Estonia on Ukrainian media field as well as the potential rise of interest about Estonia as good job destination for both ‘white collars’ and ‘blue collars’ is expected soon. The launch of ‘Work in Estonia’ programme contributes to that largely, as Ukraine is the key target-market.

### **2.4.3. Culture**

Existing in the contemporary globalised world, where the barriers are removing gradually, multiculturalism and multilingualism are defining key characteristics of the cities (Zubrytska 2005, 6). Thus, it gives the bunch of challenges to citizens and policy-makers in order to preserve cultural diversity, but at the same time, the global context gives unique opportunities for interaction between different cultures.

Estonian culture is successfully cultivating the positive image on the international arena. Such brand-marks as Singing Revolution, Digital Society, Vana Tallinn and kiiking are easily associated with Estonia. Estonia, unlike the big powers, which are promoting their due to media financing, emphasises the need of culture to bring benefit, thus, not only cultural heritage is preserved, but the new cultural activities occur (Siil, 2016). In the last twenty-five years, the Ukraine’s politicians have been busy establishing art galleries in their apartments and villas, but not in the name of National Culture. Having failed to invest seriously in preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage and supporting modern arts, did not help them to win the battles, neither inside the country, nor on the international arena. However, the main interest to Ukraine was rather due to political and social developments in the country; such common Ukraine-related associations are Chornobyl, Orange Revolution and the recent crisis.

The dialogue between Estonian and Ukrainian cultures was mostly associated with insufficient mutual knowledge, even despite lengthy period of common culture. The annexation of Crimea and armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine brought a trend, which resulted in numerous Ukraine-related cultural activities in Estonia (such as charity concerts, humanitarian campaign '*Ukraina heaks*', Ukrainian movie screenings at Tallinn Documental Festival and Ukrainian movie week) and several Estonian cultural events in Ukraine (such as Estonian movie week in Kyiv). On the international level Estonia, being more advanced is supporting the cultural and creative sectors' contribution to sustainable humanitarian, social and economic development in Ukraine, within the framework of the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme. Moreover, Estonian Creative and Cultural Sectors Specialist Ragnar Siil has been working not only with Eastern Partnership Cultural Programme since 2012, but also he has been continuously advising Ukrainian Ministry of Culture.

### 3. SUMMARY: WHY UKRAINE?

Ukrainian history has involved moments when Ukraine had closer relations with the US or the EU, although, the dualistic foreign policy still kept Russia in proximity. Despite Ukraine's geopolitical advantages for the West, Ukraine became more visible recently; strong Ukrainian civil society and armed conflict in eastern Ukraine are worth mentioning. Ukrainian issue became noticeable among international organisations. Firstly, the EU and Ukraine have closely approached the conclusion of their relations into the most extensive and the most ambitious bilateral document – the AA. Secondly, the IMF's activities in Ukraine are frequent and visible. Thirdly, since 2014, due to the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO cooperation with Ukraine has been intensified.

Estonia, despite being located geographically rather apart, has been identifying Ukraine as a key foreign policy priority for a decade already. Nevertheless, relations between Estonia and Ukraine had a calm period, but beginning from the second half of 2000s Estonia has found Ukraine's Orange revolution as the trigger for boosting the relations. On the regional level, Estonia, already being a member of the EU and NATO, has expressed a particular interest in supporting or extending membership to the CEE countries. In Estonian discourse, such involvement and activities indicate the reaction to the ongoing **neo-regionalism** in CEE. For instance, from an Estonian perspective, the EaP is not only the framework for developing the bilateral relations with partner countries, but also, contributing to the well-being, stability, and democratisation of the EaP countries, and consequently, making the region more prosperous and stable (Mardisalu-Kahar, 2015).

Currently, Estonian policy towards Ukraine has intensified. The most recent developments between Ukraine and Russia and the fact that Russia is answering its 'Ukrainian' question explicitly and much faster than the EU is (Vernygora 2013), made Estonia consistently support Ukraine not only on the bilateral level, but also at the forums of international organisations. Estonia declared pro-Ukraine position and stand against the Russian Federation sys-



tematically and firmly. Despite lobbying Ukraine-related issues on international arena, Estonian high-profile officials are often employed as mediators for Ukraine delegations. It can be assumed that Estonia is perceived in the West as a 'Ukraine expert'. Estonian Prime Minister visiting Kyiv noted that his role during this visit is to improve not only Estonia-Ukraine relations, but also the EU relations with Ukraine. Thus, being a historical expert on Ukraine, Estonia gained a role within the structure.

The relations on the bilateral level between Estonia and Ukraine are defined by actions on the strategic partnership level and are moderately active; however, a dichotomy in mutual contributions remains. Ukraine is and will be a priority country for Estonia in the new period until 2020. In other words, Estonia is going to strengthen the dynamics of growing connections with Ukraine in various spheres. Estonia, being an advanced actor in the region, provides practical assistance to Ukraine by sharing the reforms experience. However, Ukrainian foreign policy priorities are mostly concerning the general strategies and the Western Europe, rather than the CEE or Estonia in particular. The only field, where Estonia and Ukraine are contributing mutually is security and military cooperation. Currently, the dynamics in the Estonia-Ukraine relations is experiencing the growth in various spheres. In the context of the approximation with the EU, Ukraine's potential would not be only geographical, if Ukraine's strategic and commercial goals coincide and the reforms implementation will be continued. As an example of success, Estonia, directly and indirectly, contributes to the fulfillment of the main goal – prosperity in the CEE region.

## CONCLUSION

As has been seen, Estonia expresses particular interest and applies efforts in order to appear as a significant actor in the CEE region. The region is characterised by a number of neo-regionalism tendencies, factually and evidently, thus, the involvement in Ukraine-related issues is inevitable from a foreign policy perspective. The study has focused on the particular investigation of the wide range of data and process tracing of Estonia-Ukraine relations for establishing the origins and causes for of the former's foreign policy priorities towards the latter.

Answering the key research question of the thesis, neither the historical and cultural sentiments from lengthy period of common communist past, nor Ukraine's independence triggered Estonian policy makers to emphasise Ukraine as foreign policy priority in the 1990s. The separate development vectors in many areas distanced Tallinn's interest from Kyiv, and only in the light of Ukraine's prospect for pro-Western orientation as well as Estonia's membership in the EU and NATO did interest reemerge.

Estonia is responding in the light of neo-regionalism in CEE and thus creating multi-layered connections with non-EU Member States. In fact, Estonia and Ukraine are not required to be discovering each other too much in-depth, thus, the EU informally 'assigned' Estonia as an expert on Ukraine. Moreover, Estonia continued the manifestation of its commitment to the goals of the EaP even during the period of Ukrainian uncertainty when it sought to pursue a course in between full integration with the West and close relations with Russia. Additionally, currently Estonia appears to be a Ukraine lobbyist on the international arena, both directly and indirectly. Consequently, besides the fact of being an example and the direct partnership goals, Estonia perceives Ukraine as a way to appear more visible and significant.

Answering the sub-questions, the relations on the bilateral level are rather active; however, there is a dichotomy in mutual contribution. Estonia's exceptional interest in Ukraine was and is noticeable in many areas; however, the Ukraine's disadvantages such as lower interest and corruption create obstacles in mutually beneficial strategic partnership. The

operational capacity of the relationship could be improved and interconnections in the many areas could be intensified, therefore, the relations could be rather called relatively successful. However, the recent groundbreaking developments with Ukraine such as its approximation with the EU and its implementation of reforms caused a considerable rise of the Estonia's interest again. Estonia has launched the Ukraine-related activities on international, bilateral and local level in order to boost the importance of Ukraine. The strategic ambitions for future have been declared by both countries, therefore, if Ukraine makes the process of reforms 'working on the full-load' as well as deepens the knowledge of Estonia's achievements and their potential applications, the positive impact on the mutual partnership and the move onto next level of cooperation will be done.

The future research could be targeting the analysis of the new stage relations between Estonia and Ukraine. Another suggestion for the further research in the sub-field of post-Soviet studies could concentrate on the linkages between the different pair of more advanced and less advanced players in CEE region, rather than on the contracts between them.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Visits of Estonian officials to Ukraine

President	Date	Visits
L.Kravchuk	March 1994	Official visit of the President of Estonia Lennart Meri
L. Kuchma	February 1995	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Estonia Andres Tarand
	February 1997	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Estonia Tiit Vähi
	September 1999	Working visit of the President of Estonia Lennart Meri
	May 2000	Working visit of the President of the Riigikogu Toomas Savi

	October 2002	State visit of the President of Estonia Arnold Rüütel
	September 2003	Working visit of the President of the Riigikogu Ene Ergma
	May 2004	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Kristiina Ojuland
V. Yuschenko	January 2005	Working visit of the President of Estonia Arnold Rüütel
	June 2005	Working visit of the President of Estonia Arnold Rüütel
	September 2005	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet
	June 2006	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet
	January 2007	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Estonia Andrus Ansip (accompanied by business delegation)
	February 2008	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet (participation in the meeting EU-BSEC)
	May 2008	Working visit of the President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves (participation in the Summit on Energy Security)
V. Yanukovych	December 2010	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet
	November 2012	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the EP Urmas Paet
	April 2013	Official visit of Prime Minister of Estonia Andrus Ansip (accompanied by business delegation)

	February 2014	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet to Ukraine.
	February 2014	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet to Ukraine.
	May 2014	Working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet to Ukraine.
P. Poroshenko	June 2014	Working visit of Prime Minister of Estonia Taavi Rõivas to Ukraine
	September 2014	Working visit of the President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves to Ukraine
	January 2015	Working visit of the Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas and Foreign Minister Keit Pentus-Rosimannus
	February 2015	Working visit of the Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas
	April 2015	Working visit of the Commander of the Defence Forces Riho Terras
	April 2015	Working visit of the Foreign Minister Keit Pentus-Rosimannus
	May 2015	Working visit of the President of the Riigikogu Eiki Nestor
	December 2015	Working visit of the Justice Minister Urmas Reinsalu
	December 2015	Working visit of the Defence Minister Hannes Hanso
	January 2016	Working visit of the Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas
	February 2016	Working visit of the President of the Riigikogu Eiki Nestor

Source: Estonian MFA, Ukrainian MFA

Appendix 2. Visits of Ukrainian officials to Estonia

President	Date	Visitor
L. Kravchuk	May 1992	Official visit of the President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk
	July 1993	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma
L. Kuchma	May 1995	State visit of the President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma
	May 1996	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Ukraine Yevhen Marchuk
	May 1997	Working visit of the President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma
	July 1997	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Anatoly Zlenko
	January 1999	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk
	May 2002	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Anatoly Zlenko

	December 2002	Official visit of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Volodymyr Lytvyn
V. Yuschenko	October 2006	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk
	December 2006	Official visit of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko (accompanied by business delegation)
V. Yanukovych	October 2010	Official visit of the Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykola Azarov
	October 2011	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Kostiantyn Gryshchenko
	June 2012	Official visit of the President of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Volodymyr Lytvyn
	October 2013	Official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Leonid Kozhara.
	October 2013	Working visit of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych
P. Poroshenko	March 2015	Delegation of Deputy Ministers for European Integration
	October 2015	Minister of Economy and Trade Aivaras Abromavičius

Source: Estonian MFA, Ukrainian MFA