POLAND-UKRAINE RELATIONS

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Abstract:
Poland and Ukraine are the two biggest and most populated countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Because of their size, neighbourhood and position in the region the two countries have often been compared to France and Germany. Both countries are deeply interested in their mutual cooperation. Such situation steams from five factors: direct neighbourhood, common (albeit difficult) history, attractiveness of the Polish labour market for the Ukrainians, membership of Poland in the Western structures, and last but not least, the Russian threat. Despite complimentary interests, both countries have difficulty to effectively develop their mutual relations and turn them into a real "strategic partnership". These problems are due to the internal political and economic situation in Ukraine, limits imposed by the membership of Poland in the EU, Russian policy aiming at keeping Ukraine within its zone of influence and, finally, the EU reluctance to effectively engage in Ukraine.

Keywords: Poland, Ukraine, political relations, economic relations, social relations, NATO, European Union.

Resumen:
Polonia y Ucrania son los estados más grandes y más poblados de Europa Central y Oriental. Dado su tamaño, su vecindad y su situación en la región, los dos estados frecuentemente han sido comparados a Francia y Alemania. Ambos estados están profundamente interesados en la cooperación mutua. Esta situación deriva de cinco factores: vecindad geográfica, historia común- aunque difícil-, atracción del mercado de trabajo en Polonia para los ucranianos y la amenaza rusa. A pesar de tener intereses complementarios tienen dificultades en el desarrollo de forma efectiva de sus relaciones mutuas para llegar a conseguir una asociación estratégica real. Estos problemas se deben a la situación política y económica de Ucrania, las limitaciones impuestas a la pertenencia de Polonia a la Unión Europea, la política rusa intentando mantener a Ucrania en su zona de influencia y, finalmente, las reticencias de la Unión Europea en comprometerse con Ucrania.

Palabras clave: *Polonia, Ucrania, relaciones políticas, relaciones económicas, relaciones sociales, OTAN, Unión Europea.*

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1. Introduction

Poland and Ukraine are the two biggest and most populated countries of Central and Eastern Europe – the large part of the European continent, which lies between the Russian Federation on one side and Western Europe (in particularly Germany) on the other. Poland has an area of 312,685 km^2 and 38,5 million inhabitants[2], Ukraine respectively – 603,550 km^2 and 44,4 million people[3]. Both countries share a border of 535 km[4], which goes through the Eastern part of the Carpathian Mountains and later along the Bug River. Both Polish, Ukrainian, as well as the Russian, largely spoken in South-Eastern Ukraine, belong to the Slavic group of languages. Because of their size, neighbourhood and position in the region the two countries have often been compared to France and Germany, which had played a leading role in the unification of Western Europe after the Second World War.

Despite the above mentioned similarities, since the end of the communist system in 1989 – 1991, Poland and Ukraine have developed their foreign and security policies in different ways. Poland has realized a successful transformation, which led to its integration with NATO and EU, while Ukraine has remained a weak and unstable country on the peripheries of the Western system, which made it prone to the Russian aggression in 2014 – 2015.

These differences have a considerable impact on the mutual relations between the two states.

Table 1. Poland and Ukraine - principal differences

	Poland	Ukraine
History before 1989-1991	Part of the external Soviet empire Limited opresiveness of the regime	Part of Soviet Union Strong opresiveness of the regime
Politics	Internal reforms Pro-Western foreign policy	State-building "Multi-vector" foreign policy
Economy	"Shock therapy" (Balcerowicz plan) Foreign privatisation	"Shock without therapy" Oligarchization
Society	Nation-state Limited regional differences	Nation *in statu nascendi* Strong regional differences
International environment	NATO/EU accession Weak Russian pressure	No EU/NATO membership perspective Strong Russian pressure (war in Donbas)

[2] *The World Factbook: Poland*, at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html.
[3] *The World Factbook: Ukraine*, at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/up.html.
[4] Dmochowska Halina (ed.) (2014): *Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2014*, Warsaw, Central Statistical Office, p. 25.

Table 2. Poland and Ukraine - principal economic indicators (1991 – 2014)

Poland			Ukraine		
	1991	2014		1991	2014
GDP per capita (current USD)	2193	13648	GDP per capita (current USD)	1489	3082
GDP growth (%)	-7,0	1,7	GDP growth (%)	-8,4	-6,8
Polish zloty to USD	2,42*	3,1	Ukrainian hryvna to USD	1,76**	22

* in 1995, ** in 1996.

Source: worldbank.org; www.nbp.pl; www.bank.gov.ua.

2. Difficult Historical Heritage

At the end of the 10th century Poland and the Kyiv Rus', first Ukrainian[5] proto-state, adopted Christianity as the state religion, the former becoming progressively a catholic, and the latter – an orthodox country. Their mutual relations were not very different from the situation all over the continent at the time, switching from wars to royal intermarriage and vice-versa[6]. In 11th – 12th century both countries entered the period of feudal fragmentation.

In early 13th century Rus' was destroyed by the Mongol-Tatar invasion. Since that time it stopped to be an independent international actor and the Ukrainian lands fell under the domination of its neighbours – the Golden Horde, Poland and Lithuania (united since the end of 14th century by a personal union), Hungary, Turkey, and finally Russia. The Polish-Ukrainian relations became since that time highly asymmetrical. They were no more interstate relations, but relations between a state (an empire according to some historians[7]) and its province, and one of its ethnic groups, with a vaguely defined identity.

Until the 17th century these relations were relatively peaceful. Most of the Ukrainian lands were under the Lithuanian rule and benefited from a large degree of freedom, in particular in the field of religion. In 1569, however, Poland and Lithuania merged into a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Upon the common , Ukraine came under the Polish rule. Polish aristocrats were highly interested in the Ukrainian blacksoils, hoping to expand the production of grain, latter exported via the Baltic Sea to Western Europe. The civil and religious power considered detrimental the position of the orthodox church in Ukraine.

[5] For simplification I will use the adjectif "Ukrainian" and not "Ruthenian", even if the terms "Ukraine", "Ukrainian" were popularized only in the 19th century.

[6] On the history of the countries see for example Davies Norman (2005): *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, volume I *The Origins to 1795*, volume II *1795 to the Present*, Revised Edition, New York, Columbia University Press; Subtelny Orest (2009): *Ukraine. A History*, Fourth Edition, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

[7] Nowak Andrzej: "Between imperial temptation and anti-imperial function in Eastern European politics: Poland from the eighteenth to twenty-first century", in Matsuzato Kimitaka (ed.) (2004): *Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revived or Improvised?*, Sapporo, Japanese Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, pp. 247 – 253; Nowak Andrzej, Szporluk Roman: "Was Poland an Empire?", *Ab Imperio*, vol. 1 (2007), pp. 23 – 42.

Moreover the latter gained a potential ally, the Grand Principality of Moscow (later the Russian empire), also orthodox, which aimed at uniting all the Eastern Slavs under its rule.

The attempts to unite the orthodox living within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the Holy See proved to be futile. The union of Brest (1596) establishing the "uniate" catholic church of byzantine rite (the Greek Catholic church) proved to be largely unsuccessful. Most of the orthodox population did not accept the new faith, while the Commonwealth was not transformed into a three-part Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian state, as it had been planned[8].

In the mid 17th century the tensions considerably rose. The semi-military movement of the Cossacks[9], which exerted political dominance over the Ukrainian lands, claimed more autonomy from the Commonwealth. The dispute turned into a military conflict known as the Khmelnytsky uprising. The Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky proved to be unable neither to gain independence from the Commonwealth, nor to establish a viable state. After few years of war he was forced to seek protection from the Russian tsar. The Pereiaslav union (1654)[10] led to the progressive incorporation of the Eastern part of the Cossack "state" with the Russia, while the rest of Ukrainian lands remained under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the end of the 18th century the Cossack autonomy within Russia was definitively abolished. The partitions of the Commonwealth (1772 – 1795) led to the incorporation of most of Ukrainian lands to the Russian empire. Only the most Western part went to Austria.

Even if Poland was not any more an independent country, the relations between the Polish and Ukrainian communities remained conflictual and asymmetrical. The already existing religious differences were doubled by an economic and social conflict. In Russia Poles remained a nation of artistocrats, although their position progressively weakened under the Russian rule. Ukrainians were mainly peasants, as most of their elites underwent a process of Polonization or Russification. According to the French historian Daniel Beauvois, the Polish-Ukrainian relations were not very different from a colonial scheme, Poles being the colonizers and Ukrainians, the colonized[11]. In Austria, especially since its transformation into the Austro-Hungary (1867) the situation was relatively different. The Habsburgs gave a large freedom to the different ethnic groups (contrast with the Romanovs who aimed at russyfing the empire, in particular the Ukrainians). It could even said that Austro-Hungary bet on the Polish-Ukrainian different according the old principle *divide et impera.* In consequence the Ukrainian lands under Austro-Hungarian rule, in particular the Eastern Halychyna with Lviv as its capital became the cradle of the Ukrainian national movement, but also of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict[12].

The First World War and its end led to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. In that context, both Poles and Ukrainians hoped to create

[8] See for example Bercken van der, Peter (ed.) (1998): *Four Hundred Years Union of Brest (1596-1996): A Critical Re-evaluation : Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle, the Netherlands, in March 1996*, Eastern Christian Studies, volume 1, Leuven, Peteers.

[9] Longworth Philip (1970): *The Cossacks. Five Centuries of Turbulent Life on the Russian Steps*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

[10] Basarab John (1982): *Pereiaslav 1654: A Historiographical Study*, Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.

[11] Beauvois Daniel (1991): *The noble, the serf, and the revizor: the Polish nobility between Tsarist imperialism and the Ukrainian masses (1831-1863)*, Reading, Harwood Academic Publishers.

[12] Himka John-Paul (1999): *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867–1900*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press; Magocsi Paul Robert (2002): *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

independent states. The former were successful thanks to an active diplomacy in Western Europe and the internal strength of the new country, dubbed the "Second Republic" (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth being the first one). The latter were unable to realize their aims because of the internal divisions and lack of external support. Both nations clashed over Lviv and the Western Ukrainian lands, which finally went to Poland (1918). Two years later Poland signed an alliance treaty with the ephemeral Ukrainian People's Republic against the Bolshevik threat. With the help of the Ukrainian ally it was able to stop the expansion of the communist Russia, but not to save Ukraine. The Polish-Soviet Riga peace treaty (1921) confirmed that most of the Ukrainian lands will become part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, while the Eastern Halychyna and Volhynia (North-Western part of todays Ukraine, before 1918 part of the Russian empire) would go to Poland[13].

Therefore during the interwar period, Poland was an independent state, while the Ukrainians did not have such an opportunity, which led to a growing frustration among their population, which was majority in South-Eastern Poland. The Ukrainians accounted for some 14% of the population of the newly created state. Poland was unable to develop a coherent policy towards that (and other minorities) balancing between an ethnic and a civic concept of the nation[14]. The Ukrainians were first seduced by the Soviet Union, which recognized the existence of the Ukrainian nation and allowed its cultural development[15]. However at the end of the twenties the Soviet authorities opted for a Russification and adopted radical measures against the Ukrainians living in the USSR. The Ukrainians turned towards extreme right, hoping in particular for the help of Germany against the Polish state. The conflict escalated – the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), founded in 1929, opted for terrorism as the principal instrument, Polish state responded by the persecution of Ukrainian minority. It should be stressed however that till 1939 the situation of the latter in Poland was much better than in the Soviet Union when few million people perished during the artificially orchestrated Great Hunger (Holodomor)[16].

After the beginning of the Second World War the South-Eastern part of Poland fell under the control of the Soviets (1939) and later the Germans (1941). The two powers eliminated the local elites and launched the campaigns of ethnic cleansing (deportation of Poles by the Soviets, genocide of the Jews by the Germans). As the war approached its end, each country hoped that Volhynia, Eastern Halychyna and the neigbouring areas would become part of its own state. One of the fractions of the OUN created by Stepan Bandera and its Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) launched a campaign against the Poles living in the disputed areas to prove their Ukrainian character. Poles responded militarily in self-defence. Up to 100 thousand Poles and 10 – 20 thousand Ukrainians perished in the conflict in 1943 – 1944, with Volhynia being the witness of an ethnic cleansing of the Polish minority[17].

This conflict had little influence on the fate of Eastern Halychyna and Volhynia, which were attached to the Soviet Ukraine by the decision of "Big Three" (United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain). Only small territories inhabited by the Ukrainians remained within the

[13] Davies Norman (2003): *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920 and The Miracle on the Vistula*, London, Pimlico.
[14] Budurowycz Bohdan: "Poland and the Ukrainian Problem, 1921–1939", *Canadian Slavonic Papers: Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol. 25, nº 4 (1983), pp. 473 – 500.
[15] See Rudnytsky Ivan L. (1987): *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, pp. 463 – 476.
[16] Conquest Robert (1986): *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
[17] Snyder Timothy: "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All": The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 25, nº 4 (1999), pp. 86 – 120; idem: "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943", *Past and Present*, n° 179 (2003), pp. 197 – 234.

new boundaries of Poland. Upon the agreement between the Soviet and Polish authorities most of these people were "repatriated" to the USRR, while the Poles from the Soviet Ukraine came to Poland. Some of the Ukrainians however refused to leave their native lands. Their presence was perceived as a threat to the communist regime. In 1947 on the pretext of eliminating the remains of UPA in Poland, during the "Vistula" operation some 146 thousand Ukrainians and Lemkos (highlanders from Carpatian Mountains close to Ukrainians) were deported to former German territories attached to Poland by the "Big Three" (Silesia, Pomerania, Warmia and Masuria) and dispersed to facilitate their assimilation[18]. The Ukrainian minority was persecuted by the communists till the end of the eighties.

Poland and Ukraine have been largely able to overcome their historical differences or at least to limit their impact on their day-to-day relations. This is a major achievement which made their mutual relations from those between the Western Balkan countries or even between Hungary and its neigbhours, who benefitted from the Trianon treaty in 1919[19].

Such situation is largely due to the people who sought alternatives for the foreign policy of the communist Poland before 1989 and who implemented their ideas after the end of the Yalta order. The Paris-based Polish-émigré literary-political magazine "Kultura", edited by Jerzy Giedroyć, argued that Poland should accept its new, postwar border and establish good relations with Ukraine and other Eastern neighbours (Belarus, Lithuania) in order to stop the Russian expansionism. "Kultura" established contacts with the Ukrainian intellectuals based in Western Europe, such as Bohdan Osadchuk. These ideas were implemented by the new authorities of an independent Poland after the 1989 political transformation, propelled by the anti-communist "Solidarity" movement. History was not to be an obstacle to cooperation with Ukraine. Already in 1990 the Polish Senate (upper house of the parliament) condemned the operation "Vistula". The post-communist nomenclature in power in Ukraine since 1991 easily accepted this approach They did not really care about historical issues. In 1997 the presidents of Poland and Ukraine adopted a joint declaration on concord and reconciliation, calling to both countries to "remember the past, but to think about the future". Ukraine however has never formally asked for forgiveness for the Volhynia tragedy, which still divides the two countries. In 2013 the Polish Sejm adopted a resolution to commemorate that issue, depicting the Ukrainian underground's anti-Polish action as conducted in the spirit of ethnic cleansing and showing signs of genocide. However history is not a fundamental obstacle for a "strategic partnership" between Poland and Ukraine.

3. Mutual Political Attraction

Poland was the first country in the world to recognize the statehood of Ukraine after the independence referendum on 1 December 1991. Already in 1992 the two countries signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation, which in particular confirmed the existing border. In March 1994 Poland and Ukraine adopted a declaration on the principles of their mutual relations, which recognized their strategic importance for the two countries. In fact under the presidency of Lech Wałęsa (1990 – 1995) and Leonid Kravchuk (1991 – 1994) the bilateral relations were not however a top priority. Poland during that time focused on strengthening the relations with the West, while Ukraine launched a difficult process of state-building. The situation did change under Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995 – 2005) and Leonid Kuchma (1994 – 2005). Poland secured its access to the Western institutions and organizations,

[18] Snyder Timothy (2012): *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Basic Books, p. 328 – 329.

[19] See idem (2003): *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569-1999*, New Haven, Yale University Press, pp. 2 – 3.

Ukraine stopped to be perceived as a *Saisonstaat*. Both countries could focus on the bilateral relations: historical reconciliation, economic projects, cooperation with EU and NATO[20]. Poland was also a valuable partner for Ukraine, as its relations with the West deteriorated after 2000. Since that time, the term "strategic partnership" was frequently used to describe the bilateral relations[21]. After the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution" (2004) which brought to power pro-Western, democratic forces, the relations between the two countries were further strengthened. The presidencies of Lech Kaczyński (2005 – 2010) and Victor Yushchenko however showed the limits of that cooperation. Ukraine remained a weak, unstable country between EU/NATO and Russia; Poland was unable to effectively help it[22]. Under Bronisław Komorowski (2010 – 2015) and Victor Yanukovych (2010 – 2014) both countries focused on the association of Ukraine with the EU. This process was however hampered by the growing authoritarianism of the Ukrainian regime and its rapprochement with Russia. In November 2013, under the pressure of Russia, the Ukrainian regime refused to sign the association agreement with the EU. This decision sparkled massive protests in Ukraine, which led to the toppling of Yanukovych. The new authorities signed the association agreement with the EU (2014), however the Ukrainian "revolution of dignity" (known also as the "Euromaidan") provoked Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has become a major challenge for both new Ukrainian authorities and Poland, in particular the new heads of states, Petro Poroshenko (elected in 2014) and Andrzej Duda (elected in 2015).

Both countries are interested in mutual cooperation for different reasons. In the case of Poland there are five main reasons[23]:

First, history. If Poland perceives the common past mainly through the bloody period of 1943 – 1944, it remembers that for centuries the Ukrainian lands belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In a certain way Ukraine is for Poles what Algeria was for the French or India for the British: lost Arcadia, where the geographical names remind the splendid past of the Commonwealth or the microhistory of several Polish families, which came to Warsaw, Cracow, Gdańsk from what has become Ukraine[24].

Second, the stability of the neighbourhood. Poland wants it Ukrainian neighbour to be a stable, prosperous, democratic and "European" (not only in geographical sense) state. This would protect Poland against such threats as a civil war on the other side of the border, development of organized crime or arrival of waves of refugees from Ukraine. The improvement of situation in Ukraine would also limit the migration pressure on Poland and open new perspectives for Polish exporters and investors present in Ukraine. For several years, NGOs financed by the Polish state and Western sponsors have been working on the democracy promotion and civil society building in Ukraine, such as the Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation PAUCI. Since 2013 the state grants for such organizations are channelled mainly by the Solidarity Fund PL – Polish equivalent of the European Endowment for Democracy. After the "revolution of dignity" Poland has been committed in supporting the

[20] Wolczuk Roman: "Ukrainian-Polish Relations Between 1991 and 1998: From the Declarative to the Substantive", *European Security*, vol. 9, nº 1 (2000), pp.127 – 156.
[21] Pavliuk Oleksandr: "The Ukrainian-Polish Strategic Partnership and Central European Geopolitics", in Spillman Kurt R., Wenger Andreas, Müller Derek (ed.) (1999): *Between Russia and the West. Foreign and Security Policy of Independent Ukraine*, Bern, Peter Lang, pp. 185 – 211; Zięba Ryszard: "The "Strategic Partnership" between Poland and Ukraine", *Polish Foreign Affairs Digest*, vol. 2, nº 3 (4) (2002), pp. 195 – 226.
[22] Szeptycki Andrzej: "Polish-Ukrainian Relations: From the Success of the "Orange Revolution" to Russia-first Policy", *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, vol. 19, nº 3 (2010), pp. 55 – 25.
[23] See idem: "A new phase of the Polish messianism in the East", in: Bieleń Stanisław (ed.) (2011): *Poland's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Warsaw, Difin, pp. 294 – 300.
[24] See Korek Janusz (ed.) (2007): *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*, Stockholm, Södertörns högskola.

reform of the local self-government in Ukraine, which is both necessary to modernize the state, but also politically difficult, because of the separatist tendencies supported by Russia.

Third, progressive integration and eventually (in a long-time perspective) accession of Ukraine to EU and NATO. Poland is fully aware it does not have political and economic instruments to successfully support the transformation of Ukraine by its own. That is why it opts for the integration of Ukraine in the Western institutions and organizations, both to modernize the former and to move the border of the West more to the East.

Forth, the relations with Russia. Polish political elites fear the revival of the Russian imperialism and keep in mind two recommendations formulated respectively by Ignacy Daszyński, one of the fathers of Polish independence in 1918, and Zbigniew Brzeziński: "There will be no independent Poland without independent Ukraine" and "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire"[25]. Therefore Polish policy aims at strenghtening Ukraine, but also at weakening Russia[26]. The historical memory plays an important role in this context again. Poles have always fought for their freedom against their oppressive neighbours (or at least they think so) - this concerns in particular tsarist Russia and later the Soviet Union. That is why Poles tend to support those who fight against Russia in the North Caucasus (Chechnya), South Caucasus (Georgia) or in Eastern Europe. Polish leaders born in the fifties took part in the fight against the Soviet domination and often refer to the heritage of "Solidarity". Their children, who were born at the end of the communist period or after its end, could not fight for their independence - that's why they often become active within the Polish civil society or decide to help the Eastern neighbours, to bring there the flame of freedom. In consequence Polish society and political elites actively supported both the "Orange Revolution" in Autumn 2004, when Ukrainians went out to the street to protest against the falsified presidential elections, and in 2013/2014 during the "Revolution of dignity".

Fifth, the international position of Poland. Poland wants to be the leading country in the EU Eastern policy, and in particular the "advocate" of Ukraine in the Western institutions and organizations. Such a position stems from the importance of Ukraine for Poland, but also from a will to strengthen the position of Poland on the international arena (in particular in the European Union). In consequence Poland considers it should be consulted on the Ukrainian issues. Such position has been reinforced by the "Orange Revolution". As it has been already mentioned the then president Aleksander Kwaśniewski had built up close contacts with his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma. After the beginning of the political crisis in Ukraine, he managed to convince on one hand the Ukrainian president to launch the negotiations with the opposition and, on the other, the EU to support these talks. The "round table" in Kyiv led to a peaceful solution of the crisis with pro-Western Victor Yushchenko becoming the new head of state[27]. Once again Polish minister of foreign affairs Radosław Sikorski was (together with his German and French counterpart) one of the three EU envoys who unsuccessfully tried to find a compromise between Yanukovych and the Ukrainian opposition during the bloodiest days of the "Euromaidan" in February 2014.

Ukraine is interested in cooperation with Poland because of a considerable soft power the latter has in Ukraine. During the communist period, Polish culture was relatively well known in the Soviet Union and Poland (although a part of the communist bloc) was perceived

[25] Brzezinski Zbigniew: "The Premature Partnership", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, nº. 2 (1994), p. 80.
[26] See also Pełczyńska-Nałęcz Katarzyna: *How far do the borders of the West extend? Russian/Polish strategic conflicts in the period 1990-2010*, Point of View nº 15, Warsaw, Centre for Eastern Studies, pp. 52 – 58.
[27] On the Polish engagement in the "Orange Revolution" see for example Goldman Minton F.: "Polish-Russian Relations and the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Elections", *East European Quarterly*, vol. XL, nº 4 (2006), pp. 409 – 428.

as more Western, more European, than the USSR – therefore more attractive. This positive image of Poland was reinforced by the political transformation after 1989. It has become an example of success for both Ukrainian elites and population, which they would like to follow (or at least they claim so). It has become a part of the Western institutions and organizations, in particularly the European Union, which, according to the official declarations, Ukraine wants to join. Polish experience is particularly important in this context, as it could be instructive for Ukraine[28]. The successful transformation of Poland, buoyant economy and accession to EU has made the country an attractive labour market for the Ukrainian emigrants. Both countries are direct neighbours and share similar languages and cultures, which facilitates the emigration. The large presence of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland has direct political implications. From the point of view of the Ukrainian authorities the most difficult issue is probably the existence of the EU Schengen visa regime, which Poland is to respect and which considerably limits the access of the Ukrainian citizens to Polish (and in a larger way EU) labour market. Finally, Ukraine needs Poland as an "advocate" in the Western institutions and organizations, in particular in the EU. The Ukrainian authorities are aware of the fact that, for geopolitical reasons, they can always count on the Polish support despite internal problems.

Even if the interests of the two states are complimentary their mutual approach is slightly different. Poland, being a member of the EU, perceives Ukraine as its most important and/or most promising non-EU neighbour. At the same time it often was deceived by its fallacious hopes. Ukraine has a more positive image of Poland, however it treats the Polish partner with less singularity. Ukraine reasons and argues in terms of geopolitical blocks (EU on one side, Russia or the Eurasian Union on the other). In this context it perceives Poland as one of the important members of the EU, albeit not the leading one (like Germany).

4. Limited Economic Opportunities

Economic cooperation between Poland and Ukraine does not meet the expectations formulated at the political level, the only notable exception being the growing presence of the Ukrainian labour immigrants in Poland. Such situation is due mainly to similarities between the post-communist economies, their relatively small size, as well as the difficult condition of the Ukrainian economy. Because of the crisis which has touched Ukraine, the devaluation of hryvna and war in the East of the country, only in 2013 – 2014 Ukraine fell down from the 8th to 14th position as an import partner of Poland.

Table 3. Trade between Poland and Ukraine – selected indicators (2014)

	Exports from Poland	Exports from Ukraine	Balance
Polish data (million US dollars)	4,2	2,2	2
Part of total export of Poland/Ukraine (in %)	1,8	4,9	-
Part of total import of Ukraine/Poland (in %)	5,6	1	-

[28] Adamczyk Artur, Zajączkowski Kamil (ed.) (2012): *Poland in the European Union: Adjustment and Modernisation. Lessons for Ukraine*, Warsaw – Lviv, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw – Faculty of International Relations, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv.

Ukraine among importers from/exporters to Poland	14th	21th	-
Poland among exporters to/importers from Ukraine	5	5	-
Ukrainian data (million US dollars)	*3,1*	*2,6*	*0,5*

Source: www.stat.gov.pl, www.ukrstat.gov.ua.

Table 4. FDI flow between Poland and Ukraine – selected indicators (end of 2013)

	FDI from Poland	FDI from Ukraine	Balance
Polish data (million US dollars)	354	-84	270
Part of total FDI from Poland/Ukraine (in %)	1,2	0,9	-
Part of total FDI in Poland/Ukraine (in %)	1,5	n.a.	-
Ukraine among places of investment/investors in Poland	13	n.a.	-
Poland among investors/places of investment from Ukraine	13	4	-
Ukrainian data (million US dollars)	*845*	*56*	*789*

Source: www.stat.gov.pl, www.ukrstat.gov.ua.

The economic cooperation is more important for Ukraine, Poland being the fifth trade partner, but also the forth place of Ukrainian foreign investments. Poland exports to Ukraine mainly electromechanical, chemical and mineral products, while it imports metallurgical, agro-alimentary and mineral products. It has also a positive balance both in trade and in foreign direct investments.

Ukraine is potentially an interesting, but also difficult place, for Polish investors. Geographical closeness, cultural and linguistic ties, low labour costs, growing needs of the Ukrainian population, which often cannot be satisfied by the local entrepreneurs, Western (EU) know-how push the Polish business to invest in Ukraine. Leading Polish companies like the bank PKO BP and the insurance company PZU SA are present in Ukraine (via respectively Kredobank and PZU Ukraine), as well as several industrial and agro-alimentary producers. They encounter however several problems, such as corruption, unlawful "raiding" of companies, lack of transparency and variability of legislation, the weakness of the Ukrainian judiciary system, poor infrastructure, delays in repayment (or non-repayment) of VAT, slow implementation of the WTO and EU standards, in particular the maintaining of

several non-tariff barriers[29]. These issues should be one of the priorities of bilateral cooperation, however they have often mistreated by both Polish and Ukrainian authorities. In 2005 the government of Yulia Tymoshenko decided to abolish all the privileges in the special economic zones established in the previous years. This decision, which was officially motivated by the necessity to ensure equal treatment for all the economic actors and conform to WTO standards touched some 70 Polish companies, which conducted their businesses in the above mentioned zones[30]. It is to be hoped that such problems will be eliminated with the progressive implementation of the association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union.

Table 5. Poland and Ukraine: The gas sector (2014, in billion cubic meters)

	production	total imports	imports from Russia	consumption
Poland	3,7	10,6	8,9	14,3
Ukraine	16,7	17,5	12,9	34,2

Source: *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2015*, London, BP.

Poland and Ukraine have sought to develop their cooperation – for political, economic and strategic reasons. In the last case, the principal area of cooperation would be the energy sector, as the countries have been considerably dependent on the gas and oil import from the Russian Federation, which has been perceived as a threat for the two countries, in particular in the context of two Ukrainian-Russian gas crisis (2006, 2009), and later the undeclared war between the two countries. These attempts brought however only limited results.

After the "Orange Revolution" the Ukrainian oligarchic group Industrial Union of Donbass (ISD) became a major investor in Poland. Its engagement in Poland was at least to some extent politically motivated, as ISD owners Vitaliy Hayduk and Serhiy Taruta closely linked to President Yushchenko. In 2005 ISD bought Częstochowa Steelworks in 2005, and two years later acquired a majority stake in the Gdańsk shipyard, the historical birthplace of "Solidarity". The second transaction proved to be misfortunate. The transaction was made in a hurry, skipping the competitive selection procedure. In the beginning of 2008, the European Commission estimated that the shipyard had benefited from a considerable unlawful public aid and it demanded that the shipyard either return the money obtained in breach of EU rules or cut its production capacity. Under the circumstances, a restructuring plan was drawn up for the shipyard, providing for the liquidation of two out of the yard's three slipways and a major loan from the state.

The main energy-related project was Odessa–Brody–Płock pipeline to carry Caspian Sea oil along a route bypassing Russia: from the Black Sea to Poland and, potentially, further on to Western Europe. It was to become an element of broader platform for energy cooperation among countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and, potentially, Central Asia, which was to limit their energy dependence on Russia. The project

[29] See Schwab Klaus (ed.) (2014): *The Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012*, World Economic Forum, Geneva 2011, p. 25.
[30] Szeptycki Andrzej: "Poland's Relations with Ukraine", *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy* (2006), p. 144.

had a declarative support of both governments, as well as of the European Commission. The Ukrainian portion of the pipeline (Odessa–Brody) was constructed in 2002, but it was not continued to Poland. Undoubtedly Ukraine was its more vocal advocate, seeing in the project a means to increase its energy security. In Poland certain doubts emerged as to the venture's economic viability. According to some commentators, Caspian Sea oil would be more expensive than Russian because of transport costs, and its parameters would not suit the requirements of Polish refineries. Besides, no private investor could be found to finance the pipeline extension[31].

A positive experience was the Euro 2012 football championship hosted together by Poland and Ukraine. The idea was launched in 2003 by Ukraine with the aim of developing the ties between the two countries and strengthening their position in Europe. If the latter aim was only partially realized, because of the internal situation in Ukraine under the Yanukovych regime, Euro 2012 brought some considerable economic benefits: partial modernization and development of infrastructure (albeit not as successful as expected), promotion of Poland in Ukraine outside their borders etc. (see Table 6).

Table 6. Economic Effects of the Euro 2012

	Poland	Ukraine
Investment (2007 – 2012, in billion euros)	19,8	10,4
in % of GDP	*5,2*	*9*
Employment effect (in thousands)	20 – 30	69
in % of labour force	*0,11 – 0,17*	*0,31*
Average tourist expenditures (in euros)	800	800
Total tourist spending (in million euros)	400 – 560	400
% of GDP	*0.11 – 0.16*	*0.32*
Overall long-term GDP increase	1.4-2.7%	n.a.

Source: Niessner Brigit, Bittner Petr, Zablotskyy Maryan: *Euro Championship 2012*, CEE Special Report, 23 May 2012, at https://www.erstegroup.com/en/Downloads/cd690892-bfde-4738-ba5e-f12053f767ed.pdf.

5. Growing People-to-People Contacts

Long-time common history and direct neighbourhood have contributed to the existence of social ties between the two countries. Despite the policies of the communist regimes, the Ukrainian minority still lives in Poland, while the Polish one in Ukraine. According to the official censuses conducted in the two countries, there were 144 thousand Poles in Ukraine

[31] Szeptycki: "Polish-Ukrainian Relations", op.cit.

(0,3% of the population) (2001)[32] and 51 thousand Ukrainians in Poland (0,1%) (2011)[33]. In both cases the representatives of the two communities would claim that these numbers had been understated. Because of their little number, as well as dispersion of the Ukrainian in Poland due to the operation "Vistula", the two groups are neither a major actor, nor a major problem in the bilateral relations. The situation is slightly different on the local level – in the borderland region, in particular in Przemyśl (Poland) and Lviv (Ukraine) there are some tensions between the two communities. Because of historical resentments, local population negatively assess the growing activities of the Polish (or Ukrainian) minority, while the latter claims its rights are not being fully respected. The ethnic relations are closely interrelated with the religious ones, as Poles are Roman Catholics, while Ukrainians are Greek Catholics or Orthodox. In 2007 the Republic of Poland introduced the Pole's Card – a special document which can be issued to people living in the former USSR and which confirms their belonging to the Polish nation. The Card gives the holder certain rights such as free access to the public education system; however it does not entitle him/her to settle in Poland. The documents have gained in popularity in Ukraine, even if the Polish origins of certain holders of the Card seem questionable.

Since the nineties, Poland has become an important labour market for the Ukrainians. After the fall of the communism, both Polish and Ukrainian citizens would engage into the border trade to make a living, however with the growing economic differences between Poland and Ukraine, the former has witnessed a growing number of the Ukrainian immigrants coming to Poland. Ukrainian women work most often as cleaners and nannies, Ukrainian men as workers in horticulture and construction sector. However there are more and more "white collars" from Ukraine in Poland. In 2011, for the first time, a Ukrainian immigrant ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the European Parliament. The number of Ukrainian citizens living (working) in Poland is difficult to assess, as many of these people periodically come and go back. In 2011 it was estimated by some experts at around 156 thousand[34]. Economic situation used to be the main reason which pushed Ukrainian to emigrate to Poland. According to a poll conducted in 2010 – 2012 some 64% of the Ukrainian immigrants came to Poland to work there, 13% to accompany their family members, and 4% to study[35]. In 2014 the private transfers from Poland to Ukraine (made mainly by the Ukrainian workers staying in Poland) were estimated at 40 million US dollars[36], however this number may be underestimated.

This situation has considerably changed since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine in November 2013. More and more Ukrainians are coming to Poland – not only to work there

[32] *About number and composition population of Ukraine by data All-Ukrainian population census '2001 data*, at http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/. On the ethnic situation in Ukraine see for example Bugajski Janusz: "Ethnic Relations and Regional Problems in Independent Ukraine", in Wolchik Sharon L., Zviglyanich Volodymyr (ed.) (2002): *Ukraine: The Search for National Identity*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 165 – 181.

[33] *Wybrane tablice dotyczące przynależności narodowo-etnicznej, języka i wyznania - NSP 2011*, at http://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/.

[34] *Migration facts Ukraine*, April 2013, at http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/fact_sheets/Factsheet%20Ukraine.pdf. On migration from Ukraine see also Cipko Serge: "Contemporary Migration from Ukraine", in Rios R.R. (ed.) (2006): *Migration Perspectives: Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Planning and Managing Labour Migration*, International Organization for Migration, Vienna

[35] Lesińska Magdalena, Thibos Cameron: *Corridor Report on Poland: the case of Ukrainian and Russian immigrants*, Interfact, nº 2 (2015), at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/34601/Interact_KF_2015_02.pdf.

[36] Приватні грошові перекази, at http://www.bank.gov.ua/doccatalog/document?id=73840. See also Kaczmaryk Paweł: *Money for Nothing? Ukrainian Immigrants in Poland and their Remitting Behaviors*, Discussion Paper, nº 7666 (2013), Bonn, Institute for the Study of Labour, at http://ftp.iza.org/dp7666.pdf.

(see Table 7)[37]. Ukrainians are the biggest group among the foreign students in Poland; in the year 2013/2014 they were 15 thousand, in 2014/2015, more than 20 thousand. They come to Poland not only because of the current situation in Ukraine, but also because the quality of education is better and its costs are not much higher if one takes into account corruption-related charges. Poland has funded a special "Polish Erasmus for Ukrainians" program for some 550 students from all-over Ukraine, in particular from the Eastern territories touched by the war with Russia. Ukrainian citizens, in particular those from the Crimean Peninsula, annexed by Russia, and from the Donbas, seek also asylum in Poland. In the last two years most of their demands however have been rejected, Polish authorities arguing that these people can easily benefit from the protection of their home country as IDPs, so their demands for asylum are considered groundless. Growing presence of the Ukrainians in Poland together with a large coverage of the 2013 – 2015 events in Ukraine has largely contributed to a better visibility of the Ukrainian community in Poland. If a few years ago the immigrants were unnoticeable, now they dispose of their own NGOs (different from those run by the members of the "traditional" Ukrainian minority), which lobby the interests of the Ukrainians and Ukraine in Poland.

Table 7. Ukrainian citizens in Poland

	2013	2014	2015
Visas issued (in thousands)	708	833	434*
Foreigners (mainly Ukrainians) crossing the border (in millions)***	14,4	15,7	8,1*
Asylum seekers (asylum granted)	46 (2)	2318 (0)	1665**

* January – June, *** with the exeption of local border traffic, ** January – August

Source: www.strazgraniczna.pl, www.udsc.gov.pl, www.kijow.msz.gov.pl.

The biggest obstacle to the people-to-people contacts is the EU Schengen visa regime, as well as the situation on the border. In the nineties both Polish and Ukrainian citizens could cross the border without visa. This situation changed because of the approaching perspective of Poland's accession to the EU. In 2003 Poland introduced free visas for the Ukrainians, in return Poles retained the right to travel to Ukraine without a visa. Later on, in 2007 Poland joined the Schengen zone, which further complicated the situation. Since that time Ukraine had to pay for the visas to Poland/Schengen zone (except for those covered by the 2007 EU – Ukraine agreement on the liberalization of visa regime). The visas were also more difficult to obtain. Both Poland and Ukraine hope that the latter will obtain a visa-free regime from the EU as stipulated by the EU Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation adopted in 2010. The accession of Poland to the Schengen zone considerably limited the movement of the Ukrainians to Poland, especially during the first years. It should be noted that most of the Ukrainian citizens come to Poland legally, which constitutes a major difference in comparison

[37] Adamczyk Anita: "Ukrainian immigration to Poland during the political crisis in Ukraine", *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, nº 3 (2014), pp. 29 – 44, at https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/10593/12661/1/ssp-2014-3-029-044.pdf.

with the immigrants coming to the EU from North Africa and the Middle East. Most of them are intended to find (at least officially) a legal job, as this is one of the conditions to get an employment visa. They are also easily integrated into the Polish society. Till now Poland does not have to deal with the immigration-related problems existing in the Western European countries.

Ukrainians are in general positively perceived in Poland, as well as Poles in Ukraine. This means that a major change has occurred in Poland. If in 1993 only 12% of the people polled expressed positive feelings towards the Ukrainians, in 2015 this figure rose to 36%[38]. In Ukraine, Poland is also perceived as the "best friend"[39]. It cannot be excluded, however, in particular in the context of the 2015 immigration crisis, that the attitude of Poles towards the Ukrainians will worsen and *vice versa*.

Table 8. Poland and Ukraine – mutual perceptions

	Ukrainians on Poland	Poles on Ukraine
Neighbour	41	26
National traditions	23	16
History and politics	9	26
East versus West	14	11

Source: Fomina Joanna, Konieczna-Sałamatin Joanna, Kucharczyk Jacek, Wenerski Łukasz (2013): *Polska – Ukraina. Polacy – Ukraińcy. Spojrzenie przez granicę*, Warszawa, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, p. 49.

6. Military Weakness

After the collapse of communist bloc, Poland quickly opted to be part of the Euro-Atlantic block of western countries, wanting to leave the "grey zone" between the unstable post-Soviet space and the prosperous West, and fearing the possibility of the revival of Russian expansionist policy. Already in 1993 it got rid of Russian (formerly Soviet) troops which had been stationed in its territory. The perspective of the NATO enlargement towards the East was at first unwelcomed by the member states – this was due in particular to the strong objection from Russia. In 1994 the Alliance launched the *Partnership for Peace*, which Poland joined in the same year. The NATO countries attitude, in particular the US, towards the Central European countries' aspirations changed around 1995. In 1997 Poland, together with the Czech Republic and Hungary was invited to join NATO. In 1999 it became a member of the Alliance. As member of NATO, Poland is covered by article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The cooperation with NATO within the *Partnership for Peace* program and later the accession to the Alliance led to the adoption by Poland of the NATO/Western politico-military standards in the field of security and defense. Through various trainings, exercises, maneuvers, and later military operations, Polish armies has become familiarized with NATO, its values,

[38] *Attitude to Other Nationalities*, at http://www.cbos.pl/EN/publications/reports/2015/014_15.pdf.
[39] *Who is Our Friend in the EU?*, 26 June 2014, at http://iwp.org.ua/eng/public/1156.html.

organization and style of work. The major NATO operations, in particular in Afghanistan, were however costly in terms of money and casualties and therefore socially unpopular[40].

The independent Ukraine successfully managed to take control of most of the formerly Soviet military arsenal located in its territory; however it had to give up to Russia the nuclear weapons (1994) and share with it the Black Sea Fleet, which was stationed in the Ukrainian Crimea till 2017 (later till at least 2042). Ukraine has never criticised NATO as Russia has done, although it did not welcome the perspective of its Eastern enlargement in the nineties, fearing to be isolated. After adopting a quasi-neutral ("non-block") status in 1990, in the year 2002 Ukraine declared its will to join the Alliance. The perspective of its accession to NATO became more tangible under the pro-Western Yushchenko. In 2008 the North Atlantic Council declared that in the future Ukraine and Georgia would join the Alliance, however it did not offer to the two countries the Membership Action Plan, which would substance to this declaration. After Yanukovych came to power Ukraine once again adopted a non-block status, which took the question of its accession of the agenda. Ukraine was unable to join NATO because of the unwillingness of several Western European member states, strong opposition from Russia, as well as the negative attitude of the majority of the Ukrainian population, largely fuelled by Soviet and Russian propaganda[41].

Poland was a fervent supporter of the NATO enlargement policy, in particular to Ukraine. Such policy steamed from four reasons. First, it believed that the accession towards NATO would contribute to democratization, modernization and stabilization of Ukraine. In this way it would enhance security in the neighborhood of Poland. Second, the enlargement of NATO was perceived as an element of the enlargement of the European structures. As all the new EU member states had entered NATO, it was assumed that these two processes were somehow interrelated. Third, Poland feared Russia and its expansionist policy. It expected Ukraine's accession to NATO would weaken Russia in the region, while strengthening the security of Poland. Forth the membership of Ukraine in NATO was to contribute to the development of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, especially in the defense area, as Poland was already a member of the Alliance.

Both countries engaged into military cooperation, which aimed in particular at assisting the Ukrainian armed forces' adjustment to NATO standards. A Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalion (POLUKRBAT) was formed and in 2000 it joined NATO's force in Kosovo (KFOR). In 2008 Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania decided to create a multinational unit. In 2014 they returned to this idea, establishing a common brigade (LITPOLUKRBRIG). The unit will be used in accordance with the international law with UN, NATO and EU missions. It has not become fully operational yet.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 – first the annexation of Crimea, and later the "hybrid war" in the Donbas-, clearly showed both the fallacy of the Ukrainian security policy since 1991 and the limits of the Polish-Ukrainian "strategic partnership". Because of its lower military potential, strong penetration of the security sector by Russia and especially the lack of allies, Ukraine was unable to successfully defend its territory. The new pro-Western authorities have declared the will to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, however such solution seems unrealistic; NATO could hardly accept as a new member a country which is in state of war with a great power like Russia. Besides the collective defense

[40] Jeffrey Simon (2004): *Poland and NATO: A Study in Civil-military Relations*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield.
[41] On Ukraine – NATO relations see for example Deugd (de) Nienke (2007): *Ukraine and NATO. The Policy and Practise of Co-operating with the Euro-Atlantic Security Community*, Harmonie Papers, Groningen, Centre for European Security Studies.

organizations generally work like "insurance policies" – you need to take precautions before falling into troubles.

At the military level, Poland could do little to help Ukraine in the context of a war with Russia. A direct military engagement has not been envisaged by the Polish political elites both because of limited Polish military capabilities, unwillingness to enter in military conflict with Russia and incompatibility of such action with Polish membership in NATO. Ukraine has hoped it could receive weapons from NATO countries, in particular Poland. The latter has offered to sell military equipment to Ukraine (instead of delivering it for free as the Ukrainians wanted), but this proposal has not been materialized. Therefore, at least officially, Poland does not deliver weapons to Ukraine; but it cannot be excluded however that such aid is being furnished secretly. What is certain is that Polish and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations based in Poland have been supplying non-lethal equipment such as clothes, night-vision goggles etc. to the Ukrainian army and paramilitary units.

Table 9. Poland, Ukraine and Russia - military potential (2013)

	Poland	Ukraine	Russia
Military expenditures (million US dollars)	9,4	4,4	84,8
Military forces (in thousands)	99	130	845

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, at www.sipri.org; *Military Balance* (2014), London, International Institute for Strategic Studies.

7. The European Context

If the lack of membership in NATO has been one of the crucial factors which allowed foreign aggression against Ukraine, the lack of membership perspective in the European Union has largely contributed to the failure of the political and economic reforms in the last 24 years.

Since the very beginning of the nineties, Poland aimed at joining the European Communities (since 1993 the European Union). In 1991 both partners signed the association agreement bringing Poland closer to the Communities, although did not provide any guarantees concerning its future status. As the association agreement entered in force in 1994, Poland presented its application for membership in the European Union. Despite internal problems (budget, institutional reform) the EU decided to launch the accession talks with the first group of candidates in 1998. The negotiations were concluded successfully in 2002; and two years later, Poland joined the EU. The accession and the membership period constituted a powerful stimulus for Polish transformation, at least for three reasons. First, the EU legislation Poland had to adopt was a ready-to-use model of a European free-market economy. Second, the perspective of membership was an important reason to implement Poland's obligations towards the European Union. Third, Poland considerably benefitted from the EU financial help, in particular after the accession, receiving some 88 billion euros in 2007 – 2013 and (according to the plans) 108 billion euros in 2014 – 2020.

Ukraine has also declared since the early nineties that it wanted to join the EU. However its demands have never been treated seriously by the EU. Such situation steamed both from unstable situation in Ukraine and the unwillingness of the European Union to extend its future borders to the post-Soviet space (with the exception of the Baltic countries). Despite the fact

that Ukraine is a European state and fulfils the criteria required for being a candidate, the EU member states have never recognize its membership perspective. Such situation has been a handicap for the reforms in that country, both on political and financial level. In 2007 – 2013 Ukraine received from the EU only one billion euros of economic help. If a part of the Ukrainian political elites is sceptical on the EU integration, the majority of the population want the integration in the Union. The "Euromaidan" unanimously confirmed that EU has a considerable *soft power* in Ukraine. After the fall of Yanukovych both partners have signed the association agreement, EU has also increased the economic help to Ukraine. However its stance on the membership has not changed.

Poland has always advocated a close cooperation between Ukraine and EU, hoping this would contribute to the modernization of Ukraine and stabilization of Poland's eastern neighbourhood. It was one of the countries which successfully convinced the EU to engage into the resolution of the political crisis in Ukraine during the "Orange Revolution". During the Yushchenko presidency, Poland focused on three issues. It steadfastly advocated the EU's further enlargement and, eventually, admission of Ukraine. Poland also sought a strengthening of the European Neighborhood Policy's eastern dimension, as well as the increase of funding for the eastern neighbors under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument. Finally, Poland wanted the EU's visa regime to be liberalized for Ukrainian citizens. This effort brought about partial results. The European Parliament recognized more than once the possibility of Ukraine's accession. Both documents were drawn up with active participation of Polish MEPs. However the European Council or the Council of the EU has never recognized Ukraine as "candidate" or "potential candidate" to the EU. In 2009 on the initiative of Poland and Sweden, the EU adopted a new initiative addressed towards the six post-Soviet neighbors (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan). The Eastern Partnership was not an alternative to the membership, focusing only on concrete issues such as political association, establishment of free trade area, visa liberalization and energy cooperation[42]. The proposals represented a success for Poland interested in tightening up the Union's collaboration with its eastern neighbors, but their importance was less substantial for Ukraine, which had been offered such arrangements earlier.

Indeed the negotiations of the association agreement between Ukraine and the EU, which had to establish in particular the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between the two partners, were launched in 2007. It was a difficult process for both technical and political reasons. The concept of the DCFTA involves not only the mutual opening of the markets, but also the adoption by the partner country of the majority of the EU *acquis communautaire*. As it does not include the membership perspective Ukraine was tempted by a "cherry-picking approach", which was rejected by the EU. The association agreement became the main issue in Polish-Ukrainian relations during the Yanukovych presidency, Poland trying consistently to push forward despite the degradation of democratic standards in Ukraine and subsequently, the worsening of EU – Ukraine relations. In 2011 the EU postponed the signature of the association agreement because of the imprisonment of the former Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko. In 2012, as Poland and Ukraine hosted the European football championship, some EU countries called for the boycott of the Ukrainian part of the event. Poland however remained loyal to its Ukrainian partner. The president Bronisław Komorowski was the only EU leader who went to Kyiv to watch the Euro final match in the company of Yanukovych and the president of Belarus Olexandr Lukachenka. In 2013 despite Polish please Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU, which ultimately led to the fall of Yanukovych.

[42] Korosteleva Elena (2014): *Eastern Partnership: A New Opportunity for the Neighbours?*, London, Routledge.

After the "Euromaidan" and the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Poland, together with the countries of Northern Europe (Sweden, the Baltic states), successfully lobbied a progressive, albeit limited, introduction of EU sanctions against Russia. The decision on that issue adopted against the political will and economic interests of several member states was certainly a success for the Polish diplomacy. However it should be noted that this success was possible mainly because of the persistence of Russia and Russia-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine. After the annexation of Crimea, the EU imposed travel bans and asset freezes – mainly on the members of the pro-Russian administration of Crimea, as well as separatist leaders. The turning point was the shooting of the Malaysian airliner travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur over Eastern Ukraine by the pro-Russian separatists in July 2014, which forced the European Union to introduce targeted economic sanctions against the Russian Federation[43].

Despite an active policy within the EU, Poland has been excluded from the international talks on the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. If in February 2014 Poland was one of the countries engaged in talks for the peaceful solution of the "Euromaidan" crisis, since spring 2014 it has been absent from the table of negotiations. Neither the already forgotten "Geneva format" (Ukraine, Russia, US, EU), nor the "Normandy" (Ukraine, Russia, Germany, France) and "Minsk format" (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE, "Donetsk" and "Lugansk" People's Republics) include Poland. Such situation steams from two facts: First, the international position of Poland remains weak comparing to the actors currently engaged in the resolution of the conflict. Second, the "strategic partnership" between Poland and Ukraine is a handicap for the former as the Russian Federation prefers to deal with the mediators who have a more balanced approach towards the two sides of the conflict. Ukraine seems to be aware of that fact, as it cannot expect a Western aid, it needs to deal with Russia, on Russian conditions, therefore without Poland.

8. Conclusions

Poland and Ukraine are deeply interested in mutual cooperation. Such situation steams from five factors: direct neighbourhood, common, albeit difficult history, attractiveness of the Polish labour market, membership of Poland in the Western institutions and organizations (in particular in the EU), and last but not least, the Russian threat, which shapes the geopolitical landscape of the whole region.

Despite complementary interests, both countries have some important difficulties to effectively develop their mutual relations and turn them into a real "strategic partnership"; the best example being the economic cooperation. One could argue that such situation is due to their relatively limited potential; however such explanation does not seem to be valid. There are examples of small countries which are able to effectively cooperate and one can mention the Benelux or the Baltic states. The problem lies somewhere else.

There are four main factors that impede the development of the Polish-Ukrainian relations: First, the internal situation in Ukraine: political instability, lack of reforms, a mere declarative will to join the EU for a long period of time and unwillingness to engage into a real historical dialogue with Poland. Second, the membership of Poland in the European Union: belonging to the Union gives Poland a certain influence on EU foreign policy and reinforces Polish *soft power* in Ukraine; however it also imposes certain limits, for example in the case of the EU visa policy. Third, the policy of Russia, which consistently tries to keep

[43] Szeptycki Andrzej: "The European Union in the Mirror of the Ukrainian Crisis (2013 – 2014)", *Stosunki Międzynarodowe. International Relations*, vol. 51, nº 1 (2015), pp. 107 – 125.

Ukraine within its zone of influence using political, economic and (since 2014) military means. The Russian Federation is openly clear against the association of Ukraine with the EU, in particularly against the establishment of the DCFTA. It also aims at weakening Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, being aware of the anti-Russian character of the Polish eastern policy. Forth, the lack of a EU solid and viable design towards Ukraine (despite the strength of the pro-European sentiment in Ukraine).

To put it briefly, despite their mutual interest, Poland and Ukraine belong to two different geopolitical areas in Europe, one being member of NATO and EU, and the other one being in their periphery. Such situation has complicated significantly the bilateral relations and makes it almost impossible to transform them into a "strategic partnership", as it was the case between France and Germany.