

POLAND, HUNGARY, AND THE  
WAR IN UKRAINE  
THE CASE OF WHY POLAND AND HUNGARY REACTED  
DIFFERENTLY TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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# Abstract

This thesis investigates why Poland and Hungary have reacted differently to the war in Ukraine from a neoclassical realist perspective. In order to make this investigation, the thesis analyses the two intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture from the theory of neoclassical realism. The thesis is classified as a comparative case study, as it is analyzing the case of Poland and Hungary and their reactions to the Ukraine war. Moreover, the thesis contains a qualitative research approach. The theoretical basis of this thesis is the theory of neoclassical realism. The theory explains what influences a foreign policy decision while providing different variables to include in the analysis. These variables are clarity, strategic environment, and the two main variables analyzed, leader image and strategic culture. These variables are analyzed via national security and FPDs, speeches, comments from state leaders, and relevant scholarly literature. In the analysis, it is revealed that the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture can explain why Poland and Hungary have reacted differently to the war in Ukraine. Poland's leader image and strategic culture perceive Russia as its biggest threat and has always had the foreign policy strategy of balancing against Russia and avoiding too much Russian influence on the CEE region. On the other hand, Hungary's leader image does not perceive Russia as a threat, but rather as an important ally for its national interests.

Moreover, Hungary has a pacifist strategic culture that constrains its leader from taking part in the war in any way. These above-mentioned reasons are all important findings as to why Poland and Hungary reacted differently to the war in Ukraine. All these findings are based on the neoclassical realist way of understanding how foreign policy decisions are shaped. The analysis shows that the variables of leader image and strategic culture can explain why the states chose different reactions to the war, as these have provided a tendency that represents the reactions from each country. The discussion in the thesis discusses the difficulty in assessing which intervening variables is deemed the most influential since the leader image and strategic culture resemble each other in most areas in this case. Therefore, the concept of the intervening variables might need further development to be able to clearly differentiate between the variables. Moreover, it discusses the possibility of alternative explanations in which it draws on economic dependence theory. It is discussed that when a country is heavily dependent on Russian energy, like Hungary, it is more likely to adopt pro-Russian foreign policy. Despite the discussion of alternative explanations, it is concluded, via this

thesis, that the intervening variables of strategic culture and leader image can provide an explanation as to why Poland and Hungary reacted differently to the war in Ukraine.

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# Abbreviations

NCR – Neoclassical Realism

FPE – Foreign Policy Executive

NSS – National Security Strategy

FPD – Foreign Policy Document

PM – Prime Minister

CEE – Central Eastern European

# 1. Introduction

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February in 2022, Russia started its invasion of Ukraine. An attack that stunned everyone and shifted focus to something no one anticipated in today's world, war. Following this aggressive action from Russia, every country, especially in Europe but also around the globe, has made statements about the situation in Ukraine. The EU has hit Russia with heavy sanctions, and the country has been expelled from numerous international events so far in 2022 (Brown 2022).

This thesis focus on the reaction to the war from two specific countries, namely Poland and Hungary. These two countries look a lot like each other; they are close geographically and are similar politically. They were both parts of the Soviet Union, are both members of NATO, and both currently have a rather complicated relationship with the EU because of Rule of Law disputes. Even though these two countries look very similar, they have had very different reactions to the current situation in Ukraine. Poland has called for stronger sanctions against Russia, has condemned the Russian aggression from the beginning, and is helping Ukraine with military shipments. Hungary will not allow military shipments through to Ukraine and will not support energy sanctions against Russia (Adam 2022). Because the two countries are so similar and have cooperated closely for many years, this contrast in reaction to the war is particularly interesting. This thesis aims to examine why Poland and Hungary have had such different reactions to the war in Ukraine.

Realism argues that all nation-states seek security within the international system and that national decision-makers tend to act rationally ( (McGlinchey, Walters, Scheinpflug 2017). There has been a clear political and economic response from the Western allies toward the Russian aggression, which would suggest that all NATO and EU members would follow this policy without stalling. However, Hungary has continued to balance between Russia and the West in this conflict by being the last NATO and EU member to vote in favor of sanctions, refusing to agree on energy sanctions, and has not helped Ukraine militarily. The reactions from Poland have been to call for even stronger sanctions and more military aid to balance against the Russian threat. However, Hungary does not view Russia as a threat despite its aggressive actions. NCR regards the structure of the international system as providing states with information about the costs and benefits policy decisions can have, but that information is, according to NCR, processed through various filters and evaluated depending on how states understand the world and what their ethics and ideas are, these filters are called intervening variables (Kitchen 2010).

Therefore, NCR is the theory chosen for this thesis. It aims to explain why Hungary and Poland chose different foreign policy reactions to the war in Ukraine and to explore how the intervening variables from NCR can explain the difference in the responses. These considerations have brought about the following problem statement:



## **2. Problem statement**

*Why have Poland and Hungary's reactions to the war in Ukraine differed from each other from a neoclassical realist perspective?*

### 3. Case background

This section will feature some background information about the case and the countries examined in this thesis. First, will be a short characterization of the similarities between Poland and Hungary from a political perspective. Secondly, it will consist of the 2014 Crimea crisis, which was a similar problem, although not to the extent of the current situation's full-scale invasion. Thirdly, the chapter will finish by explaining the actual case this thesis is examining.

#### 3.1. Poland and Hungary from a political perspective

PM Viktor Orban has governed Hungary, and his party, Fidesz, since 2010. Fidesz won landslide victories in 2014 and 2018 and recently won the 2022 election with a substantial margin (Gosling 2022). These victories have facilitated a two-thirds majority for Fidesz in the Hungarian parliament. This majority situation has made it possible for Fidesz and Orban to alter the Hungarian constitution and bring systemic change leaning toward an authoritarian regime (Szelenyi 2022). The website FreedomHouse, which measures the level of freedom in each country, has evaluated that Hungary is experiencing some form of democratic backsliding (Freedomhouse 2021). The constitutional changes in Hungary have allowed Fidesz to control the country's independent institutions; they have passed anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ policies and put restrictions on free and independent media (Ibid.) Orban himself has described his vision for Hungary as an "illiberal democracy" (Orban 2014).

The increasing autocratic tendencies in Hungary have created a feud with the EU, as the EU views these tendencies as a danger to the Union and not representative of the fundamental values that the union has described in the TEU Article 2. This situation has resulted in a now lengthy debate about the rule of law, in which the EP and EC have made several cases against Hungary, which are still ongoing.

Poland has been governed by the right-wing party PiS and the President, Andrzej Duda, since 2015. However, even though Duda is the President of Poland, he is not the one who controls the country's political direction. Jaroslaw Kaczynski is the leader of the PiS party and the so-called "de facto leader in Poland" (Murphy 2017). Since PiS came to power in 2015, the party, like Fidesz in Hungary, has also enacted various measures which have increased the political influence over state

institutions, thus damaging the level of democracy in Poland (Freedomhouse 2021).

Like Hungary, Poland has also created a heated relationship with the EU, mainly because of the rule of law disputes and because of restrictions on the media and other human rights aspects like abortion (EP 2021). The governing party, PiS, has embarked on a process of “de-Europeanisation” to give Poland a greater sense of sovereignty. PiS believes that the EU threatens the country’s values and identity. Because of this fear, Poland has sought to be closely allied with like-minded countries. This is also why Poland and Hungary always support each other in these rule of law debates, showing solidarity and not giving in to the EU forces, which will lead to loss of sovereignty in their minds (Reuters 2021).

### 3.2. Poland and Hungary in the Crimea annexation

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014, Vladimir Putin was able to approve a bill for the annexation of Crimea. The West quickly condemned this aggressive action, where the EP condemned the aggression in a joint statement, and EU leaders announced sanctions and bans against Russia (Kruk 2019). Poland was one of the countries with the firmest condemnation of the Russian annexation of Crimea. Poland was even called a “Hawk” for advocating for a more vigorous reaction and sanction policy from the EU (Govet 2014).

For Hungary, it is another story. The relationship between Russia and Hungary was at a peak era in 2014, mainly because of the many joint economic and energy relations between the two countries (Ada Amon 2015). The 2014 situation in Ukraine did not seem to bother Hungary, Hungary was not concerned with the aggressive actions, and Orban even criticized the sanctions imposed on Russia (Insight 2022). Instead, what concerned Hungary was the Hungarian minority in Ukraine. So, while the rest of Europe was shocked by the annexation of Crimea, Hungary requested autonomy for the approximately 200,000 ethnic Hungarians in western Ukraine (Staff 2014).

Both Poland and Hungary are part of the so-called Visegrad group (V4 group); the other two countries are the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This is an informal regional cooperation between four central European countries linked in history, traditions, culture, and values (Gov.pl). The idea behind this group was to promote cooperation and build a democratic state structure and free-market economies, to participate in European integration (Ibid.). The V4 group is a way for these central European nations to form a strong alliance as a tight-knit group that supports each other.

However, the discrepancy between the reactions from Poland and Hungary to the annexation of Crimea created tension in the group (Zgut 2017). Like most other countries, Poland tried to balance against Russia, but Hungary did not. It might be relatively often that some countries differ in foreign policy reactions; however, for Poland and Hungary, the situation is different. They should respond similarly to major events like the Crimea annexation because of the V4 group cooperation, the membership in the EU, and NATO, and the overall values and overall connectivity they have with each other.

### 3.3. Poland and Hungary in the Ukraine war

Like the Crimea annexation back in 2014, the reaction to the war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 has also sparked a lot of tension between Poland and Hungary. Hungary has been opposed to imposing sanctions on Russia, like in 2014. However, later Hungary agreed to vote in favor of sanctions on Russia, but is still opposing energy sanctions and will not let weapons destined for helping Ukraine through its borders (Krzysztozek 2022).

In a speech on the 1849 War of independence national holiday in Hungary, Orbán said that “the best war is a war we stay out of” (Harms 2022). Furthermore, Orbán and his government now focus on security and peace, meaning that Hungary shall not involve itself in the war. If the opposition comes to power, they will force the country into a military confrontation, according to Orbán (Inotai 2022).

On the other hand, Poland feels like it could be the next victim of invasion after Ukraine and is helping Ukraine with fuel, weapons, and humanitarian and economic aid (Adam 2022). Poland is also in great support of strong sanctions against Russia, just like in 2014. Moreover, Poland has become the center for distributing Western military shipments in assisting Ukraine with weapons (Kedzierska 2022). The war in Ukraine has significantly changed Poland’s relations with the West, as Poland now has become of strategic importance to the balancing against Russia. This situation has forced the West to put aside Poland’s rule of law concerns and instead focus on security. Poland has become the NATO frontline, and its active participation in condemning the Russian aggression has heightened the geopolitical relevance of the country (Ibid.). US President Biden was on a visit to Warsaw, and the US also deployed armed forces in Poland which emphasizes the role that Poland is now playing (Adam 2022).

After his recent election win, Orbán held a speech where he talks about how many battles and opponents he faced during this election campaign. In this speech, he named the President of Ukraine as an enemy (Orbán 2022). Furthermore, Orbán has been reluctant to explicitly condemn Russia over the war crimes in Bucha, which virtually every other country has (Jack 2022). Following these statements from Orbán, the leader of Poland's ruling party, J. Kaczyński, strongly criticized the Hungarian PM, which was widely seen as a surprising move, considering the close relationship the two countries have. Kaczyński said that Orbán must see an eye doctor if he cannot see what is happening in Bucha (Jack 2022). Moreover, Kaczyński uttered that Orbán's attitude towards the war was "disappointing" and slammed Orbán for referring to Zelenskyy as an opponent of Hungary (AP, Euronews 2022). Moreover, Kaczyński has said that further cooperation with Hungary is impossible unless Orbán's and Hungary's approach to Russia's aggression changes (AP 2022). These comments from Kaczyński clearly show how this approach by Hungary is hurting them internationally. If it no longer has the support of Poland, then Hungary is weakened tremendously in its rule of law feud with the EU.

This conflict between Poland and Hungary has even resulted in the cancellation of V4 meetings because Poland is dissatisfied with the lackluster Hungarian support for sanctions and other actions against Russia (Krzysztošek 2022). Furthermore, the Defense Minister of the Czech Republic wrote on Twitter that "*I am very sorry that Russian oil is now more important to Hungarian politicians than Ukrainian blood*" (Ibid.). Thereby seriously stating that there is a lot of tension between Hungary and the rest of the V4 group over the stance on the war.

Although both Poland and Hungary have accepted the policy decisions made by the EU and NATO on Russia, their approach and reactions to these have been very different, as presented above. Poland is in full support of tough sanctions on Russia and strong condemnation, whereas Hungary has been debating the need for sanctions and refused to help transfer weapons through to Ukraine.

## 4. Theory

This thesis will apply the theoretical approach of realism. More specifically, it will use the theory of neoclassical realism throughout the analysis and the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture. This chapter will start with an introduction to realism, its origin, and different variations of the theory through time. Subsequently, the chapter will explain why NCR was chosen for this specific case study. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to account for the theory.

The roots of the realist tradition are typically claimed to originate from Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, and Niccoló Machiavelli. Thucydides was the first political theorist to introduce realism with his *History of the Peloponnesian war*, where he explains the cause of the war with an implied realist perspective (Karpowicz 2018). Machiavelli established himself as a political innovator with his *The Prince* because he argued that classical Western political thought, at the time, was unrealistic. He argued that politics and ethics should be separated. *Machiavellianism* is a radical type of political realism, as it denies the relevance of morality in politics and claims that all means are justified to achieve certain political ends (ibid.). Thomas Hobbes attacked the classic political philosophy and idealist perspective that human beings can control their desires through reason can distinguish between right and wrong and can work for the benefit of others. Hobbes argued that human beings are highly individualistic and subject to a perpetual and restless desire for power (ibid.) With these ideas, Hobbes contributed to some of the core principles for realism in international relations. For instance, the idea of human nature as egoistic, the concept of anarchy, and the idea that the struggle for power in politics can be rationalized and studied scientifically (ibid).

The above mentioned can be seen as founding fathers of the realist tradition. However, many other scholars have elaborated and expanded on realism as a theory and concept since. Therefore, realism may be best seen as “a spectrum of ideas” (Haslam 2002) or “a philosophical disposition” (Gilpin 1986). Definitions of realism can vary a lot in their details but at the same time, has considerable resemblance altogether. Generally, realism has four central points in the tradition of realism. These are Groupism, Egoism, Anarchy, and Power Politics (W. C. Wohlforth 2009).

*Groupism* is essentially the idea that politics takes place within and between groups. Groupism is essential in domestic politics, and conflict and cooperation between different institutions is the core

of international politics (Ibid.). To survive, it is crucial to foster some form of group solidarity. However, this same solidarity facilitates the possibility of conflict with other groups. Today, the most important groups are national states, and the most important in-group cohesion is nationalism (Ibid.).

*Egoism* is the phenomenon when individuals or groups act politically driven by narrow self-interest. In realism, egoism is explained as something rooted in human nature. However, the way it is carried out may vary significantly because of national and international political structures, institutions, and values.

*Anarchy* is one of the most important concepts in realism. This concept refers to the understanding that the international system is anarchy in the theory of realism. That the international system is anarchic essentially means that no one is in charge. Meaning that, internationally, there is no clear expectation of anyone or anything to do something, as there is no hierarchy. Thus, states can only rely on themselves. (McGlinchey, Walters, Scheinpflug 2017).

*Power politics*: The fact that groupism and egoism are placed in a system of anarchy makes international relations largely a politics of power and security (W. C. Wohlforth 2009). Human affairs are always marked by great inequalities of power. The key to politics in any area is always the interaction between social and material power. Power is also a central concept in realism. When analyzing, realists look for where the power is, what the group interests are, and what role power relationships play in accommodating conflicting interests (W. C. Wohlforth 2009).

The four points and their arguments provide a certain coherence to the realist tradition. However, there are debates among scholars about the relevance and priority of each point, their overall implication, and under which conditions they apply (W. C. Wohlforth 2009). Scholars agreed on the core realist principles and expanded the theory in different directions afterward, from classical realism to neorealism, offensive and defensive realism, and neoclassical realism.

## 4.1. Classical realism

Classical realism began in the aftermath of the Second World War with Hans Morgenthau, who in 1948 wrote the book *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Morgenthau was by no means the only thinker who contributed to the development of classical realism. Still, he is one of the most influential, and his book became a standard textbook and influenced how to think

about international politics for a generation, which is why he is highlighted in this period (Karpowicz 2018).

Hobbes influenced Morgenthau in the way that he also placed egoism and the desire for power at the core of his understanding of human existence, exemplified in his book, where he writes: “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.” The most important concept in Morgenthau’s realist theory is the concept of power. Human lust for power and wanting to dominate is the main cause of conflict for Morgenthau. His realist theory had the assumption that political leaders think and act with the sole interest of power. This concept provided an analysis of foreign policy regardless of motives and individual politicians and laid a foundation for a rational picture of politics. Morgenthau also explains the relationship between ethics and realism and ethics and politics, thereby deriving from the Machiavellian realism route by removing ethics from politics. He argues that realists are aware of the ethical significance of political action.

Moreover, Morgenthau explains that politics cannot be subordinated to ethics, but that ethics still play a role in politics (Karpowicz 2018). He explains that a pure political man would be a “beast” and a pure moral man would be a “fool.” In this sense, politics require human life, power, and morality to be considered (Ibid.). According to Morgenthau, this suggests that although humans are guided by their desire for power, universal moral principles still have significance.

Even though Morgenthau is one of the most well-respected scholars in realism, his theory is argued to be rather vague and ambiguous at times (tucker 1952). Key concepts such as national interest, which is essential for this thesis, and the balance of power are undefined or defined in contradictory ways. This discovery resulted in a lot of criticism of realism. The concept of power in Morgenthau’s realism is at times ambiguous. Power can both be a means and an end in politics. If power is only a means for obtaining something else, then it does not define international politics in the way Morgenthau explains (Karpowicz 2018). Then we are not able to understand the action of states independently of their political leaders, which is of analytical interest in this thesis. We need to consider a broader historical and cultural context when analyzing the actions of states; if the analysis is solely based on the desire for power, it is a rather useless analysis, as states, regardless of the regime, would pursue the same kind of foreign policy. Therefore, this thesis needs another realist theory perspective.



This criticism sparked another scholar, Kenneth Waltz, to revive realist thinking (W. C. Wohlforth 2009).

## 4.2. Neorealism

Waltz first published his book *Theory of International Politics* in 1979, in which he reformulated realism in a new and distinctive way (Karpowicz 2018). Waltz's approach to realism attempted to "cure" the defects of classical realism and became structural realism or neorealism (Ibid.). While Morgenthau based his theory on the struggle for power as human nature, Waltz avoided any discussion of human nature in his work. Instead, he constructed a theory around international politics and microeconomics (Ibid.). Waltz argues that states' primary interest is to survive, exactly like a business. A fundamental distinction between classical realism and neorealism is that they view power and state behavior differently. Morgenthau explains power as both a means and an end, and rational state behavior to be what would result in the most power possible. Whereas Waltz, i.e., neorealists, understand the primary interest of states to be security and survival and therefore focuses on the distribution of power.

From neorealism, two additional theories of realism emerged: offensive realism and defensive realism. Offensive realism shares the assumption of classical realists that states seek to gain as much power as possible. However, in structural offensive realism, it is not the human lust for power but the structure of the international system which creates the incentive for major powers to maximize their power via offensive strategies. The main innovator of offensive realism is John J. Mearsheimer, who wrote the book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; like Waltz, he also focuses on the importance of state survival but argues that the best way to be secure in an anarchic system is to become the most powerful state. According to offensive realists, the anarchic structure of the international system induces states to maximize their power and seek dominance rather than equality, thus making the state more secure and thereby increasing the chance of survival (Lobell 2017). The overall argument in offensive realism is that the stronger the state is, the more unlikely it is to be attacked, as weaker powers will not be willing to challenge it. In his book mentioned above, Mearsheimer states that "states quickly understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system" (Mearsheimer 2001). According to offensive realists, all major powers employ a worst-case scenario and therefore try to increase their power through

expansion. Thus, states can never be certain of other states' intentions which is why states will always look to maximize power because it is hard to quantify how much relative power is needed to diminish rival threats and be secure. For offensive realists, offensive actions often succeed and are the most profitable option, as Mearsheimer claims initiators of war win 60pct of the time (Lobell 2017). However, states are not mindless expanders, according to offensive realists. Instead, they describe it as prudent territorial expanders who take the risks of economic and industrial power into account (Lobell 2017). States may avoid opportunities to gain power because the costs are too high, which will result in decreased power as it might undermine the economy, which is the basis for military power. In other words, no state will seek to change the system when it is not profitable. Major powers will only show aggression if the benefits exceed the expected loss (Lobell 2017). However, Mearsheimer also argues that in many cases, even if the outcome of war fails, "a careful analysis shows that these choices for war were a reasonable response to the particular circumstances each state faced," using Japan and Nazi Germany as examples (Mearsheimer 2001). Offensive realism also calls upon an immense level of competition, as states take advantage of opportunities to gain more power at the expense of other states and with the intention of weakening other states. Mearsheimer also argues that if a state passes up the opportunity to maximize its influence and power, another state will take advantage of this opportunity (Lobell 2017). Thus, a great power does not try to remain equal with other great powers but rather tries to be the hegemon. However, Mearsheimer believes that no state can become a hegemon because of geography and the stopping power of water (Mearsheimer 2001). The ultimate goal for a state is, according to Mearsheimer, to be a regional hegemon, which is to be the only great power in a specific part of the world.

On the other hand, defensive realism argues that the anarchic system induces states to adopt more defensive strategies to maximize security. Both defensive and offensive realism agree on the international system as an anarchic structure, thus the name "structural realism" that they both are a part of. Waltz describes the anarchic system in the way that the threat of violence is ever-present. According to Waltz, states act based on self-help, meaning that they act with the sole purpose of survival, and their interactions with other states reflect their desire to survive (Waltz 1979). By understanding the international system in this way, Waltz identifies ways in which the structure of the international system hampers cooperation between states. First, the fear or insecurity about other

states' future intentions works against the cooperation. Moreover, a state also worries about becoming dependent on others and therefore will elect to limit the cooperation (Ibid.).

Waltz is the main innovator of defensive realism as it is mainly built on his balance of power theory. From a defensive realist perspective, only a great power can change the structure. However, most states don't have the necessary power to change the structure. States will therefore try to balance against each other to increase the chance of survival. This balancing can be both internal and external. Internal balancing refers to investment in military power to match other states. External refers to the alliance of states to counter a stronger power. Because states are primarily concerned with their security, they will try to maximize their relative power compared to other states (Waltz 1979). The contrast to balancing in Waltz's theory is bandwagoning, where weaker states choose to ally with a stronger state. Waltz argues that "because power is a means, not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions" (Waltz 1979).

Waltz argues that only if the state's survival is secured, a state can begin to seek other goals (Waltz 1979). For defensive realists, the risks are simply too high if attempting to achieve hegemony. It will likely leave the state weaker and less secure as this attempt will provoke aggression and counterbalancing from other states. However, the aim of security for states in Waltz's theory comes with certain implications. For instance, when states attempt to increase their security, it can result in decreased security for other states', which is known as the security dilemma (Glaser 1997). In this case, creating mutual security through cooperation will be preferred to minimize the dilemma. Furthermore, as previously explained, maximizing power is not the primary goal of defensive realism; it is seen more as a valuable tool to ensure security. According to defensive realism, because maximizing power is not the end goal, states wish to keep the current power balance to ensure security. Thus, states tend to have the most interest in defending the status quo from a defensive realist viewpoint, which naturally goes against the offensive realist argument that the anarchic structure induces states to pursue maximum power.

While neorealism gained more acceptance than classical realism, neorealism also provoked various critiques in some areas (Karpowicz 2018). Most critics of neorealism blame the theory for ignoring differentiations of state and non-state actors and ignoring historical and social dimensions (Öner 2014). One of these critics is Robert Cox, who criticizes neorealism for only examining one limited

period of history and shows it as a universal reality (Ibid.) Waltz does not include different places, times, and special conditions, which is a mistake when trying to make a general theory. Moreover, the theory is criticized for the balance of power concept, which is criticized for being a mechanical relation defined by military and economic powers without taking perceptions, knowledge, and the purpose of actors into account (Ibid.). Thus, the historical and social dimensions are underdeveloped in neorealism. In the neorealist theory, because of the anarchic structure, all states are functionally equal with similar interests. This thesis seeks to examine how and why two states operate differently on the same matter, which cannot be answered fully by neorealism, as it does not take historical and social dimensions and the perception and purpose of actors into account.

### 4.3. Neoclassical realism

NCR is a newer strain of realism that attempts to bring together main pillars from structural realism and classical realism. Where classical realism focuses a lot on domestic politics and neorealism has more attention on systemic distribution of power, neoclassical realism accepts that the international system can influence how a state behaves but at the same time argues that the domestic actors influence the state behavior. The neoclassical international system is largely state-centric since states remain the most politically consequential actors (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). Like other variations of realism, NCR views international politics as a never-ending struggle among states for power and influence. Through the realist tradition, there are many debates and disagreements about how to quantify and define the concept of power. NCR adopts the “elements of national power approach,” which defines power as a resource and sees power as a means to an end, not an end unto itself, thereby separating power from influence (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). Moreover, neoclassical realist theories share the assumption that every state’s external behavior is shaped by its power and position in the international system and more specifically, by its relative share of material capabilities (Ibid.). This external behavior notion is interesting to the analysis in this thesis. As Poland has more “power,” meaning a relative share of material capabilities, than Hungary. Then this could also be an important factor as to why Hungary does not want to support Ukraine with military aid. At the same time, Poland serves as the main strategic military position for the West regarding the balancing against Russia.

NCR emerged as a criticism of neorealism, primarily because of the “rational actor” assumption (N. M. Ripsman 2017). Neoclassical realists agree with neorealists that states construct their foreign security policy with primary attention to threats and opportunities in the international system (Ibid.). However, neoclassical realists reject the implication that states necessarily act as rational to changing international circumstances as neorealists imply (Ibid.).

Moreover, the neorealist perspective requires a state to be always perfectly flexible and a state which can answer immediately and correctly to any threat posed by the international system. However, because of, for instance, political or economic circumstances, a state might not be able to mobilize the necessary resources to respond appropriately to the international system. This level of flexibility is unable to foresee states that face domestic constraints when making national security decisions. In this analysis, it is important to differentiate between states based on their unique policy-making environments, as it is a comparative study of two different states. Hence, NCR is the theory used in this analysis, as these aspects are deemed important in this analytical case. NCR is, in this way, a theory that has supplemented structural realist theory with additional levels of analytical variables which can help explain events that pure structural realism is unable to.

The overall assumption in NCR is that the state and its domestic processes cannot be ignored. This theory argues that the domestic processes can influence the “rational” choice so much that it suddenly is no longer a rational choice. Neorealists argue that the state always chooses the “rational” option. In contrast, neoclassical realists argue that there are a lot of intervening variables that influence this process, e.g., poor domestic leadership, corruption, or misperception of the enemy (W. C. Wohlforth 1993). This theory in realism is particularly interesting for this thesis, as it aims to explain why two countries react differently towards a historical mutual threat. The goal of NCR is not as vast as neorealism which aims to explain systemic trends. Instead, NCR tries to explain why states choose different policies in response to their external environment at a certain point in time (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). This is precisely why NCR is the perfect theory choice for this case study.

According to NCR, the international system might not always present clear signals about threats and opportunities. Many situations in the international system can leave a great deal of ambiguity regarding both the challenges and the responses to the threats that the international system presents.

Therefore, the independent variable of “clarity” is a key concept in NCR, which distinguishes it from other realist approaches. Clarity has three components: the degree to which threats and opportunities are discernable, whether the system provides information and time horizons of the threats and opportunities, and whether the optimal policy option stands out (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016).

The first element of clarity of clear threats can be identified by the expressed hostility towards the state’s territorial integrity, the economic and military capabilities to inflict harm on a state, and the expectation that it will inflict harm in short order on a state. Clear opportunities require evidence of a state’s improving balance of capabilities regarding other states; however, this element of opportunities is not important to expand on in this thesis.

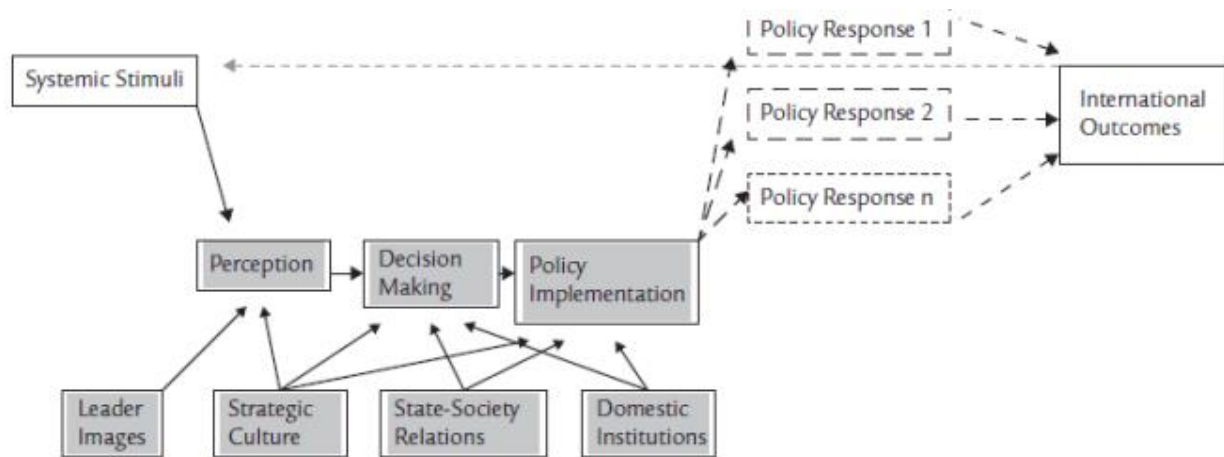
The second element of clarity, time horizons, is often difficult to estimate for leaders, as it requires accurate knowledge of the adversary’s capabilities and intentions (Ibid.). The strategic dilemma a state faces is, in this element, whether the adversary behavior signals imminent attack or indefinite withdrawal.

The third element of clarity refers to whether the optimal policy response stands out, which it rarely does in the international system; however, the system does often constrain and limits the options available for states (Ibid.). NCR argues that “clarity” is important as it can highlight that if the degree of clarity is high, the variance in policy choice should be low, and vice versa.

In addition to the relative levels of clarity, another key independent variable for NCR is the state’s strategic environment (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). There are permissive and restrictive strategic environments; the distinction between the two relies on the magnitude of threats and opportunities the state faces. The more dangerous the threat or enticing opportunity, the more restrictive the strategic environment is for the state and vice-versa.

Neoclassical realists argue that states do not always perceive systemic stimuli correctly, which means that the power that influences politics is based on different leaders’ perceptions of who makes decisions on behalf of the state (N. M. Ripsman 2017). Thus, humans are responsible for the outcome. Humans are not always correct in their calculation of power or identification of different options or the calculation of likely consequences of their actions. Below is a figure with all the different components which might interfere with decision-making. Therefore, a state’s security might have more to do with its leader’s personality and beliefs than objective systemic opportunities

or constraints (Ibid.). William Wohlforth, one of the most well-known neoclassical realists, argues that “If power influences the course of international politics, it must do largely through the perceptions of people who make decisions on behalf of the states” (W. C. Wohlforth 1993). Neoclassical realists observe that states cannot always structure their policies to international circumstances because of variations in perception of systemic stimuli, non-rational decision-making procedures, or something that hinders policy implementation caused by a failure to mobilize societal resources (N. M. Ripsman 2017). According to NCR, states’ policy choices are no longer a direct product of systemic stimuli. Instead, the responses pass through the state which perceives and responds to them within its unique domestic circumstances (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). To understand foreign policy, it is therefore essential to study the unique processes of perception, decision-making, and policy implementation in individual countries, which might lead them to enact different policy responses to similar challenges. This is exactly what this thesis aims to do, which is why NCR was chosen for this case of investigation of the foreign policy response by Poland and Hungary to the war in Ukraine. The figure below consists of three intervening level processes: perception, decision-making, and policy implementation. Below them are four clusters of intervening variables that can affect how and why specific foreign policy decisions are made. As seen in the figure below, these policies are often influenced by these four intervening variables: *Leader image*, which interferes with perceptions; *strategic culture*, which also interferes with perception and shapes responses; *state-society relations*, which affect the state’s ability to implement decisions and *domestic and political institutions*, which can either enable or restrict a state leader when they face opposition in society. In this way, NCR creates a unique position on the agent-structure debate (N. M. Ripsman 2017).



**Figure 3.1**  
The Neoclassical Realist Model of Foreign Policy

(Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016)

The following section will further explain the four clusters of intervening variables in the neoclassical realist model above. The reason for a further explanation is that these variables will be the main component of the analysis, which seeks to uncover why Poland and Hungary have enacted different policies to a similar challenge. The variables of leader image and strategic culture will be of specific importance for this thesis; an explanation for this choice will follow in the coming sections.

### 4.3.1. Leader image

Leader image is one of the most important variables for this thesis, as it involves the beliefs or image of individual decision-makers. It is the most important actor to focus on when seeking to explain foreign policy and grand strategic adjustment (Ripsman, Jeffery og Lobell 2016). This “image” is highly personalized, as it relies on the individual’s prior experiences and values, which is also why the beliefs are not easily altered. Once formed, they act as a cognitive filter that informs how leaders process information, what they direct their attention to, what they ignore, and how they understand signals (Ibid.). Thus, all incoming information passes through these cognitive filters and personalizes and biases the leader’s perception of the systemic stimuli. Many neoclassical realists have also used the perception intervening variable, which affects how leaders assess the balance of power and anticipate power trends.

Moreover, another scholar, Taliaferro, argues that leaders often continue to invest and even double down on failed foreign interventions to recoup past losses (Ibid.). Moreover, numerous studies have



indicated that some individuals are more likely to take risks, while others are risk-averse. Thus, to understand a state's foreign policy choices, it is helpful to investigate the character of its political leaders and the intervening variable that can influence the way they respond to systemic pressure (Ibid.). This is very important for the analysis of this thesis, as it aims to explain why there is a difference in the foreign policy response between Poland and Hungary to the Ukraine war. The determining factor may be explained via this intervening variable if one leader understands the systemic stimuli completely different from the other.

### 4.3.2. Strategic culture

The strategic culture of the state is another important variable in this thesis, as it can influence the way the state perceives and adapts systemic stimuli. This variable includes a set of inter-related beliefs, norms, and assumptions, which shapes the decision-makers, the public, and the societal elites (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). In comparison, the leader image variable is more diverse and personalized, whereas the strategic culture variable is more embedded in the state-society perception and functions as a collective way of thinking about suitable and unsuitable strategies for the state. Ideology is an important concept in this variable, as it can affect the state's attitude towards international affairs and willingness to use force and degrees of nationalism as important components of strategic culture (Ibid.).

Due to major historical events or foreign occupiers, the national strategic culture can be constructed and reconstructed over time. For instance, Western Germany's strategic culture changed dramatically after the defeat in WWII, its strategic culture was heavily militaristic before the war, but the loss completely restructured its strategic culture. This drastic change in strategic culture and the new antimilitarism norm in Germany have made it very difficult for its governments to adopt militaristic and assertive foreign policies (Ibid.). The strategic culture can also place severe constraints on the decision-making elite, which can prevent them from reorienting grand strategy to meet international imperatives and avoid self-defeating behavior (Ibid.). Moreover, in extreme cases, the strategic culture can prevent the state from responding fluidly to external challenges and opportunities, thus jeopardizing the state's primary security interests. In other words, the strategic culture can limit and shape national policy choices. This is of particular interest to this thesis, as the strategic culture might place constraints on the decision-makers, which may be the reason for Poland and Hungary's difference in foreign policy reaction to the Ukraine war.

### 4.3.3. State-society relations

State-society relations are the third factor of intervening variables, which is defined as the interaction between the central institutions of the state and various economic and social groups (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). A key concept in this variable is the degree of harmony between state and society. The degree of harmony determines the degree to which society defers to state leaders on foreign policy matters. The level of political and social cohesion within the state can, along with other factors, affect whether leaders have the power to extract, mobilize, and harness the state's power (Ibid.). A high degree of harmony means that the society supports the central administration and agrees with the state's foreign policy direction. A low degree of harmony means a lack of trust in the central administration from society and a lack of support for foreign policy. The low harmony can result in the state having to satisfy domestic interests rather than international ones, or even at the expense of international ones.

### 4.3.4. Domestic institutions

Domestic institutions is the final intervening variable and involve the state structure and domestic political institutions. This variable focus on the structure of the state's political institution, like checks and balances, to which degree power is concentrated, party systems, voting rules, the quality of the government, etc. All these areas will affect whether a state's leader can harness the state's power. Domestic institutions determine the leadership's scope of authority and to which degree the leader must consult or respect the wishes of societal interests, like the military or the business elite (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016).

The book (Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics 2016) argues that all the intervening variables above can impact systemic outcomes and structural change. However, because the scope of the dependent variable expands over time, one should expect the intervening variables to vary slightly in influence. It is argued that the *leader image* matters most in the short term. Because a quick decision is required, the leaders have the greatest impact on foreign policy decisions in a crisis. Furthermore, the strategic culture variable should influence both the short-term foreign policy and the long-term planning. During a crisis, or when there is a need for a quick decision, the national attitude towards, e.g., the use of force or other policy options may influence or constrain the choices of the national leader (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). Moreover, it is argued that the

last two categories, state-society relations and domestic institutions, are to have very little influence on short-term policy decisions but a significant impact on longer-term planning.

Therefore, since the analysis in this thesis is centered around the case study of the response by two states to a crisis in a relatively short period of time, this analysis will mainly focus on the first two intervening variables, as these are deemed more appropriate by the theory. To further explain why the leader image and strategic culture are the most important intervening variables for this analysis, the independent variables of clarity and strategic environment, as previously introduced, will help determine the choice. The table below, developed by the neoclassical realists Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, is a scheme of how the intervening variables should be conducted depending on the two independent variables. The purpose of this scheme, and why it is important to this thesis, is to determine which intervening variables are deemed most important to influence Poland and Hungary's foreign policy choices in relation to the war in Ukraine. The theory determines the intervening variables to vary in influence over time, therefore, the previously mentioned scholars made this scheme, in order to explain when specific variables are important in understanding the foreign policy responses. In this thesis' case study, this thesis determines the systemic clarity to be high, as it is an imminent threat i.e. Russia, who is targeting a sovereign state and therefore threatening the security situation in Europe. The nature of the strategic environment is deemed to be restrictive, as the states are aware that they are facing a clear threat, a short time horizon, and restricted choices. Consequently, there is no time for the intervening variables of state-society institutions and domestic institutions to affect policy. Instead, the theory suggests that leader image and strategic culture will be the most relevant intervening variables. This does, however, not deem that the two additional intervening variables are irrelevant in shaping states' response in a crisis like this, however, they are less likely to have an immediate impact on the short-term foreign policy choices.

**Table 4.1. Intervening Variable Clusters by the Degree of Systemic Clarity and the Nature of Strategic Environment**

		Degree of Systemic Clarity (High to Low)	
		High Clarity	Low Clarity
Nature of Strategic Environment (Restrictive to Permissive)	Restrictive Environment	<i>Leader images and Strategic culture</i>	<i>Leader images and Strategic culture</i>
	Permissive Environment	<i>Strategic culture, Domestic institutions, and State-society relations</i>	<i>Indeterminate—all four clusters could be relevant.</i>

(Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016)

Thus, by following these principles of when and how to go about the variable analysis in NCR, this thesis does not select its variables in an ad hoc manner, as the theory has taken criticism for doing. Instead, this thesis selects its variables in a way that makes them logically connected to the case study and thus makes the intervening variables connected to the independent and dependent variables in a scientifically argued manner.

#### 4.3.5. Criticism of Neoclassical realism

NCR has also received its share of criticism, which is important to include and consider. Stephen Walt, who has made important contributions to neorealism, criticizes NCR because it tends to incorporate domestic variables in an ad hoc manner (N. M. Ripsman 2017). However, in this chapter, this thesis has tried to circumvent this criticism by systematically categorizing the different variables and arguing why leader image and strategic culture are of specific importance in this case study. The variables have been categorized in a way that determines when each variable is of importance for foreign policy decisions, thus they are not selected in an ad hoc manner in this thesis. Furthermore, Walt adds that the theory has yet to identify when these variables have greater or lesser influence (Ibid.). However, this chapter has explained that the intervening variables can influence the dependent variable to different degrees over time. For instance, leader image will significantly influence the short term foreign policy decision-making in crises, which is why that variable has specific importance to this thesis.

A critique of NCR is also that it is comparatively inefficient. Because NCR focuses on specific events, it cannot explain recurring patterns, like why wars happen in general (Ripsman, Jeffery and

Lobell 2016). Another scholar, Benjamin Fordham, argues that it is impossible to separate international and domestic variables, as NCR attempts to do (Ibid.). He maintains that domestic interests are conditioned by the international system, as well as international threats and opportunities must be interpreted through the eyes of domestic interests. As with the other genres of realism, this thesis acknowledges the criticism of NCR.

Nevertheless, this thesis still finds the theory applicable to this case study. The thesis aims to apply the theory of NCR and the two intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture to explain the difference in foreign policy strategy between Poland and Hungary in a specific geopolitical crisis. Moreover, this thesis argues that NCR provides a better explanatory power than other realism genres because of its attention to the historical background and the factor of perception by way of the intervening variables, which is the central part of this analysis.

## 5. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodological framework of the thesis, as well as the underlying considerations throughout the development of the thesis.

### 5.1. The objective of the thesis

The objective of the thesis is to study the short-term foreign policy decisions of two specific states when they are responding to a specific crisis. The analysis will focus on the role of the two intervening variables, leader image and strategic culture, which is also explained in greater detail in the theory section. These variables in NCR are chosen since the relatively short time frame of the analyzed actions by the states reduces the impact of societal and institutional variables (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). To understand the leaders and strategic culture of the two states, the concepts from NCR have been coupled with qualitative document analysis of relevant government documents, historical documents, interviews, speeches, and scholarly articles to demonstrate how the intervening variables from NCR have influenced the policy decisions in Poland and Hungary and can explain why the countries reacted differently to the same international challenge.

### 5.2. Data collection

The research design of this thesis is, like any academic project, defined by the methods used to collect and analyze data. There are two types of data in academia, qualitative and quantitative data.

**Qualitative data:** *is empirical research where the data is not in the form of numbers. This type of data is also known as soft data.*” (Punch 2005). This type of data consists primarily of texts. This thesis will predominantly consist of qualitative data like speeches, interviews government documents and strategy papers, and other scholarly data.

The approach of this thesis will be a qualitative research approach. The reasoning behind this approach is inspired by the book *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* which states: “*Since neoclassical realism requires researchers to investigate, among other factors, the role of idiosyncratic state institutions and processes on policy choices, it lends itself to careful, qualitative*

*case studies, rather than large-N quantitative analysis*” (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). This quote suggests that to create the best possible analysis of individual state processes using the theory of NCR, one must conduct qualitative research and revise specific documents, as this analysis cannot be fulfilled with quantitative data or statistics. Therefore, one must delve deep into various sources from the individual governments to discover a pattern and figure out the leader image and strategic culture of the states, in order to reach a conclusion in the best and most reliable way for the thesis. The relevant qualitative data used to carry out the analysis in this thesis is explained below.

This thesis is placed in qualitative research, as the data in the thesis mainly consist of texts and other soft data. This is a deliberate choice as the best way for a neoclassical realist researcher to be certain that one understands why states acted as they did, is by way of primary sources. Thus, to collect data that can be used effectively in answering the problem statement, the data collection method of this thesis has been *desk research* rather than *field research*. “*Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork*” (Hague 2004). In other words, all the data analyzed in this thesis is created by others.

To examine why Poland and Hungary have reacted differently to the Ukraine war, the thesis will look at recent speeches and statements by PM Viktor Orban and PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Moreover, the thesis will examine other relevant statements and scholarly analyses of the two countries to determine the FPEs and examine the leader image in the two states. Additionally, the thesis will examine scholarly literature, documents produced by the governments, security plans, strategic policy documents, visions for the countries, etc. to examine the strategic culture correctly from both states.

### 5.3. Case study

According to the American Scholar Robert K. Yin, a case study is defined as “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon*” (Yin 2014). This thesis aims to explain why Poland and Hungary reacted differently to the current war in Ukraine. Thus, the specific research design in this thesis is a qualitative case study. The type of case study in this thesis is a comparative case study, as it examines two countries and why they differ in their foreign policy response. By comparing the countries and governments in the neoclassical realist framework, the thesis might be able to uncover why the response from the two countries, in this case, was different from each

other.

A case study is an often-used method in qualitative research, especially in IR studies which this thesis is a part of (Baskarada 2014). Because case studies can be used to describe, understand, and compare different aspects of a research problem in a specific subject, the case study research design method is deemed fruitful in this thesis, as the objective is to analyze, understand, and compare a research problem within a specific subject. The thesis will go in-depth with Poland and Hungary and shed light on different aspects of the case, such as historical context, foreign and security policy, leader image, and strategic culture of the states. While a plethora of countries could be examined in this case, e.g., Belarus and Poland, China and the US, or Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This thesis has specifically chosen to look at Poland and Hungary because it was puzzling that the two countries reacted so differently despite their many similarities and close cooperation in recent years.

Moreover, a case study is able to challenge existing theories and contribute with new perspectives and information on a specific subject, thereby creating new directions for further research in the future (Ibid.).

## 5.4. Document Analysis Method

The NCR variables will be analyzed via document analysis of the relevant data gathered for this thesis. Document analysis is a social research method and is an effective and efficient way of gathering data. This type of method is often used to strengthen research in many ways. It can, for instance, provide extensive background information and broad coverage of data which can help contextualize the research conducted within a specific subject (Bowen 2009). The overall concept of document analysis is the process of evaluating documents to produce empirical knowledge and develop an understanding (Bowen 2009). The researcher must maintain a high level of objectivity and sensitivity for the document analysis to be credible and valid. For this reason, it is also important to evaluate the purpose of the document, such as the target audience.

Via document analysis, one can study a plethora of texts; however, this thesis will focus on written texts. According to various scholars, a major issue when doing document analysis is the issue of bias (Bowen 2009). The issue of bias is important to consider for both the producer of the document and the researcher. It is a fact that in social science, the problems of human subjectivity and bias



exist. The bias factor carries a risk that it can complicate the results and analytical conclusions in the thesis. Therefore, to handle the issue of bias in the best way possible, it is paramount to balance the subjectivity in the research by critically reviewing the sources used. Therefore, the thesis has strived to primarily review original documents from the states like national security strategies and foreign policy strategy documents issued by the government in Poland and Hungary. However, the government documents might also include ideological tendencies as the ruling party is responsible for the final version of these. This is another reason the researcher must maintain a high level of objectivity for the document analysis to be credible.

The data used for document analysis must be possible to examine and understand with the purpose of gaining and developing empirical knowledge. By using document analysis as a research method, this thesis has identified several documents which are relevant to this case study. The analyzed documents in this thesis include national security documents and foreign policy strategies from Poland and Hungary, speeches and comments from Viktor Orban and Jaroslaw Kaczynski, and scholarly literature about the two countries and their respective history. The careful analysis of the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture from NCR has provided the thesis with guidance on what documents were relevant for this specific research. Meaning that the selected data is based on what the theory can explain. The national security and foreign policy documents have been chosen as they demonstrate the strategic culture of the states and can help identify the country's foreign policy strategy, and thus may help explain the foreign policy choices in this specific case study. Furthermore, the thesis has chosen to include speeches and comments from the countries' FPEs, as they provide an understanding of the leaders' perception and understanding of the situation, thus providing a perspective on the situation and an ability to examine how these perceptions have influenced the foreign policy choices.

## 5.5. Structure of the analysis

One of the first steps to be aware of from a neoclassical realist perspective when conducting this type of research is the definition of actors. Identifying the important actors is important because many societal actors may express views; however, these views may not represent the key decision maker's views, which is the only important thing to know, as they are responsible for the foreign policy decision-making. The individuals responsible for making the foreign policy choices will be

referred to as “FPE” and could be the head of government, minister of foreign affairs, defense minister, etc. It can be anyone who is determined to have a significant influence on foreign policy choices. Thus, the FPE will be important in analyzing the leader image intervening variable. It is important to distinguish the FPE from the rest of the government that does not play a central role in foreign affairs. The FPE might be limited to just one individual, such as the President. For instance, a foreign affairs minister might participate in making foreign policy while the actual decision-making is in the President’s hands. To determine the FPE, this thesis will consult scholarly literature on foreign policymaking in the states and statements from ministers of the government.

This thesis focus on the Hungarian PM, Viktor Orban, as the FPE in Hungary, and the leader of PiS, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, as the FPE in Poland. This thesis does not deny the possibility that other institutions or individuals may matter during this crisis of war, but in this case, the two individuals were deemed the prime decision-makers based on the empirical evidence and subsequent analysis conducted in the thesis, which is explained in the analysis section.

After the initial analysis of determining the FPE, the leader image analysis will continue with an examination of the FPE’s personal beliefs, values, and visions for the foreign policy strategy in the country. This will be done mainly via examining speeches, comments, and scholarly literature about the FPEs and analyzing the individuals’ beliefs based on that data. Moreover, this part of the analysis will be carried out via speeches, interviews, and relevant scholarly literature, which will help portray the leaders and how they interpret the systemic stimuli presented by the international system and how their beliefs and values have influenced the country’s foreign policy decisions.

Following the analysis of the leader image will be an analysis of the strategic culture of the two countries. To determine the strategic culture of each state, the necessary elements to be analyzed are its geographic setting or influences, the values of society, the historical evolution of the state, and finally, significant shocks that may have changed the state’s evolutionary pattern. When all these elements are brought together it will provide an understanding of what the state’s strategic culture is (Greathouse 2010). The geographic influence is understood as the physical position of the state in the international system. The second element regarding the values of society is represented by the major documents that the state has created on security and politics. The third element regarding the historical evolution will be based on an analysis of historical events and how the state has handled

crises before. This will also allow the thesis to understand the development of the strategic culture of both Poland and Hungary. The last component of the strategic culture analysis is the significant shock that causes a major change in the state's strategic culture. A significant shock can create the option for radical change in a state's strategic culture and may completely alter the state's values (Ibid.). These four components will undoubtedly sometimes overlap in the analysis; however, according to scholars, these components are important to understand a state's strategic culture and how it acts within the international system (Greathouse 2010). By understanding how a state views itself in the international system and the constraints the state has placed on itself, one will be better equipped to understand why the state acts as it does in certain situations, which is the main aim of this thesis.

This part of the analysis will be carried out via national foreign and security policy documents, statements from important actors, and scholarly literature to better understand the history of the states under observation. The strategic culture analysis will help this thesis determine the collective assumptions and expectations that constrain a state's behavior by defining what is acceptable and unacceptable strategies and might therefore help determine why Poland and Hungary reacted in the way they did to this specific international challenge of the war in Ukraine.

## 5.6. Research Limitations

This section will cover some of the limitations of the overall research of the thesis. As mentioned in the document analysis method section, there are issues of human subjectivity in social science studies. Interpretation and subjectivity in social science can influence the research and make it hard to measure phenomena objectively. Therefore, this thesis must critically review the primary and secondary sources used in the analysis to obtain the most objective results possible.

To gain a complete grasp of the government and decision-making process in both states, it is vital to access government documents, speeches, and relevant articles. However, even though one might have access to these relevant texts, it is still difficult to fully know if the decision-making process and the negotiations truly happen in the way described. Because we don't have access to the actual talks behind the foreign policy decisions that the FPEs make, one can only base the conclusions on accessible material that support various claims. Additionally, it is important to consider the language limitations. There is a possibility of potential bias because the thesis has only included data in English. This means that the data is more likely to come from Western sources. The research does not possess the skill to read and interpret data in either Polish or Hungarian, which could mean

that the completely objective picture is interfered with, as the speeches etc., are translated into non-original language.

This indicates that this type of research cannot achieve absolute certainty. This type of research cannot conclusively prove or disprove the broader theoretical claims investigated; however, what this type of research can do is offer strong confirming or disconfirming evidence. Because of the perceived influence of subjectivity in social science, this type of research should not argue in terms of certainty but rather attempt to reach a plausible conclusion and arguments consisting of evidence (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016).

The thesis also has its limitations regarding the scope of the case study. The focus of the case study is on the two national states of Poland and Hungary and their foreign policy decision and reaction to the war in Ukraine. The case could also have included focusing more on the decision from an EU or NATO standpoint.

Moreover, because the case is an ongoing matter, the situation in the world, and in Poland and Hungary, might change suddenly which could alter the outcome of the analysis completely. However, events of this significance have not happened while writing the thesis.

## 6. Analysis

The analysis in the thesis will seek to analyze the two intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture from NCR and examine whether the reason Poland and Hungary reacted differently to the crisis in Ukraine can be explained by the difference in leader image and strategic culture of the states. The analysis is divided into two main sections with each country and four smaller sections with each intervening variable. Additionally, a sub conclusion will follow the analysis of each country, where the main findings of each analysis will be consolidated.

### 6.1 Strategic environment and clarity

The following section will be a shorter introductory analysis to provide a starting point for the analysis of the intervening variables. It will explain, via the theory of NCR, why the intervening variables are important to study in this case and how the concepts of clarity and strategic environment influence this notion.

This thesis argues that the current international system leans toward a multipolar system where the US no longer dominates. However, the US and Russia are still by far regarded as the strongest military states. In Europe, there are two easily identified blocks in the present system: the EU and NATO on one side and Russia, with Belarus as its closest ally, on the other side. Scholars argue that the current war in Ukraine has accelerated the transition to a multipolar world (Chausovsky 2022). This war's economic reach and geopolitical impact go far beyond Ukraine (Ibid). Because many powers can affect this war, such as Turkey, India, and China, this shows the level of interconnectedness of the current global system, meaning an increasingly multipolar system. However, as argued by the neoclassical realists, it may take several years before being able to conclusively determine the international system in a specific period (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016).

As argued in the theory section, the systemic variable of clarity is important to NCR as it tells something about the clarity of signals that the international system presents to the states. According to the systemic variable of clarity, Russia's aggression can be characterized as a clear threat, as it has expressed hostility and harmed Ukraine's territorial integrity. Moreover, Russia can be described as an imminent threat as it has threatened other states, like Finland and the Baltics, which

gives them the expectation that they could be invaded in short order, too (Henley 2022). The policy response from most European countries was to condemn the Russian aggression, impose tough sanctions, and provide military assistance in one way or another to Ukraine (EC 2022). This united policy response indicates a high level of clarity which was able to shape the states' response. Another important systemic variable of NCR is the strategic environment. In this case, the strategic environment is deemed restrictive, as explained in the theory section, because of the magnitude of the threat that Europe is facing because of the aggression from Russia.

Europe faces an imminent threat due to the Russian aggression and the short time horizon. That indicates a high level of clarity, and the variance in policy response should be low according to the theory. Poland did react in the same way as its NATO and EU allies with strong condemnation, calling for tough sanctions, and has provided military assistance. Conversely, although it has condemned the Russian aggression, Hungary has refused to provide military assistance. It has been questioning the need to impose tough sanctions on Russia, thereby going against the policy response of its NATO and EU allies. This response goes against how the theory of NCR expects the policy response to be in a case like this. However, the theory also argues that the international system is rarely crystal clear, and states often face some degree of uncertainty in their calculations of balance of power (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). According to NCR, this uncertainty is often caused by the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture. It is argued that even with perfect clarity, some states might still experience a low degree of clarity because of the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture that NCR identifies (Ibid.). Therefore, the subsequent main analysis of this thesis will consist of an in-depth analysis of the two intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture, as these variables may be able to explain why Hungary and Poland reacted differently to the War in Ukraine.

## 6.2. Leader Image Hungary

This section analyzes the first intervening variable concerning the FPE's perception of systemic stimuli. A key first step to conducting empirical research from a neoclassical realist perspective is to identify the FPE of the state relevant to the case study. While societal actors within a state may express many views, these views may not represent the key decision-makers' beliefs or rationale for policy decisions (Ripsman, Jeffery, Lobell 2016). The individual bias of the FPEs will provide the thesis with subjective views on how to respond to events in the international system, and their power as decision-makers grants them a personal impact on how the states under observation react to international events.

Since 2018, observers of Hungarian politics have spoken of an "Orban era," which indicates the level of power the current PM of Hungary has (Atila Agh 2020). Until 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for coordinating EU affairs and policies. However, this responsibility shifted to the PM's Office in 2018 by Government Resolution 94/2018 (V.22.), which further indicates the centralization of power in Hungary (Tatar 2020). The centralization of power in Hungary provides the PM with the ability to perform radical and quick decisions. Moreover, if the PM cannot decide on a specific policy, this issue will remain undecided until he is available (Atila Agh 2020). Thus, making Orban the absolute FPE. According to the 2020 Country Report for Hungary, the formal mechanism in Hungarian politics only serves to legalize and implement improvised and hastily decisions made by the PM (Atila Agh 2020). Those ministers who do not comply with the direction of the party or in line with the PM will lose their position. Based on these findings, the most important FPE in Hungary is deemed to be PM Viktor Orban.

### 6.2.1 Viktor Orban

To analyze the leader image and the core values, beliefs, etc. of PM Viktor Orban, and the effect it can have on the perception of the incoming systemic stimuli, in this case, the thesis will examine various speeches, scholarly literature, and comments from and about Orban.

The political story of Viktor Orban started in 1989 when Orban gave a rousing speech on Heroes' Square in Budapest when the communist regime was collapsing. In the first following free election, Orban and his party won 22 seats in parliament. Since 1990 Orban has transformed from a liberal

politician to a national conservative and in recent years a radical right-wing populist, (Hutt 2022). Orbán has displayed a very flexible nature in his political life, which has allowed him to build up his own personal power. His first period in government was from 1998 to 2002 when he was the youngest head of government in Europe. According to Daniel Hegedüs, who is a political analyst, his politics in that period were mainly in compliance with liberal democratic principles (Ibid.). That changed after the 2002 election when Orbán and his party Fidesz lost power. Fidesz drifted further towards the political right after that loss. Orbán began to rally against the Treaty of Trianon, which was evident in 2014, for instance, when Orbán claimed territorial autonomy for Transcarpathia, a Western Ukraine region with a substantial ethnic Hungarian minority (Hopkins 2020). Moreover, in a speech focusing on the Treaty of Trianon, Orbán said that the West raped the thousand-year-old borders and history of Central Europe and reiterated that Hungary will never forget that the West did this (Hungary Today 2020). Many Hungarians view the Treaty of Trianon as a national tragedy, and Orbán has managed to tap into this mutual feeling in Hungary by focusing a lot on the ethnic minority in the neighboring countries. The policy on the Treaty of Trianon has been an important strategic pillar since Orbán came to power in 2010. Some of the first policies Orbán made were granting dual citizenship to hundreds of thousands of ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries, and he made the anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon a national holiday (Sadecki 2020). In this way, Viktor Orbán has created a coherent national ideology and sense of unity for a large part of Hungarian society by using his populist and strong nationalist tactics.

Another way Orbán has used his nationalist ideology and beliefs is evident in his feud with the EU. Orbán has been on a collision course with the EU almost since his inauguration in 2010. In 2012, his Eurosceptic stance became particularly evident in a speech where he associated Hungary's "freedom fight" against the EU with the fight against the Hapsburg Empire in 1848 and the Soviets in 1956 (Wachs 2014). Moreover, like Poland, Hungary is also involved in an ongoing Article 7 case regarding the rule of law against the EU, which does not improve the relationship. Orbán argues that the EU is interfering with the sovereignty of Hungary by having this rule of law case built against them. Thus, he characterizes the fight against the EU as a "freedom fight," as Orbán tries to "liberate" Hungary by only pursuing Hungarian interests without blindly following the EU. In 2015, Orbán again displayed his nationalistic strategy with anti-migration rhetoric during the refugee crisis. Orbán said that migrants would threaten Hungary's sovereignty and cultural identity, and thus Orbán rejected the EU migrant quotas (Macdowall 2016). By constantly being skeptical



about the EU and the West, Orbán has isolated himself and Hungary more and more during the past decade. He is only concerned with the national interests of Hungary, and his strategy has that sole purpose, no matter how many enemies he makes along the way. The Hungarian national interests are Orbán's primary driving force in his foreign policy strategy. Thus, Orbán does not care about whom he is negotiating with, which is also why he pursued an "Eastern Opening" policy.

In 2014, Orbán made a speech in which he demonstrated his desire to create an "illiberal democracy" and further distanced himself from the Western way of thinking by praising the big Eastern powers:

*" the most popular topic in thinking is trying to understand how systems that are not Western, not liberal, not liberal democracies, and perhaps not even democracies, can nevertheless make their nations successful. The stars of international analyst today are Singapore, China, India, Russia and Turkey. (...) while breaking with the dogmas and ideologies that have been adopted by the West and keeping ourselves independent from them, we are trying to find the form of community organisation, the new Hungarian state, which is capable of making our community competitive in the great global race for decades to come "* (Orbán 2014).

These quotes from the Balázs Tuskó speech in 2014 portray the beliefs and ideology Orbán wants to employ in Hungary. It sends a clear message that he wants to deviate from the West and gain a closer relationship with the bigger states in the East instead. The foreign policy evident in this speech was the "Eastern Opening," where Hungary started to form closer ties with Eastern powers like Russia and China. This quote above perfectly summarizes the belief that Viktor Orbán has. He believes that the future of world dominance and economic prosperity lies in the East, while the West is in decline. This belief has been evident in Hungary's trade and investments policy with the countries to the east, primarily China and Russia. For instance, Orbán made a deal with China that served as the flagship of the new economic relationship between the two, a 20-year €1.5 bn Chinese loan to construct a railway between Budapest and Belgrade. Since Orbán came into power in 2010, China has invested more in Hungary than any other country in the region (Aron 2022). The relationship with Russia was a major priority early for Orbán as he wanted to secure cheap energy supplies. Moreover, Orbán made deals with Russia on gas and nuclear power. These relationships

are key to Orbán's strategy as he has aimed to mobilize his base with an anti-Western and anti-EU sentiment (Ibid).

In 2010, Orbán started to meet bilaterally with Russian President Putin more often than any other European leader (Racz 2021). Orbán has repeatedly praised Putin as a leader, and the two have held several meetings together and formed a good relationship between the two countries (Ibid.). This also suggests that Orbán wants to bring the Hungarian orientation more towards Russia than the EU, which is also exemplified by his vision of an "illiberal democracy" or illiberal state concept. However, forming a close relationship with Russia and Putin does not necessarily mean that Orbán sympathizes with the Russian system or President, other than the possibility to stay in power for decades. When examining the strategy and beliefs of Orbán, the main reason for his close relationship with Putin has always been an attempt to widen the political connections for Hungary, strengthen its international position while pursuing national interests, and hope for economic benefits. However, all these measures were taken by Orbán without considering the moral aspect and without considering how the West would feel about it. A former Hungarian diplomat had this to say about the foreign policy strategy that Orbán has displayed:

*"In diplomacy, where a single step could trigger a thousand consequences, the essence of our job is to anticipate all of them. An opportunity that seems tempting at first glance could easily destroy decades-long relationships, inflicting long-term damage. This is something they will never understand"* (Panyi 2015). The "they" in this quote refers to Orbán and his Minister of foreign affairs Peter Szijjarto.

This notion is particularly interesting as this could be the main reason that Hungary has acted as it has done in its foreign policy decisions regarding the crisis in Ukraine. For instance, many other Western countries, including Germany, has executed investments and policy toward the East in the past, similar to the Hungarian foreign policy. However, the other Western countries have always insisted on their democratic and moral values, which is where Hungary and Orbán seem to lack insight.

The tunnel-vision-like focus on national interests from Orbán was also clearly depicted as he condemned the sanctions against Russia in 2014 concerning the annexation of Crimea (Kucharczyk 2015). He argued these sanctions as being "against Hungarian national interests," thereby clearly showing that moral and democratic values are subordinate to Hungarian national interests according

to Orban's beliefs. This sense of Orban bringing Hungary closer to Russia raised some concern among the other European states, especially since the Crimea annexation in 2014 (Hegedus 2016).

In an interview with the media Politico in 2015, Orban shared some of his thoughts on his relationship with Putin and why Hungary needs a good relationship with Russia. In the interview, Orban argues that Putin is someone he can cooperate with and added that he would not deny if he had a good relationship with Putin just because he does not like to follow "the request of the Western approaches" (Kaminski 2015). This quote also reiterates the "national freedom fight against the EU" agenda, which Orban's rhetoric is often categorized as (Hegedus 2016). Later in the interview, Orban explains what Hungary gains by having a good relationship with Russia. Orban argues that security and energy sovereignty is two major reasons for cooperating with Russia (Kaminski 2015). Because of the cooperation, Hungary is now able to get gas very cheap from Russia, and Orban also emphasized the importance of not letting Russia buy a too large stake in the Hungarian oil company MOL, which was an important step for the energy sovereignty. Orban argues that generally, his only focus is the interests of Hungary, and therefore he does not care about ideology when it comes to whom he is negotiating with (Ibid.). Orban believes that Hungary cannot just depend on one major power in the international system. He argues that Hungary is not big enough to maintain its sovereignty if the relationship between big powers is not properly balanced. Hungary will cooperate with anyone to not depend on anyone.

In connection to the statements made in the 2015 interview with Politico, Orban held a speech in 2017 at the Lamafalussy conference in which he argued that the world had entered a new stage where countries, like Hungary, should be able to pursue their own path in foreign relations, which may be considered unreasonable to the rest of the EU:

*" the era of multilateralism is at an end, and the era of bilateral relations is upon us. For us this is good news, because it is an unnatural state of affairs when, influenced by external pressure, one dare not state that one's own country comes first when governing, making decisions, or considering what the central bank should do. This unnatural state of affairs is at an end, and we have been given permission, if you like, from the world's highest secular position, that we, too, can place our own interests first. This is a great thing, it is a great freedom and a great gift" (Orban 2017).*

Hungary's FPD from 2011 argued that Hungary intends to conduct a "value-based" foreign policy (M. o. Hungary 2011). Meaning that its policy will be a function of the values that Hungary associates itself with, both domestic and globally. However, in 2020 Orban commented on this "value-based" foreign policy strategy, saying that "a solely value-based foreign policy will necessarily lead to a policy unable to broker or compromise" (Today 2020). Orban defended this statement by arguing that Hungary should pursue its national interests primarily. Moreover, Orban said that when Hungary negotiates with Turkey or other powers in Asia, it does not mean that the country gives up its principles but that it is just making foreign policy (Ibid.). Thus, Orban is rejecting the value-based foreign policy strategy specified in the national document in this quote. It can be argued that Orban is trying to install a new form of value-based approach, in which Hungary only pursues its national interest solely based on the values of Orban as the Lamafalussy quote indicates.

When taking these comments into account, it seems like Orban and the leader image variable is a determining factor in Hungarian foreign policy strategy, directly affecting the foreign policy response to the Ukraine war.

When looking at Orban's quotes from the Bale Tusnad speech in 2014 and the Lamafalussy speech in 2017, it becomes possible to identify Orban's strategic thinking and assessment of the international system and the current geopolitical situation. Orban is convinced that the US is trending downwards as a global power and that the powers to the east are taking over. He argues that the current geopolitical situation provides an excellent opportunity for Hungary. These beliefs have made Orban pursue a closer relationship with the big powers in the East. Hungary's relatively close relationship with Russia, compared to the other EU states, is now becoming a problem for Orban because of the war in Ukraine.

Because of the close relationship that Orban has with Putin and Russia has with Hungary, especially in terms of trade, Orban has not been able to see the strategic environment as restrictive as the other European states and has not been able to see the current geopolitical situation with perfect clarity. As explained, Orban's form of value-based foreign policy strategy does not take the moral or democratic values into account; it solely relies on the national interests of Hungary. These national interests would be best fulfilled if Hungary maintains a close relationship with Russia. This is partly because of the gas deal, which provides Hungary with cheap gas. And it is partly because of the

foreign policy strategy that Orbán and Fidesz have pursued since 2010, which is a closer relationship with the East. If that would all be for nothing now, it would be a major failure for Orbán. Hence, Orbán did not see his options as limited as the other European countries' leaders. This resulted in various comments made by Orbán, which have been laid out in the case background section, which have angered the rest of the EU, especially Poland. However, Hungary has agreed to the sanctions proposed by the EU on Russia. Still, Orbán does not want to impose sanctions on energy, as this will cause too much damage to the Hungarian interests. Orbán has also said that Hungary will not provide military assistance either. Orbán has used historical factors to explain this: *“There are some countries that feel truly threatened, feeling that their security is at risk every single day. Such countries include the Baltic states and Poland. They are justified in feeling so both for both historical and geographical reasons. At the same time, it is completely clear that Hungary feels no such a threat”* (Adam 2022). In this quote, Orbán is clearly trying to balance between the East and the West, by being understanding of the position of Poland, but at the same time mentioning that Hungary does not see Russia as a threat. Since 2010, Orbán has done a remarkable job of balancing against bigger powers to fulfill the interests of Hungary. However, in a crisis like the current Ukraine war, with this kind of strategic environment, the balancing act seems unlikely to prevail. By continuing such an approach, Orbán is risking the reputation on both sides and, ultimately, the security of Hungary. Since Orbán, as illustrated by the quotes, believes that the world has entered a new stage where power trends favor the states who cooperate with everyone and that there is no external pressure, he has not been able to see the current geopolitical situation with perfect clarity. Thus, it can be argued that the foreign policy actions made by Hungary in this crisis are to be explained to some extent via the intervening variable of leader image as described by NCR.

Based on this analysis section, it can be argued that the leader image variable can be a driving force behind the perception of what Hungary's foreign policy priorities are. The next chapter will focus on the strategic culture of Hungary.

## 6.3. Strategic Culture Hungary

### 6.3.1 Geographic setting and influence

Hungary is placed in the CEE region and shares a border with seven countries and is geographically the 17<sup>th</sup> largest country in Europe. In terms of population, Hungary is the 16<sup>th</sup> biggest country in Europe. Regarding GDP, Hungary was placed 21st in 2021, and per capita, Hungary only ranks 27<sup>th</sup> (Tradingeconomics 2021). Thus, indicating Hungary as a small power in the international system. Moreover, Hungary enjoys membership in NATO and EU because previous experience has shown that exerting influence, even in geographically close regions, through political or economic soft power tools, has strong limits for Hungary (Biehl 2013). Thus, the national interests of Hungary are best channeled through international institutions like the EU. This self-understanding of the country's capabilities can be labeled a small-state approach (Ibid.). However, Hungary is getting worldwide attention for its foreign policy strategy, which shows that Hungarian foreign policy has a greater influence than its population and economic power would suggest (Moldicz 2021).

In Hungary's FPD from 2011, It is described that Hungary's interests and aspirations for the CEE region derive from a multi-layered foreign policy identity that is founded on values and structured in a geographical context (Hungary 2011). In other words, it is explained that the geographical position of Hungary has an extensive impact on its foreign policy identity. The aim for Hungary is described in the document as being to strengthen European cohesion by helping the region attain the values and living standards of Western Europe (Hungary 2011). In the FPD, there is also an outline of the foreign policy regarding the neighboring countries of Hungary. Hungary describes that it is desirable to form bilateral ties that enhance economic cooperation and harmonization. However, the main part of the section is devoted to the protection of the Hungarian minority living in the neighboring countries.

In contrast to Poland, the Eastern European region only plays a minimal role in Hungarian foreign policy strategy (Tulmets 2012). Hungary has no real connection to the Eastern Neighborhood or a clear foreign policy agenda like Poland. There is no actual historical motivation towards the Eastern Europe region, like in Poland's case. For Hungary, these ties are mainly with the Balkan region. The main reasons are historical and geographical. Neither the Kingdom of Hungary nor the Austro-Hungarian Empire had any clear visions for the Eastern region. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Hapsburg

Empire, the Balkans were the primary attention in foreign policy (Ibid). In this aspect, the Hungarian case is much different from that of the Polish case regarding its foreign policy toward the East and the historical and identity-based connection to the region.

Unlike Poland, Hungary seems not to have any real solidarity with the region. However, after the EU accession in 2004, Hungary intensified its activities in the Eastern region, as the accession provided Hungary with an opportunity to become a regional power and policymaker. The 2004 strategic document mentions the opportunity for the EU's Eastern Neighborhood policy to play an active role in favor of the Hungarian national interests (R. o. Hungary 2004). Moreover, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Hungary, Ferenc Somogyi, argued in an interview that the main pillars of Hungarian foreign policy had been altered by the EU accession, especially regarding the strategy for the neighboring countries of Hungary. However, the focus on protecting the minority abroad remained a top priority, as Somogyi explained: *"These three foreign policy tools may provide us with good chances for pursuing our political interests and economic goals and also for realizing our efforts aimed at improving the situation of the Hungarian minority communities"* (Tulmets 2012). Somogyi is here proving that the overall objective of the Hungarian foreign policy strategy seems to be to protect the Hungarian minority abroad.

One of the most critical geographical points for Hungary's foreign policy strategy is the Carpathian Basin. The Carpathian Basin is a cultural, historical, geographical, and ecological reference point for Hungary (G. o. Hungary 2021). It served as a key tool for Hungarian territorial claims after 1920 (Balogh 2021). The Hungarian people are believed to have moved to the Carpathian Basin around the year 895, and approximately 100 years after, King Stephen founded the state of Hungary (Ibid.) So, since the origin story for Hungary is in the Carpathian Basin, it is of crucial importance to the concept of Hungarian geographic thought (Ibid.). In 1541 the country split into three parts: the Hungarian Kingdom, the Hapsburg dominion, and the Turkish dominion (Ibid.). In 1848, the Hungarians tried to remove the boundaries of the Hapsburg dominion, and in 1867 an agreement was made, and the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy was born (Ibid.). During the first World War, Hungary was allied with Germany and Austria, and hundreds of Hungarian troops died in the name of a foreign interest. After losing the war, the Allies forced Hungary to sign the Treaty of Trianon, in which Hungary lost great amounts of land, and a country that used to be 20 million people was now only eight million people, which is the territorial area of Hungary we have today. Since the

treaty of Trianon, one major focus of Hungarian foreign policy has been protecting the rights of the ethnic Hungarian minority living in the neighboring countries, especially those living in Ukraine in the Transcarpathian region (G. o. Hungary 2021).

### 6.3.2. The values of society

In 2022, Hungary adopted a new NSS document describing Hungary's fundamental values. Hungary generally perceives itself as a pacifist nation; this notion is particularly evident in the document. It is explained that Hungary does not regard any country as its enemy and aims to settle arguments and disputes peacefully through international organizations (G. o. Hungary 2021). The threat perception in Hungarian society is primarily non-military. Instead, it focuses on internal existential issues like employment, social welfare, and public safety. Hungary has an adaptive and pacifist foreign policy orientation, which implies strong limitations on the use of military force and risk-limiting behavior on the international scene. In other words, the strategic culture of Hungary can be categorized as a risk-averse behavior that seeks to avoid conflicts that could result in casualties. This pacifist strategy is also easily detectable when looking at Hungary's role in international military operations, where national caveats rule out the possibility of Hungarian troops engaging in combat activity, as the country believes in avoiding casualties. Thus, the operations Hungarian deployed forces are carrying out rely on positive effects on the country's security like humanitarian needs (Budai 2021).

One of the main pillars in Hungarian foreign policy since the Orban-led administration took office in 2010 has been building multilateral ties with great economic powers to boost development. In 2011, Hungary adopted a foreign policy strategy that serves as a fundamental document in guiding foreign policy activities. The document explains the Hungarian foreign policy as "value-based," which means that the goals and interests are exclusively defined by the values Hungary openly and publicly associates itself with (M. o. Hungary 2011). One of Hungary's most important national basic values is described as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Hungary. Hungary's sovereignty and territorial integrity is protected via the strategy of membership in the EU and NATO. The FPD states explicitly that membership in NATO and the EU enhances the country's ability to advance national interests and allows for it to meet eventual security threats and challenges more efficiently. The membership in both NATO and the EU also has support from the majority of the Hungarian public, and the security strategy document deems Hungary to regard



NATO as the cornerstone of its security (G. o. Hungary 2021). However, the foreign policy strategy of trade and building ties with great economic powers in a Hungarians-first kind of way has brought about a balancing act for Hungarian foreign policy, as it often receives harsh criticism from its Western allies. The foreign policy towards non-European great powers has been amplified by the government and especially Viktor Orban's rhetoric, as displayed in the leader image section, which shows a shift in global relations in favor of non-Western non-democratic countries and a belief in the Hungarian society that these ties will be in the best interests of Hungary.

The role of Russia in Hungarian foreign policy strategy has always been not to alienate Russia too much, which is also evident in the current government's foreign policy and the "Eastern Opening" policy or the term "global opening," which is used in the 2011 FPD. This "opening" policy is a desire from Hungary to develop economic relations with the non-Western world, thus counterbalancing Hungary's economic ties with the West (M. o. Hungary 2011). The specific term "Eastern Opening" stems from Viktor Orban and his government, who advocated for a new approach to Hungary's external economic relations in a speech in 2010 (Orban 2010). One of the most important countries Hungary wanted to develop economic relations with was Russia. For instance, Hungary signed an agreement with Russia to extend its only nuclear power plant. According to this deal, the reactors will be built almost entirely on Russian credit, meaning Hungary will be indebted to Russia until around 2050 (Végh 2015).

Furthermore, Hungary depends on Russia in terms of energy where 95 percent of its natural gas in 2016 and 50-75 percent of its petroleum oil imports were from Russia (Tarrossy & Voros 2020). Because of the relatively heavy dependence on Russia, especially in terms of energy, Hungary was not thrilled with sanctioning Russia both in 2014 and now in 2022, arguing that the sanctions would harm the EU member states' economies. Hungary has voted in favor of the current sanctions anyway but has remained determined not to allow sanctions on Russian energy (Végh 2015). Moreover, the current Minister of foreign affairs, Peter Szijjarto, stated in an interview that Hungary does not consider Russia a direct threat to its territory (Hungarytoday 2021). So, in this regard, the perception of Russia is clearly different from that of Poland.

Additionally, in the interview about Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Szijjarto quickly shifts attention towards the Hungarian minority in the country, as the major concern in Hungary, by stating that Hungary cannot accept Russian presence in Ukraine as an excuse for the violation of

Hungarian minority rights (Ibid). Clearly, Hungary is more concerned with the Hungarian minority than anything else. The previous quote also clarifies that the protection of the Hungarian minority, even in times of attack on a sovereign state, is Hungary's most important foreign policy matter.

The public opinion on Russia in Hungary is that Russia should not be too involved in Hungary and that Hungary's interests are better served by membership in Western organizations like the EU and NATO (institute 2017). The experiences of the last two centuries with Russia have left a scar on the memory which cannot be forgotten. Historical events like Russia's repression of the revolution in 1848, the Soviet Union's repression of the revolution in 1956, and the overall Russian military presence in Hungary from 1945 to 1991. However, Hungary does still not consider Russia a threat to its security. Instead, Hungary believes Russia to be a vital ally because of its size and status as a global power (M. o. Hungary 2011). The perception of Russia as positive, non-threatening, and important to Hungary can be traced back to 2010, according to scholars, when Orban made his first visit to Moscow (Hegedus 2016). The "Eastern Opening" policy strategy created by the current Hungarian government has been vital in altering the strategic culture in Hungary regarding the perception of Russia (Ibid.).

Since 2010 there has been a re-founding of the relationship between the two countries. Russia is seen as a potential provider of economic benefits connected to energy and industrial cooperation in Hungarian foreign policy (M. o. Hungary 2011). Since the end of the Cold War, particularly the last decade, the public perception of Russia in Hungary has changed drastically. In 2014 a quarter of Hungarians said that Hungary should maintain a closer relationship with Russia than with the US; in 2018, that number had risen to a third of Hungarians (Kreko 2018). One of the main reasons for this development in Hungary is the political landscape, where the government gradually has argued for closer economic cooperation with Russia (Ibid.). ELTE university also conducted a study, confirming that most people in Hungary support a further deepening of the economic and cultural relationship with Russia. Despite the negative historical ties with Russia, Hungarians only regard Western countries marginally better than Russia (Ibid). Because of the level of expected propaganda in Hungary, it might not be valid to look at these polls on public opinion of Russia, since these could have been tampered with to fit the narrative of close cooperation and admiration between the two countries.

Generally, Hungary seems to adopt a far more positive position regarding Russia than Poland and

any EU country. This is especially true when focusing on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The main reason seems to be Hungary's foreign policy strategy after 2010 regarding the "Eastern Opening." Another reason appears to be the ethnic Hungarian minority living in Ukraine and that Ukraine is generally one of the least favored countries by Hungary. This claim will be analyzed in the historical evolution section.

### 6.3.3. Historical evolution of the state

Hungarians have constantly struggled to find their own identity throughout history because of being under the control of other stronger powers such as the Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire, and the Soviet Union.

Hungary had to build relations with the other newly independent states after the fall of the Soviet Union (Budai 2021). Ensuring the stability of Ukraine has been a top priority in Hungarian foreign policy since the fall of the Soviet Union. The reasons were partly because Hungary wanted to ensure a peaceful political transition to democracy in Ukraine, but most importantly for Hungary was to ensure the protection of the ethnic Hungarian minority living in Ukraine. The agreement on mutual protection of the minority was signed in 1991 when Ukraine still belonged to the Soviet Union (Tulmets 2012). The other neighboring countries to the east were not mentioned a lot in the document, nor had Hungary any specific policy regarding the other Eastern European countries, Thus, indicating that Hungarian foreign policy mainly focused on the well-being of Hungarian minorities abroad and that Ukraine was primarily in the foreign policy interest for Hungary because of the focus on protecting the Hungarian minority.

Like Poland, the strategic culture in Hungary has changed drastically since 1989. This has mainly been because of the Soviet control, the acceptance into NATO in 1999, and the EU membership in 2004. Before joining these Western unions, Hungary had difficulty defining its place in the international system and its national interests. Hungary's foreign and security policy was generally quite securitized, mainly because of the ongoing civil war in Yugoslavia (Tulmets 2012). When Hungary first had to form its own foreign and security policy in 1993, the three main strategic national interests were Western integration, regional cooperation, and the protection of minority rights in the neighboring countries (Tulmets 2012).

The first basic security policy of Hungary was adopted in 1993 and reflected the strategic thinking of the period. Thus, Hungary viewed itself as a product of a transnational era of shying away from the Soviet times and more toward the western way of thinking (Budai 2021). The first NSS document was adopted in Hungary in 2002, which sought to react to the new strategic environment Hungary was placed in because of the NATO membership and the forthcoming accession into the EU. The following security strategy was published in 2004. This document argued that the security situation in Hungary was stable and that Hungary was not threatened by military aggression (R. o. Hungary 2004). The document outlines specific risks which deserve global attention, and only one of these many challenges described involves a military aspect, namely weapons of mass destruction.

In the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, Hungary was, like now with Ukraine, the last among its neighboring states to condemn the Russian attack and waited for the EU to lead the way (Porter 2008). In 2008 it was not Viktor Orban but Ferenc Gyurcsany who was Hungary's PM. After the EU issued an official statement, Gyurcsany followed; however, he did not condemn the Russian aggression as strongly as other European leaders; instead, he focused more on the national interests like Orban. So, in that specific crisis, Hungary was also reluctant to strongly condemn the Russian aggression, which may indicate that the Hungarian strategic culture is constraining its leaders to some extent. In 2008, the main cause for not condemning Russia also seemed to have something to do with energy dependence. Gyurcsany also argued that Hungary wants to live in peace with Russia, which ties into Hungary's general pacifist strategic culture (Ibid.).

The next security strategy document in Hungary was adopted in 2012, in which the military aspect is still rather low because it is argued that Hungary's security situation is stable because of the EU and NATO membership. Moreover, it is argued that Hungary does not consider any countries its direct enemy, and wishes to settle disputes peacefully, which also indicates the pacifist nature of Hungary (R. o. Hungary 2012). The 2012 strategy document does not even mention Russia but is more concerned with threats arising far away from Hungary's own borders like terrorism (R. o. Hungary 2012). This is in stark contrast to Poland, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening its own borders often to balance against the perceived threat of Russia. This also indicates that Hungary does not see Russia as a threat despite its aggression in the region during this period. The latest NSS document from 2021 also follows these principles and underpinning from 2012. So, even after the Crimea annexation in 2014, the security strategy and perception did not

change much in Hungary, which is also in complete contrast to Poland. Although the 2021 document does mention Russia, it does still not characterize Russia as a threat. However, the document does recognize that there are major tensions between NATO and Russia. Hungary describes this situation as one where it wants to maintain the cohesion of NATO and the EU, but at the same time wants to keep the development of the economic cooperation with Russia (G. o. Hungary 2021). This is a clear example of the balancing act between Russia and the West that Hungary's strategic culture is.

Between 2004 and 2021, the perception of Ukraine has altered a bit in Hungary's strategic culture. In the 2004 document, it was described how important the relations with Ukraine were for Hungary; however, in the 2021 document, this Ukraine relation comes with an exception. It explains that the efforts to reinforce Ukrainian national identity must not come at the expense of the rights of the Hungarian minority in the country (G. o. Hungary 2021). Again, proving that the security of the Hungarian minority is a top priority, especially after the Ukrainian educational law in 2017. Since 2017, there has been an intensified dispute in the relation between Hungary and Ukraine over the rights of the Hungarian minorities in Ukraine. In 2017, the government in Ukraine passed a new law on education, which limited the existing rights of ethnic minorities to be educated in their native language, as everyone should now exclusively be educated in the Ukrainian language (Havelicek 2021). Two years later, Ukraine passed another law that proclaimed the use of the Ukrainian language in all public spheres (Ibid). This resulted in the minority language only being spoken in private conversation, which really infuriated Hungary and was viewed as detrimental to the Hungarian minority in Ukraine (Ibid.). This dispute has resulted in Hungary blocking Ukraine from relations with the West as a sign of protest. Hungary has, for instance, blocked ministerial political meetings between NATO and Ukraine since 2018 (Tarnok 2021). This action by Hungary is also clear evidence that the historical ties to the region before the Treaty of Trianon still have immense importance to Hungary in foreign policy. So much so that violations of the minority rights will provoke Hungary to endanger its neighbor by not letting it cooperate with the West or be a part of NATO. Conclusively, the policy regarding the protection of the Hungarian ethnic minority is of prime importance to Hungary.

As previously explained, Hungary currently has a pacifist foreign policy orientation. This may be a consequence of the fact that Hungary lost both World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has been a small

state ever since, which is why Hungary has had a foreign policy strategy that aims at conforming with great power interests. After the first World War, Hungary was forced to sign the Treaty of Trianon, which resulted in the country losing two-thirds of the national territory and approximately three million citizens (Tulmets 2012). The Treaty of Trianon is seen as a national tragedy for Hungarians. This historical event can be categorized as a significant shock to the state because it has led to a pacifist foreign policy strategy with an immense focus on the Hungarian minority in the neighboring countries. The Treaty left Hungary as the smallest state in Central Europe, and it was now also the weakest in terms of economic resources and military strength (Cornelius 2011). Even though the Treaty of Trianon happened more than 100 years ago, it is still very present in the Hungarian memory. Every family is argued to have been affected by the Treaty, either because they were forced to be separated for years or because they had to leave their home and move to the “new” Hungary back in 1920 (Sandford 2020). Therefore, today, there is much focus on the Hungarian minority still living in those parts of former Hungary. Thus, the Treaty of Trianon has undoubtedly shaped the foreign policy strategy of Hungary.

During the interwar period, Hungary’s main foreign policy goal was to take back the lost territory and chose to side with Germany in WWII, as it promised Hungary to give some of its territories back. However, the loss in that war brought the regained territory back to the Trianon boundaries, and the Soviet Union then occupied Hungary for 40 years, which brought a different trauma to Hungary, again because of war (Ibid). Hungary’s current pacifist foreign policy strategy may have materialized because of these detrimental outcomes in both World Wars for Hungary. Hungary now argues in its strategy documents that it wants to find peaceful solutions to every international confrontation, which could be because of the scar that the two World Wars have left on the country. To sum, the historical events of the Treaty of Trianon and the subsequent loss in WWII and Soviet occupation have been some of the most significant shocks in the historical evolution of Hungary and have been determining factors in shaping the foreign and security policy that Hungary has today.

#### 6.3.4. Sub conclusion

Viktor Orban’s beliefs and values are very nationalistic and populist. Like Kaczynski, Orban wants to protect the Hungarian national values and cultural identity and does not want too much

influence from the EU in Hungary. Orbán believes that the West is trending downwards, and the future of economic superpower lies in the East with China and Russia. Orbán's leadership ideology only has Hungarian interests in mind, which is also why he has formed such a close relationship with Russia because he believes it to be the best way of pursuing the Hungarian national interests. Orbán believes in an international system in which a country should be able to focus on its national interests without having to consider external pressure. This belief has made him not agree on energy sanctions, as it has not been in the Hungarian national interests. Thereby, Orbán has not seen the strategic environment as restrictive and with perfect clarity because of his beliefs about the international system and his close ties with Russia. These factors have affected the foreign policy decisions made by Hungary.

The strategic culture of Hungary can be categorized as pacifist and with a great focus on the ethnic Hungarian minority living in other countries. Because Hungary lost both World Wars, the strategic culture has shaped into one with strong limitations on the use of force and an overall risk-averse strategy. Because Hungary has a pacifist strategic culture, Orbán has not been able to support Ukraine with military aid, as Hungary's strategic culture deems it better for Hungary to stay out of the war in every way because of the risk-averse strategy.

According to the NSSs and FPDs, Hungary does not consider Russia a threat, contrary to Poland. Hungary is more concerned with the ethnic Hungarian minority living in Ukraine than protecting and helping Ukraine in this war. In this way, the strategic culture in Hungary does not demand that Hungary engages in the war but only that it will protect its ethnic minority in Ukraine.

Despite Hungary's recognition of tensions between Russia and NATO, Hungary wants to maintain its close economic cooperation with Russia, thereby showing its multi-vectoral foreign policy strategy. Moreover, during the 2008 war in Georgia, Hungary also remained slow to condemn the aggression from Russia and was more focused on the Hungarian national interests. So, by collecting all these findings, it can be stated that both the leader image, because of the "Eastern Opening" policy, and the belief regarding the future of the international system, and the strategic culture, because of the pacifist and risk-averse strategy and the example of the same reaction to a similar prior crisis, has been important intervening variables when examining the reason for Hungary's policy response.

## 6.4. Leader Image Poland

Like with Hungary, the first part of this section will be determining the FPE in Poland. Under the PiS government, which has served since 2015, parallel networks and informal actors have gained unprecedented influence in foreign policy decision (Balcer). Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of PiS, does not occupy any public post apart from being a member of parliament, but still, any significant decision requires his approval (Cienski 2016). This fact is also evident in an article from 2016, which deems Kaczynski the most powerful man in Poland (Gnauck 2016). Furthermore, another article names Jaroslaw Kaczynski a “puppet master,” referring to the fact that he dominates Polish politics by inserting close and trusted allies into state institutions while he himself pulls the strings (Crowcroft 2020). Thus, in this system, certain key issues are decided on more quickly if Kaczynski or his close associates are convinced of the importance and urgency.

According to Balcer, who has confirmed this through internal confidential reports and private correspondence between officials, decisions regarding foreign affairs are often endorsed without consulting independent experts but are instead based on political calculations and prejudice, very much resembling the Hungarian situation. Thus, the most prominent and important FPE in Poland is deemed to be Jaroslaw Kaczynski in this thesis, which is why the subsequent leader image analysis will focus on him and his beliefs, values, and ideology.

### 6.4.1 Jaroslaw Kaczynski

To analyze the leader image and the core values, beliefs, etc. of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, and the effect it can have on the perception of the incoming systemic stimuli, in this case, the thesis will examine various speeches, scholarly literature, and comments from and about Kaczynski.

Jaroslaw Kaczynski’s political life began in the 1970s and 80s when he participated in a pro-Western liberal opposition to the communist regime. Later in the 1980s, he was active in the Solidarity Movement. In the first democratic election in Poland after the Soviet occupation, the Solidarity Movement won, which brought Tadeusz Mazowiecki to power (A. Smolar 2018). However, Kaczynski later began to assert his hostility towards Mazowiecki. In 1990 Kaczynski sided with Lech Walesa and created the party “Centre Agreement,” which later became known as the PiS, which J. Kaczynski is now leading. Kaczynski became one of Walesa’s closest allies and



was named Head of the President's Chancellery when Walesa was elected president (Ibid). In 1991, Kaczynski was dismissed from the presidency and switched to the opposition. Here the foundations for the current political agenda and beliefs of J. Kaczynski were formed. The only message the "Centre Agreement" focused on was the defense of peripheral Poland against the urban liberal elites. In these years in the mid-1990s, the radical discourse regarding the memory of communism started to increase for Kaczynski (A. Smolar 2018).

In 2006 and 2007, Jaroslaw Kaczynski ruled Poland as the PM alongside his brother Lech Kaczynski who was elected President. Four years later, Lech Kaczynski and 95 other passengers died when the presidential plane crashed in Smolensk (Tilles 2022). This tragedy is still remembered in Poland today and is especially important for the values and beliefs of Jaroslaw Kaczynski. This disaster was the worst in Poland since WWII and something that completely stunned the country. The tragedy has complicated the relationship between Russia and Poland even further because J. Kaczynski and the governing party, PiS, are convinced that the crash did not happen because of pilot error but was a deliberate attack from Russia. Kaczynski has spoken about the tragedy on numerous occasions to the public and is convinced that it was an "attack made at the highest level of Kremlin" (Ibid.). PiS and Kaczynski have, since the tragedy happened, repeatedly promised to release proof that the crash was caused deliberately (Ibid.).

However, there is currently no evidence to confirm or deny the accusations. When President Putin offered Kaczynski his condolences after the crash, Kaczynski refused to speak with him, cementing the anger, resentment, and blame Kaczynski had put on the Russians (Gnauck 2016).

After his brother died in 2010, Jaroslaw Kaczynski ran for office to replace his brother but ultimately, he lost. He never ran for the top job again; however, as the years went by, he became more and more powerful as the head strategist of his political party PiS. In 2015, PiS won the election, and Andrzej Duda, hand-picked by Kaczynski, served as President. Since winning the election, PiS, with Kaczynski as "puppet-master," has dominated Polish politics. So, five years after the plane crash, Jaroslaw Kaczynski became the most powerful man in Polish politics without being a PM (Crowcroft 2020).

Because Kaczynski is indeed functioning as this "puppet-master," he is often taking a backseat in political debates or letting the PM or president do the speeches to the public while he orchestrates

the strategy behind the curtains. Since this is how the political landscape in Poland is structured, there are not as many speeches or comments available to examine from Kaczynski as with Orban. Therefore, this analysis section will be based more on scholarly literature about Kaczynski and knowledge from others about his beliefs.

The Polish political analyst, Piotr Buras, has uttered that of the two Kaczynski brothers, Lech was the most moderate. His death has had a significant impact on how Jaroslaw shaped his politics. Buras argues that Lech was a counterweight to Jaroslaw's radicalism, and now he is left with his radical views without anyone interfering with them (Crowcroft 2020). Since 2015, J. Kaczynski has tried to install a policy that serves to concentrate geographical and institutional power within the state. He perceives the judiciary as a corrupt and liberal "cooperation" and believes its damaging powers must be restrained (Foy 2016). Kaczynski believes that Poland has gone in the wrong direction since 1989 and has made it his life mission to "fix" the country and rebalance Polish society (Foy 2016). Kaczynski believes that Poland's transition from communism to capitalism has been a failure and needs to be fixed (Foy 2016). He believes that the former communist rulers still have some form of power and influence, which is disguised in modern capitalist Poland (Ibid.). Kaczynski has a deeply historical rooted resentment towards Germany and Russia. He is not fond of the EU as it wants to shape the policy of Poland, with Germany as its head actor, and he argues that Russia is looking at Poland and dreaming of dominance once again (Foy 2016). This distrust regarding Germany and Russia especially is also one of the core reasons for the foreign policy agenda of a strong national defense and strong skepticism for the supranational EU approach. Kaczynski allegedly never misses a chance to bring up past crimes committed by Germany and Russia against Poland, solidifying the deep skepticism and distrust that Kaczynski has, which is influencing the foreign policy decisions (Foy 2016).

With these beliefs and arguments of fear, Kaczynski is posing as a leader who wants to protect Poland's national values, sovereignty, and identity.

Kaczynski's ideology is like Viktor Orban's, nationalistic, conservative, and Eurosceptic.

Kaczynski and PiS have ramped up the nationalistic rhetoric by targeting historical enemies such as Germany and Russia, using the memory of the Nazi and Soviet regimes' occupation. One of the key anti-Russian arguments is, as mentioned, the Smolensk plane crash, which Kaczynski argues was a Russian attack.

Like Orban, Kaczynski has also portrayed the EU as an occupier, which interferes with Poland's sovereignty, that the Member States are not treated equally, and that he is only trying to work in Poland's national interests (Gera 2021). During election campaigns, PiS presented itself as the country's true defender, which would protect Poland from the liberal values of a "decadent Europe" that would force gay marriage and abortion upon the population (E. Smolar 2021). Moreover, Kaczynski, who is conducting the PiS strategy, wants to protect Poland from the threat of Muslim refugees, whom he, much like Orban, sees as "terrorists" and will destroy the national identity in Poland (Ibid.). Kaczynski wants cultural hegemony, meaning that he wants to stop the West from influencing traditional Polish values and enhance the Poles' national pride (Gnauck 2016). Kaczynski believes that post-communists and liberals threaten to take over Poland and often refers to his political opponents as "communists and thieves" (Foy 2016). This level of animosity towards his political opponents is caused by the historical fact that after the fall of communism, Poland's political elites were divided into two camps. Those who sided with compromise and reconciliation won the debate, and those who called for an absolute end to the previous regime, like Kaczynski, got overruled (Foy 2016). Kaczynski has never forgotten nor forgiven the liberals, who, in his eyes, betrayed the revolution, which is why Kaczynski displays these anti-liberal beliefs and values today. This is also why Kaczynski believes that Poland has gone in the wrong direction since 1989, as previously explained, and why he wants to "fix" the country's direction.

As indicated above, Poland's Kaczynski resembles the strategy of Hungary's Orban in several ways. He has created a coherent populist national ideology; he is fighting the political elite in the EU and sees liberals as someone who will harm Poland's cultural identity and national interests. Moreover, Kaczynski portrays himself and his party as the country's true defender against all these threats and as someone who only serves the purpose of Poland's national interests. However, one way the two leaders differ, which is very important to this thesis, is the relationship with Russia.

As explained, Kaczynski does not have a good relationship with Russia or Putin. This is due to historical grievances of communism and occupation and the Smolensk tragedy in 2010. Overall, Kaczynski's relationship with Russia is affected mainly by his deeply rooted skepticism about the country. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Kaczynski gave an interview to the German newspaper, *Welt*, in which he accused Germany and France of having too close relations with Russia:

*“For years, the German government has not wanted to notice what Russia is doing under Putin, and today we are seeing the result,”* (Novinite 2022). This quote from Kaczynski also solidifies the notions about his beliefs that have been established earlier as distrust in Germany and Russia, and that Russia wants to control the region again. Moreover, in the interview, Kaczynski argues that Germany is trying to revive the pre-WWII era of German domination with Russia. In 2020, Kaczynski also argued that NATO troops must be “combat ready” for Russian aggression. Kaczynski is obsessed with the presence of NATO troops in the Baltics and in Poland to balance against the inevitable Russian attack, according to Kaczynski’s beliefs (Taylor 2018). Kaczynski’s beliefs do not see Russia as anything but a threat to Poland’s sovereignty and security, contrary to Orban, who sees Russia as an opportunity to benefit economically and politically.

Because of Kaczynski’s beliefs regarding Russia, the war in Ukraine has dramatically affected the foreign policy strategy. With the war in Ukraine, Kaczynski’s continuously skeptical stance on Russia has proven that he has been right about Russia all along, which now propels Poland’s importance in the EU. Poland has now gotten a “good guy” status in the EU, as it serves strategic importance as the EU’s eastern border towards Russia. This has provided Kaczynski and Poland with the opportunity to position themselves as a regional leader. Poland has also been the advocator of the strongest sanctions against Russia and pushing for Ukraine’s EU membership (Kedzierska 2022). The EU and the US have been forced to put aside the rule of law issues and focus only on security

Kaczynski and PiS have for long had political battles with the EU and focused on asserting national sovereignty against the liberals and bureaucrats in Brussels; however, now, in this geopolitical situation, Kaczynski and PiS are trying to make it look like they are very loyal Europeans (Higgins 2022). The Russian aggression has altered the politics and beliefs of Kaczynski, who is now posing as a European standard-bearer (Higgins 2022). Moreover, at the beginning of the invasion, Kaczynski traveled to Kyiv to clearly state his support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russian aggression. A former Polish diplomat has interpreted this action by Kaczynski as a way of shaking off his prior relationship with the anti-European populist politicians (Ibid.). One main reason Kaczynski is now softening his populist comments and hostile attitude towards the EU is that Kaczynski is aware that Poland needs the EU support and the money it is withholding in this time of crisis (Kedzierska 2022). This also tells something about how Kaczynski sees Poland in the

international system. He is aware that Poland needs to be in alliance with the West to balance against the Russian threat. Kaczynski understands the current strategic environment as very restrictive because of the threat of Russia. In terms of clarity, Kaczynski sees the information that the international system provides in the same way as the EU and the West, primarily because of the threat perception of Russia. In this way, Kaczynski has responded to the international system rationally, which benefits Poland's security the most by allying with the West and balancing against Russia. This contrasts with the reaction from Orban, who, because of his relationship with Russia, has not been able to see the international system with the same level of clarity that Kaczynski has.

Based on this analysis section, it can be argued that the leader image variable can be a driving force behind the perception of what Poland's foreign policy priorities are. The next chapter will focus on the strategic culture of Poland.

## 6.5. Strategic Culture Poland

### 6.5.1. Geographic setting and influence

Poland is, like Hungary, placed in the CEE region and shares a border with seven countries. Poland is geographically the ninth largest country in Europe. Poland is the fifth biggest country in Europe in terms of population. Regarding GDP, Poland was placed 9<sup>th</sup> in 2021 but only ranked 25<sup>th</sup> per capita (Tradingeconomics 2021). Thus, Poland should be categorized as a small power because of its weak economy. However, Poland plays a vital role in the European international system, as it serves as the EU and NATO border against Russia. Thus, Poland can be categorized as a middle power, or at least an emerging middle power in the international system, because of its importance as an agenda-setter at the regional level in the CEE region.

Therefore, the geographical position of Poland between the East and the West has undoubtedly influenced the shaping of the Polish national identity and defined the nature of Poland's national interests and security and foreign policy strategy (Zajac 2016).

Because of the history of absence of state sovereignty during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and limited sovereignty in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the strategic culture in Poland is highly dictated by an understandable sense of insecurity. Additionally, for much of the country's history, its geopolitical situation has been so fragile that it could not pursue its foreign policy. It had to focus mainly on survival (Krasnodębska 2021). As a satellite state to the Soviet Union, Poland, although it had its own borders and was a part of the UN, had to mirror the opinions of the Soviet Union. Thus, Poland was essentially cut off from European development in the Cold War era. After 1989, Poland, therefore, had to reinvent itself as an international actor (Ibid.). Having to catch up to a society and an international system that has gone through various changes and processes made it difficult for Poland to find its international identity, trying to seek recognition and find its place in the system based on the assumptions of what is considered the "norm" by Western states (Ibid.). The fall of the Soviet Union provided Poland with new circumstances regarding security policy. The relations with Germany grew, and Russia was weak in the immediate time after 1989, which is why geopolitical factors became of lesser importance to Poland, as it was no longer positioned between two great powers. However, as the multipolar world emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the position of Russia grew again, Poland went back to the geopolitical concerns (Zajac 2016). Poland is now no longer

positioned between the great powers of Germany and Russia but rather between the West and Russia, as Poland's eastern border is also the eastern border of the EU and NATO.

The instability of Poland's territory has also been an important component in shaping the country's strategic culture. Poland's territorial questions were not entirely resolved until the Berlin wall fell and the Soviet Union ended in 1991. During the interwar period, Poland found itself between two great powers in Germany and Russia, and thus had to balance between them (Krasnodębska 2021). The primary concern at this time for Poland was its borders, and it had to defend its borders to the east against Russia militarily. However, in WWII, Poland was attacked by both the East and West at the same time. To sum, Poland's territorial placement has frequently been decided by others throughout history. Because of this issue of discontinuity and insecurity regarding its borders, Poland is extremely sensitive to balance of power politics (Malksoo 2010). Because of Poland's sense of insecurity, it is often perceived negatively by other EU countries who have difficulty understanding these traditional security concerns focused on territorial security (Ibid.).

### 6.5.2. The values of society

The values and identity of Poland's foreign and security policy are driven more by history and geography than any other European state (Zajac 2016). A plethora of important historical experiences like the major power status for a few centuries, which declined in the 18th century, WWII, and the following years when Poland was under Soviet control, have significantly impacted the Polish identity (Ibid). Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a debate about whether Poland is a bulwark or a bridge between the East and the West.

The NSS of the Republic of Poland from 2020 also clearly depicts Poland's relations with Russia and how it shapes the security policy. This document explains that the most severe threat to Poland right now is "*the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation*" (R. o. Poland 2020). This quote also clearly sums up the relationship and perception of Russia and how Poland feels about Russia. In the document, it is also clear that Poland fears and almost expects Russia to initiate military aggression to destabilize the structures of Western states. Poland warned the West about a military conflict in 2020, which we are seeing in Ukraine now in 2022 (Lovett 2022). Poland has been trying to get this message through to the Western European countries for years, but until 2022, the West has simply waved this concern away and argued it was an outdated Cold War

way of thinking (Lau 2022).

During Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the then President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, warned about Russian aggression: *"Today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the day after tomorrow—the Baltic States and later, perhaps, time will come for my country, Poland"* (Lovett 2022). The West thought that Russia was open to dialogue and that military aggression could be avoided by engaging in trade and cooperation. However, Poland has always had a firm stand on the beliefs and values regarding policy toward Russia. It has often criticized the West for being too soft, especially regarding sanctions toward Russia when it has shown military aggression during the past decades (Ibid.) Russia continues to be seen as a threat in Poland, which is also evident when looking at a survey from 2019 made by the Polish newspaper "Rzeczpospolita," where 45.2 pct of Poles feel that Russia poses a threat to Poland's security (RZECZPOSPOLITA 2019). There has been a constant rivalry between Poland and Russia throughout history since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which continues to influence the relationship between the two states today and affect Poland's security policy and general foreign policy (Zajac 2016). The turbulent history with Russia, which will also be accounted for in the historical evolution section, has undoubtedly been a factor in shaping Poland's foreign and security policy. Evidently, Poland still has a significant amount of distrust about Russia's intentions. Thus, the level of historical Russia-phobia, which is embedded in Polish public opinion, has been a significant shock that has shaped Polish foreign policy.

As a member of the EU, NATO, and the OECD, Poland is indeed a part of the West, despite not being recognized fully as such at times (Krasnodębska 2021). Poland has a somewhat ambiguous relationship with the West shaped by historical events, especially around WWII. Although Poland's FPD from 2017-2021 describes its membership in the EU and NATO as vital for the overall security goals for the state, Poland's historical relations with the West have problematic connotations in Poland (M. o. Poland 2016). Because of the already explained geopolitical position, Poland found itself in, placed between two great powers in the interwar period, Poland sought alliances with Western powers to ensure security, primarily France and Britain at the time (Krasnodębska 2021). However, during the German and Soviet invasion in 1939, neither France nor Britain came to help defend Poland, leaving Poland with distrust and abandonment towards the West. This abandonment from the West has also had a significant impact on the strategic culture in Poland, which is why this event can be categorized as a significant shock to the state. This shock



has, as mentioned, lowered the trust in the West; however, Poland also recognizes that membership in NATO and EU is the best available security guarantee and insurance against future Western abandonment (M. o. Poland 2016). The events in 1939 and the abandonment of the bigger European powers are also why Poland has taken strides towards an “America first” security policy in recent years (Taylor 2018). In 2018, the US had more than 3,000 military personnel in Poland, and Poland has offered more than \$2 bn to secure a permanent US armored base in Poland (Ibid). This foreign policy strategy is also a result of the events of 1939. Kaczynski is allegedly obsessed with how Poland was abandoned in 1939 and therefore sees permanent US military personnel as the only dependable insurance against Russian aggression (Ibid).

Because of its traditional security concerns, Poland had accession to NATO as a very high priority, higher than EU membership. This is because Poland has a limited trust in a European defense system without the US. In its security section, Poland also emphasizes that regarding foreign policy strategy between 2017-2021, American military involvement is “key” to maintaining NATO’s collective defense capabilities and reiterates that Poland’s security requires close ties with the US (M. o. Poland 2016). Moreover, in the NSS document from 2020, Poland addresses the happiness with the NATO membership. This strategy has helped strengthen the defense of Polish territory by the presence of allied forces in Polish territory. This notion is important as one of Poland's most important core values is the security of its national borders.

With the entry into NATO and the EU, Poland has been able to feel secure enough to concentrate on other goals in the East. Since the entry, Poland has strived to spread Western influence further into the East. Having a solid eastern policy strengthens Poland’s position in the EU and NATO as it can provide the West with expertise and is familiar with the area. This notion is particularly evident in the Polish FPD for 2017-2021. This document states that the foreign policy goal for Poland in this period is to strengthen Poland’s position in NATO and the EU by pursuing an active regional policy (M. o. Poland 2016). Additionally, Poland describes its position as “key” in Europe as it lies between two “geopolitical tectonic plates.” Poland describes its geographical position as posing many threats and offers unique opportunities to strengthen its international position, which it wants to achieve.

Poland is trying to establish itself as a leader in the defense of Eastern Europe and sees itself as an essential actor in the East, and seeks to actively shape politics in its Eastern neighborhood (M. o. Poland 2016). In other words, Poland's policy to the east is essential for its self-definition as an international actor. Thus, Poland would be overlooked and viewed as non-central to the West without the Eastern dimension. What happens in the region is of vital concern for Poland both in terms of cultural heritage and historical connectedness and security. Relations with Ukraine and Belarus are a reminder of the history of Poland's once territorial greatness and cultural influence on the region (Krasnodębska 2021).

Moreover, the strategic culture in Poland is highly influenced by building relations with its eastern neighbors between it and Russia and encouraging their political independence from Russia, which will benefit Poland's security. This argument is explicitly noticeable in Poland's FPD from 2017-2021, which states that Poland's fate is inextricably linked with other Central and Eastern European nations. Furthermore, the document explains that because of the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is imperative for Poland to stand in solidarity with its neighbors as it serves its best interests for Poland. Once again, it is evident from this foreign policy strategy paper that Poland's primary concern is security, mainly because of its turbulent history of occupation and invasion.

### 6.5.3. Historical evolution of the state

Poland has defended its sovereignty on numerous occasions throughout history. This is partly due to the already discussed fact of Poland's geopolitical position between the East and the West. The Golden age for Poland was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the two nations ruled together over a territory of almost 1,000,000 square kilometers of Central and Eastern Europe and are described as a "sophisticated democracy" for its time (intropoland). The following century was filled with wars for the Commonwealth; one was the Russo-Polish war. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Republic was in crisis and fell under foreign influence where the rulers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria invaded Poland and partitioned its territory. The Commonwealth was terminated in 1795 (Ibid.). Thus, the Commonwealth lost its position of supremacy in the region on behalf of Russia. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russia controlled over 60 pct of the old Commonwealth territory, which only added to the animosity felt by the Poles towards the Russians (Zajac 2016).

Until 1918 there was no independent Polish state on the world map, however, the successive

collapse of the Russian and Austria-Hungarian empires after the First World War gave Poland a chance to regain freedom and the Second Polish Republic was formed in 1918. In 1920, the young state stopped a massive Soviet invasion aimed at Western Europe in the battle of Warsaw (Ibid). So, immediately after establishing a new Poland, the country was set on a collision course with Russia. Subsequently came the surprise attack from Russia on Poland at the beginning of WWII, and Poland fell under Soviet control. So, the historical relationship of Poland's relations and experience with Russia is primarily based on fear of security of Polish territory and preparation for Russia's next aggressive move. All these historical events of invasion have had a significant impact on the strategic culture in Poland. Therefore, they can be categorized as significant shocks that have altered the state's strategic culture.

As explained, Poland appeared on the world map again in 1918 but had ceased to exist for the prior 123 years due to annexation by foreign powers. Therefore, the fear of foreign domination has been the strongest cultural trope of Poland ever since the second republic was formed in 1918. And since the state again was invaded by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in WWII and subsequently ruled by the Soviet Union until 1989, the threat of being invaded again is omnipresent for Poland. Thus, the most important goal for the strategic culture in Poland is to ensure the security and protection of the national borders.

Like Hungary, Poland did not have its own security policy until after the fall of the Soviet Union. Hereafter, several documents regarding Poland's foreign and security strategy were adopted (Zajac 2016). The first documents stressed the uncertain nature of developments in international politics and the consequences these developments could have for Poland because of its position between Western Europe and the Post-Soviet Region (Ibid). Moreover, the initial strategy documents stress the strategic importance of integrating with the West and membership in NATO, and the cooperation with neighboring states is also described as important. The following strategy documents from Poland were adopted in the 2000s when the US was in a hegemonic position in the international system. Poland joined NATO in 1999, whereafter the US became an important strategic partner in Poland's foreign and security policy. The role of the US becomes more and more significant in each strategy document adopted for Poland (Ibid.).

The NATO membership changed Poland's geopolitical position, which is evident in the NSS documents, where there is a sense of reduced danger towards Poland's territory, sovereignty, and existence in general. It is described as not any danger of direct military aggression in the foreseeable future (Zajac 2016). In the documents in the mid and late 2000s, Poland again describes NATO as a principal pillar of its external security and as a critical component to military stability in Europe. These documents also view the EU as an essential pillar in Poland's external security. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Poland's interests and security concerns were mainly non-military. Until the document from 2007, there was no mention of fear of military threat in Poland. Although, the 2007 document does raise concerns over the context of energy security and mentions that Russia is taking advantage of this market to strengthen its position (Zajac 2016). However, since the Russian aggression and annexation of Crimea in 2014, Poland has gone back to the traditional skeptical stance toward Russia. Poland sees Russia as an opponent and a threat, and Poland seeks to prevent Ukraine and the other Eastern neighbors from being cut off from the EU and Western cooperation (M. o. Poland 2016). Pushing Western values onto its Eastern neighbors and helping them gain access to the EU and NATO is central in Poland's attempt to balance against Russia and protect it against Russia (Ibid). Poland has advocated for EU and NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia for a long time. Poland has argued for these memberships by stating that if these countries were to participate in Western institutions, they would be liberated from Russian influence and thereby undergo a positive transformation (Krasnodębska 2021). Moreover, a democratic Eastern region will further ensure Poland's security, as it would prevent Poland from being the immediate NATO and EU 'bulwark' against Russia. Furthermore, a solid and coherent eastern foreign policy will also strengthen Poland's position in NATO and the EU because of its expertise and knowledge of the region (Ibid.).

In 2009, Poland initiated the Eastern Partnership with Sweden; it was an EU program aimed at supporting the democratic process in the Eastern neighborhood and bringing them closer to the EU. One of the countries Poland aimed to move closer to the EU was Ukraine. Ukraine has a central place in the strategic culture of Poland, especially because of history (Marras 2015). Another reason for the importance of Ukraine in the Polish strategic culture is the geographical proximity to Russia, which is a far greater power than Poland, and this imbalance of power increases the threat perception of Russia by Poland. According to Andrzej Szeptycki, "*Polish political elites fear the revival of the Russian imperialism*" (Szeptycki 2016). Moreover, the Russian military aggression in

Georgia in 2008 and later Ukraine has incentivized Poland to increase the need for balancing against Russia.

In the FPD from 2017-2021, Poland explains a strategy and the Polish perspective on the situation in the world pertaining to its security (M. o. Poland 2016). Poland states that the security environment has deteriorated considerably because of the Russian-provoked conflict in Ukraine. Poland continues by arguing that the West has not done enough to combat this Russian aggression by stating that the conflict in Ukraine was preceded by the international community's "blind eye" toward Russia's support for the secession of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria (Ibid.). The Crisis in Ukraine back in 2014 provided Poland with the opportunity of acting as a regional power because of, as previously mentioned, the knowledgeability and political weight in the region.

Because of the events in Ukraine, Poland adopted a new foreign and security strategy in 2014. This strategy raised concerns over a potential Russian threat that had been growing for years. This document describes a series of potential challenges and threats to Poland's security. It explains that there is a large concentration of aggressive military potential in the immediate region of Poland. Moreover, the document states that Russia's relationship with the West will be a vital factor influencing the security of Poland. And that the whole situation regarding Ukraine has a negative impact on the security of the entire region (R. o. Poland 2014). Suddenly, Poland had a lot of focus on strengthening its national defense capabilities. The document also shows that the most important pillar in Poland's security is still NATO, the US, and the EU.

It has long been a key goal for Poland's foreign and security policy to make Ukraine independent of Russian politics and economy and bring the country closer to the "West" (wolczuk 2003). Ukraine's vital importance to Poland's strategic culture cannot be understood without the Russian factor because Ukraine has historically been an area of war between Poland and Russia (Szeptycki 2016). The wars between Poland and Russia in the Ukrainian territory date back to the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and have continued through time up until today (Ibid.). The idea that the loss of Ukraine to Russia weakened the Polish geopolitical position continues to influence the beliefs in Polish political thinking today (Krasnodębska 2021). The threat of Russia has been a unifying factor for Ukraine and Poland at various times throughout history. For instance, in the interwar period, the then Chief of State, Jozef Pilsudski, pursued an alliance with brief independent

Ukraine against Russia (Krasnodębska 2021). He believed that an alliance with Ukraine could be a defensive front against Russia at the same time, which was, like most of the time through history, a primary goal of Polish foreign and security policy to eliminate the Russian threat.

Moreover, as previously explained, Poland has been interested in limiting the Russian economic and political influence in Ukraine since the end of the Cold War. Poland argues that Russia spreads disinformation, engages in corruption, and revives historical disputes between the nations it once ruled because Russia wants to control these countries once again (M. o. Poland 2016). According to Poland, when these tactics from Russia fail, they revert to military aggression.

To sum, because of Poland's turbulent history with Russia, its geopolitical position, and the deeply embedded fear of attack on its national borders, Poland has a strategic culture focusing on protecting itself and its neighbors from Russia as its main priority. Thus, based on the analysis of Poland's strategic culture variable, it can be argued that this variable has influenced how Poland has reacted to the war in Ukraine.

#### 6.5.4. Sub conclusion

Kaczynski's values, beliefs, and ideology is affected by his resentment toward the liberals and communists. His beliefs regarding Russia are primarily influenced by the 2010 Smolensk tragedy, where his brother was killed, which he is sure was a Russian attack. Kaczynski has a deeply embedded belief that Russia wants to dominate Poland again and therefore emphasizes strong national defense in Poland's foreign policy. He wants to protect the Polish national values and sovereignty and does not want the EU and West to influence these too much. However, Kaczynski sees it as necessary for Poland to be protected by the West from Russian aggression. Therefore, after the war in Ukraine broke out, Kaczynski posed as a loyal European and a bearer of European values. Because of the war, Kaczynski saw the imminent threat of Russia and the international system with perfect clarity.

Poland's strategic environment can be characterized as being focused on security and survival, mainly directed toward the aggressive intentions of Russia. Because Poland has a turbulent history with Russia, the strategic culture primarily focuses on survival and territorial defense. Its security documents have generally portrayed Russia as the main threat to its security, especially since the Georgian war and Crimea annexation. The strategic environment in Poland has therefore

constrained its leader to strongly condemn the aggression from Russia and fight Russia with the toughest sanctions possible.

Moreover, Poland has for long lobbied for Ukraine's EU membership to strengthen its security position toward Russia. Therefore, the strategic culture of Poland has also constrained its leader in this case of the Ukraine war to only respond with condemnation towards Russia and support for Ukraine.

## 7. Discussion

This thesis has aimed to examine why Poland and Hungary had different foreign policy reactions to the Ukraine war. Additionally, the thesis has used the theory of NCR and the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture to explain why the reactions were different from each other. In the analysis, the thesis found that both intervening variables can be ascribed some level of influence in the policy responses. However, it is hard to decipher which variable is the most significant and exactly measure how much influence these have on foreign policy responses. This indicates that the concept of intervening variables in NCR remains underdeveloped, which is also reiterated by the scholar Elias Götz (Götz 2021).

Neoclassical realists understand that the intervening variables operate between cause and effect, but their exact role is not clearly defined (Götz 2021). According to Götz, there is hardly any literature on how the intervening variables specifically work, which causes the ambiguity this thesis experiences when analyzing the effect of the intervening variables in a specific case. However, this thesis has aimed to understand the foreign policy decisions of Poland and Hungary by referring to the intervening variables as a cause that drives state behavior, and in this way, tried to add explanatory power to the case. In the analysis, there was evidence of a correlation between the variables and the reaction to the war, which indicates that the intervening variables do add explanatory power to this case, and the research question as to why Poland and Hungary reacted differently. So, even though the intervening variable concept might be underdeveloped, it has still been able to provide an answer in the analysis of the thesis.

Moreover, because of the variables of strategic environment and clarity, the thesis determined that only two of the four intervening variables were important to this case, which nonetheless improves the framework of the study of the effect of the intervening variables on foreign policy decisions. However, this does not deny that perhaps there needs to be a more precise definition and role of each intervening variable to explain each of the variables' actual effect on foreign policy.

Because it is hard to fully conclude the actual influence of the intervening variables on foreign policy decisions, this next paragraph will discuss the possibility of alternative explanations regarding the difference in foreign policy behavior. Maybe it could be explained via economic dependence theory. Some scholars have observed that economic dependence is key to understanding foreign policy behavior, especially regarding post-Soviet states (Miller 2006). It has



been observed that when a post-Soviet state is highly dependent on Russian energy, they usually are forced to bandwagon with Russia because anti-Russian policies could prevent it from access to Russian energy resources moving forward. Therefore, this theory argues that a state's foreign policy choices are constrained by economic dependence (Ibid.). For instance, if a state that is very dependent on Russian energy decides to go full anti-Russia in its foreign policy strategy, Russia will be able to greatly affect that state's economic situation and create chaos in that state because Russia is so vital for the state's economy.

As argued in the thesis, Hungary is very dependent on Russian energy. Hungary's Russian-based energy supplies are about 50% higher than Poland's, indicating that Poland is not as dependent on Russian energy as Hungary (Harper 2022). Russia responded to the sanctions imposed on them because of the war in Ukraine by demanding that the gas deliveries be paid in rubles. Most countries, including Poland, denied this, and Russia halted its gas supplies because of it. Hungary was the only EU country to pay the gas supplies from Russia in rubles, indicating the level of dependency Hungary has on Russian energy.

Moreover, only Slovakia and Hungary have said they will not support energy sanctions against Russia (AP 2022). This further indicates the notions of the economic dependence theory, that a country very dependent on Russian energy would make foreign policy responses supporting Russia. Thus, this economic dependence could also theoretically be a deciding factor for why Poland and Hungary have chosen different foreign policies in the case examined.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to examine why Poland and Hungary have had different reactions to the war in Ukraine from a NCR perspective. Thus, the goal of the thesis has been to gain a better understanding of both countries' foreign policy strategies. The thesis has argued that the intervening variables from NCR were needed to give a more comprehensive explanation as to why the two countries reacted differently to the Ukraine war.

Based on the conducted analysis of intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture, the thesis can draw the following conclusions regarding the effect of the variables on the countries' policy decisions.

Kaczynski's values and beliefs can be characterized as resentment and distrust in Russia, primarily affected by the Smolensk tragedy in 2010. He is convinced that Russia wants to dominate Poland again and therefore emphasizes the importance of national defense. Kaczynski is not generally in favor of the EU influencing Poland; however, Kaczynski deems it necessary for Poland to be protected by the West from Russian aggression. Since the war, Kaczynski has been posing as a loyal European. He has perceived the strategic environment as restrictive and with high clarity because he believes that Russia is a serious threat to Poland.

Poland's strategic culture can be characterized as focused on security and survival mainly from the perceived aggressive intentions of Russia. Poland has generally always portrayed Russia as the main threat to its security, especially since the Georgian war and Crimea annexation. The strategic culture of Poland has, therefore also viewed the situation with high clarity and the strategic environment to be restrictive, which has constrained its leader to strongly condemn the Russian aggression and impose the strongest sanctions possible on Russia.

Thus, the leader image and strategic culture variables have both been important variables to analyze to understand Poland's foreign policy reactions to the Ukraine war as both variables have perceived Russia to be an imminent threat to the security of Poland.

Orban's values and beliefs can be characterized as believing that the West is trending downwards and the future in economic cooperation lies in the East. He believes that cooperation with Russia is the best way to realize the Hungarian national interests. He believes that Hungary should be able to pursue its national interest without considering external pressure. Therefore, Orban has not been

able to see the strategic environment as restrictive but rather as permissive. And has consequently not experienced a high clarity in this situation regarding the policy decision on the war. This belief has made Hungary refuse to agree on energy sanctions against Russia.

Hungary's strategic culture can be characterized as being pacifist with a particular focus on protecting the ethnic Hungarian minority. Hungary has a pacifist, risk-averse strategic culture because it lost both World Wars and suffered significant consequences. The pacifist strategic culture of Hungary has therefore constrained its leader in his policy options by not letting him provide military help, as the strategic culture in Hungary deems that the country should stay out of the war in every way possible. Moreover, the strategic culture in Hungary does not regard Russia as a threat, and the Russian aggression is overshadowed by the objective of protecting the Hungarian minority living in Ukraine. Therefore, the strategic culture in Hungary does not demand its leader to engage in the war and fully support Ukraine and condemn Russia, as the case is with Poland. Furthermore, the reaction to the 2008 Georgian war also suggests that the strategic culture is an essential factor in Hungary's policy response, as it was another government, but the same response from Hungary.

Thus, the leader image and strategic culture variables have both been essential variables to analyze to understand Hungary's foreign policy reactions to the Ukraine war, as both variables did not perceive Russia as a threat, and the "Eastern Opening" policy from Orbán and the pacifist strategy in Hungary's strategic culture has been determining factors in its policy response to this crisis.

Systemic stimuli have passed through the filters of these intervening variables, which has shaped the Polish and Hungarian foreign policy response as they match the leader image and strategic culture of the state. Thus, from a neoclassical realist perspective, Poland and Hungary have reacted differently to the war in Ukraine because of the intervening variables of leader image and strategic culture. Poland and Kaczyński have always perceived Russia as a threat and have always been preparing for Russian aggression. This has caused Poland's reaction to being strong condemnation, helping with military aid, and calling for tougher sanctions. On the other hand, Hungary and Orbán do not regard Russia as a threat. Hungary has a more pacifist strategy and perceives Russia more as an important economic partner who can further the Hungarian national interests. This has been the reason why Hungary does not want to impose energy sanctions against Russia and the reason Hungary does not want to involve itself militarily.

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