

Political Elite Transformation as a Driver of Structural Reform in the Era of Globalization

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Abstract

This study examines the transformation of political elites under the influence of globalization and analyses their role in shaping structural reform agendas in transitional economies. As globalization increasingly integrates national markets into the global financial and institutional architecture, the composition, orientation, and capacity of political elites become key determinants of economic resilience

and institutional development. Using a multidisciplinary political economy approach combined with qualitative structural analysis, the research investigates how the transition from traditional, closed elite structures toward more technocratic and internationally connected leadership influences governance quality, institutional reform, and fiscal discipline. Empirical evidence is derived from semi-structured interviews with policymakers, civil society representatives, and international experts, complemented by documentary analysis of policy reports and institutional documents. The findings suggest that elites integrated into global governance networks are more likely to promote structural reforms that support foreign investment, institutional modernization, and long-term economic stability, while fragmented or locally entrenched elites may resist reform initiatives, contributing to institutional inertia and fiscal vulnerabilities.

This study contributes to the literature on political economy and globalization by providing an empirical qualitative assessment of elite transformation in a transitional economy and by illustrating how global governance integration shapes domestic reform capacity. The findings offer policy-relevant insights for understanding the institutional conditions that facilitate structural reform in emerging and post-transition economies.

Keywords: political elites; globalization; structural reforms; governance transformation; transitional economies.

JEL Classification: D72; F60; H11; P26.

Introduction

Globalization has reshaped political, economic, and institutional structures across the world. In this process, the role and composition of political elites have undergone substantial transformation. Political elites are no longer defined solely by domestic power structures; instead, they increasingly operate within a complex network of international institutions, transnational governance frameworks, and global economic actors. As states integrate into the global economy, political leaders face growing pressure to adapt governance practices, institutional arrangements, and policy strategies to international standards and expectations (Al Kharafi & Al-Sabah, 2025; Bishop & Payne, 2020). Consequently, globalization has not only altered the policy environment in which political elites operate but has also influenced the mechanisms through which elites emerge, circulate, and exercise authority (Held et al., 1999; Sassen, 2006).

In transitional and emerging economies, these dynamics are particularly pronounced. Countries undergoing institutional reform often experience significant restructuring of their political elite composition as new actors enter governance structures while established groups attempt to maintain influence. Such transformations are frequently shaped by external pressures from international organizations, transnational financial institutions, and supranational governance bodies. These actors promote reforms aimed at improving transparency, strengthening democratic governance, and enhancing economic competitiveness (Kalantayevskaya et al., 2022). However, the outcomes of these processes vary significantly across countries, depending on domestic political structures, historical legacies, and the balance of power between competing elite groups.

Ukraine provides a particularly important case for examining these dynamics. Since gaining independence in 1991, the country has experienced repeated waves of political transformation accompanied by efforts to modernize state institutions and align governance practices with European and global standards. Major political events, including the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan protests in 2014, have significantly reshaped the country's political trajectory and intensified its orientation toward European integration

(D'Anieri, 2012; Arynov, 2022). These events also triggered a process of elite renewal, bringing new actors into the political system while challenging the dominance of entrenched oligarchic networks.

Following the Euromaidan Revolution, Ukraine intensified its cooperation with Western institutions, particularly the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This cooperation has been accompanied by a broad agenda of structural reforms aimed at improving institutional quality, strengthening rule-of-law mechanisms, and enhancing economic transparency. Several initiatives have become emblematic of these reform efforts. For instance, the ProZorro electronic procurement system was introduced to increase transparency and efficiency in public procurement processes, while the Diia digital governance platform has modernized the delivery of public services and reduced bureaucratic barriers (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022). These reforms reflect the growing influence of international norms and governance standards on domestic policymaking.

Despite these reform initiatives, the transformation of Ukraine's political elites has not been straightforward. The country continues to grapple with the legacy of oligarchic influence that emerged during the rapid privatization processes of the 1990s. During this period, a small group of business magnates accumulated substantial economic resources and political leverage, enabling them to exert significant influence over policy decisions and governance structures. Although successive governments have attempted to reduce the political power of oligarchic groups, their economic influence remains an important factor shaping the country's political economy (Minakov, 2023; Tambunan, 2023).

In recent years, however, new forms of elite emergence have begun to challenge traditional oligarchic structures. A growing number of political actors have entered the Ukrainian political system with professional backgrounds in international organizations, civil society institutions, and global policy networks. Many of these individuals possess international education and professional experience, which facilitates their integration into transnational governance frameworks and strengthens their alignment with global policy norms. This development reflects broader patterns of elite circulation observed in many transitional societies, where technocratic actors increasingly assume leadership roles in the implementation of structural reforms.

The interaction between political elites, business actors, and civil society organizations has therefore become a central feature of Ukraine's contemporary governance landscape. Civil society organizations gained significant prominence following the Euromaidan protests, particularly in monitoring government activities and advocating for institutional reforms. International donors and development agencies have also played an important role in supporting these organizations through funding and technical assistance programs. As a result, civic actors have acquired greater visibility in the policymaking process, although their ability to exert direct influence on political decision-making remains uneven (Buzogány & Varga, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, these developments raise important questions regarding the relationship between globalization and elite transformation. Classical elite theory, developed by scholars such as Pareto and Mills, emphasizes the cyclical circulation of elites and the concentration of power within relatively small groups of actors. According to Pareto's concept of elite circulation, political systems periodically experience the replacement of ruling elites by new groups that bring different values and competencies to governance structures. Similarly, Mills' concept of the "power elite" highlights the interconnected networks linking

political, economic, and institutional actors within a society. However, the increasing influence of transnational governance structures and global policy networks suggests that elite circulation may now occur within a broader international context.

Contemporary scholars have therefore emphasized the emergence of transnational elite networks that operate across national boundaries. Sassen (2006), for example, argues that globalization has facilitated the development of new elite configurations that are embedded in global economic and institutional systems. These actors often share common professional norms, educational backgrounds, and policy orientations, which contribute to the convergence of governance practices across different national contexts. In transitional economies, the integration of domestic elites into these transnational networks may accelerate institutional reforms but can also create tensions between globally oriented technocratic elites and locally embedded political actors.

Despite growing scholarly interest in globalization and elite transformation, empirical research examining these processes in the Ukrainian context remains limited. Much of the existing literature focuses either on macroeconomic reforms or on the role of oligarchic structures in shaping Ukraine's political economy. Comparatively fewer studies have explored how globalization influences the composition, behaviour, and interaction patterns of political elites, particularly in relation to structural reform processes.

This study seeks to address this research gap by examining the transformation of political elites in Ukraine within the broader context of globalization. Specifically, the paper analyzes how emerging technocratic elites interact with traditional power structures, business groups, and civil society organizations, and how these interactions influence the implementation of structural reforms. By combining qualitative interviews with documentary analysis, the study provides a comparative perspective on the evolving configuration of Ukrainian political elites.

The research contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it provides an empirical examination of elite transformation in a transitional economy undergoing simultaneous political, economic, and geopolitical challenges. Second, it highlights the role of globalization in reshaping elite recruitment patterns and governance practices. Third, it offers insights into how the interaction between domestic political structures and transnational governance norms influences reform trajectories in post-Soviet states.

The analysis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does globalization shape the composition and behaviour of political elites in Ukraine and other global contexts?

RQ2: In what ways do global economic and political pressures influence the relationships between political elites, power structures, business, and civil society in Ukraine?

RQ3: How do these transformed relationships contribute to socio-economic changes, such as reforms or inequalities, in Ukraine compared to global trends?

To address these questions, the remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First section reviews the relevant literature on elite theory, globalization, and institutional transformation, with particular attention to the interaction between political elites, economic actors, and transnational governance networks. Section 2 presents the research methodology, including the qualitative research design, data collection procedures, and analytical approach used to examine elite transformation in the Ukrainian context. Section 3 reports the empirical findings, focusing on the evolving composition of political elites, their relationships with

business and civil society actors, and their role in shaping structural reform initiatives. Section 4 discusses the results in relation to existing theoretical perspectives on elite circulation, political economy, and globalization. Last section concludes the paper by summarizing the key findings, outlining policy implications, and suggesting directions for future research.

1. Research Background

The classical theories opined that the Political elites are those individuals who play influential roles in core institutions and determine, to a greater extent, what happens in society. In liberal democracies, Garrido-Vergara (2020) asserted that the elites comprise a “power elite,” or, though a small fraction, considerably connected privileged individuals who share disciplines of power, rule, and wealth. Tonde (2023), Pakulski (2022), Jackson (2022), and Orsini (2024), on the other hand, developed the theory of “circulation of elites,” asserting that inequality will continue to persist as new elites will always come to power either by meritocracy or political means.

This theory, therefore, explains the current political dynamics in Ukraine in which the elites remain as powerful as they have been despite the Orange Revolution (2004) and Euromaidan (2014). Globalization, in this context, according to Held et al. (1999), can be described as the changes in power dynamics resulting from the growing connectedness that compels political leaders to operate outside their country. This is true in the way Ukraine, as a country, is being run, because most of what is happening in the country, including political decisions, is being influenced by external organizations such as the EU, NATO, and the IMF. Therefore, Sassen (2006) concluded that global cities are rapidly becoming global elites due to their involvement in transnational networks and their increased influence in nearly all national institutions.

Sassen (2006) stated that globalization is affecting the behaviour of political elites throughout the world, as they are becoming more connected, and this integration is bringing about a greater influence of elites on power dynamics across different national boundaries, especially in countries undergoing democratic or economic transformation. Globalization has brought with it new methods/strategies of bringing in elites who quickly and regularly create affiliations with world agencies such as the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and European Union to gain legitimacy, receive financial support, and/or receive policy direction, since these external world organizations wield too much influence on national policy frameworks.

Modern politics is now being dominated by “sophisticated elites”, who are often individuals with foreign degrees and the ability to speak multiple languages, as well as affiliations with international agencies. This set of people is devoted to as “transnational professional classes,” who characteristically act as mediators between global governments and national administrations (Kummitha et al., 2025; Khabeer & Khabeer, 2024; Martens & Niemann, 2022; Spence et al., 2018). According to Gumenyuk et al. (2021), this tendency is marked in countries experiencing democratic changes and economic reforms like Brazil and Poland, where new people from business, academia, and civil society are permitted to dynamically contribute to politics, particularly with the interruption of blocks brought by the numerical revolution, which has enhanced the degree of alteration. Now, due to progressions in information and communication technology, elites can communicate across borders by means of numerical tools such as virtual forums, international media, and real-time policy management. Additionally, the concept of an “epistemic community,” which describes the

convergence of elites sharing the same ideology and policy views, is emerging and gaining traction both nationally and internationally. These are persons with external diplomas and widespread knowledge, also contented with using numerous numerical platforms for a global context.

Though, contempt the effect being applied by these elites, particularly in supporting liberal democracy, market improvements, and international collaboration, in regions facing unbalanced governance and high stages of disparities, they are being apparent to be acting out of tune most of the time with the present truths in their states, which is a important encounter of this “erudite elites” (Held et al., 1999).

In the period of 28 years since Ukraine gained independence in 1991, it has experienced many political disturbances, revolutions, and reforms. Even nowadays, the background remains very unstable due to the continuing war between the country and Russia (Kalmykova 2022). Contempt for the war and democratic reorganizations, their socioeconomic milieu has been formed by the conflict itself. Oligarchic influences continue nowadays; the Ukrainian elite leftovers are disjointed along the old networks shaped during the Soviet Era, and the new cohort is predisposed to the phenomenon of globalization and the growth of civil society.

While in 2014, the Euromaidan protests and the escalated intervention efforts of the Russian military created a crisis of legitimacy for the Ukrainian elites, according to Bondarenko et al. (2022). He asserts that protests have made citizens more vocal about the need for higher levels of transparency, anti-corruption measures, and closer ties with the European Union. The demonstrations also resulted in several technocratic measures, which took power on circumvention paths, on the part of those who owed their political careers to their relationship with civil society. Such reforms included judicial transparency, digital governance (especially the Diia platform), and public procurement (ProZorro), aimed at accelerating the prosecution of corruption cases.

The forces that should have been put in place to create the needed system change never came into being, as oligarchic regimes had so much power. They owned and controlled the parliament (Verkhovna Rada), the media, and critical industries, with enormous power, resources, and influence to dictate who should get what, how, in what quantity, and when (Shevchuk et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Kryshchanovych et al. (2022) stated that elite identities and narratives are conditioned by the local environment in areas of significant presence of the Russian military and/or culture. The strange thing is that this local context also changes the complexity of the elite dynamics as a result of regional divergence because there is a considerable gap between the pro-European and post-Soviet worldviews that have made elite loyalty very flexible and vulnerable to shifts as a consequence of public cynicism or external geopolitical pressure, with a great significant effect on governance, power dynamics, and even power dynamics.

Shapovalova et al. (2023) stressed that these questions have further shown faintness in social security nettings, fiscal flexibility, and public management, while also consolidating executive authority and policy centralization, chiefly as the COVID-19 pandemic caused chaos among the Ukrainian elite. The state now stands at an intersection amid improvement and relapse, oligarchy and openness, with an unequal influence on Ukraine's elite. The democratic uprising of Ukraine will continue to be thrown down the gauntlet by international powers and by the dimensions of new elites to commit expressive change and decrease the hold of established power systems.

These three facts, civil societies, business welfares, and government organizations, are those that aid one in comprehending how Ukraine's political elites interrelate, change, and grow. The variations since the Maidan movement have rehabilitated ties, integrating efforts, needs for agreement with international norms, and augmented local activity.

Ukraine has made important efforts to establish a strong connection among its political leaders and the key branches of government, particularly the judiciary and civil service. The reforms themselves meant to decrease political bonds by endorsing good employment in the public management and working towards the depoliticization of the court (Gumenyuk et al., 2021). With the provision of US and EU associates, new organizations such as the High Council of Justice and the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) have been shaped to endorse greater transparency and rule-based authority. Though elites still influence important actions at the regional and national stages due to the tenacity of patronage and informal networks.

An important feature of Ukraine's post-Soviet political system is the sustained impact of influential economic groups on political policymaking. Oligarchs stay significant as they regulate the media, set laws, and deliver funding for political parties. Yet, that control is progressively at risk from Ukraine's labourers to join the EU and its partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has strict canons. Even if they are applied unequally, actions like anti-monopoly implementation and laws meant to decrease oligarchic impact designate a shift away from the prior elite-business power assembly (Bondarenko et al. 2022).

Some oligarchs confronted economic embargoes and sanctions throughout the Russian invasion in 2022, which broke long-lasting political relations.

The relationship between Ukraine's political elites and civil society has undergone significant changes since the 2014 Euromaidan revolution. NGOs, civic relations, and regulator clusters have augmented their efforts to keep an eye on administrative actions and hold bureaucrats responsible. External contributors, including USAID and the EU, account for an important portion of this effort. Stages such as ProZorro, which screens public procurement, and the asset revelation system of the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption are two instances.

Nonetheless, there are still encounters. There is still concern about elites captivating over public areas through financing management, NGO penetration, or rhetorical sustenance for reformist purposes. The intentional assumption of civic discourse by elites can reduce proper management and uphold elite continuity under the pretence of alteration, even though they may use the language of public participation. In conclusion, Ukraine's elite ecology is undergoing a rebalancing of its relationships with grassroots actors, market forces, and state power. Whether these ties continue to develop under democratic norms or revert to well-known patterns of patron-client dominance will have a significant impact on the course of elite accountability and reform.

According to Bishop & Payne (2020) and Bozhkova & Halytsia (2022), the primary fiscal policy controllers in transitional economies are political elites who control all essential fiscal tools, including budgets, public investments, taxation systems, and external borrowing rights. The state resources flow toward productive investment when state officials possess both the necessary expertise and global governance network links, but they direct resources toward rent-seeking activities when they solve state problems through patronage systems.

The present political elite quality in Ukraine determines fiscal stability and economic resilience because the country still experiences oligarchic control and institutional weakness, according to Shapovalova et al. (2023) and Minakov (2023). The two elite archetypes create opposing fiscal results for transitional states. Globalized or technocratic elites who have studied abroad and have close ties with international institutions, pursue structural reforms to bring in foreign direct investment (FDI) and enforce fiscal discipline through transparent budgeting and efficient public spending (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025; Scholte Verhaegen & Tallberg, 2021). Oligarchic elites protect their monopolies and politically motivated subsidies from public scrutiny to achieve their immediate profit goals, which endangers fiscal stability and leads to increased debt accumulation (Tambunan, 2023; Wilson, 2023). The transitional economy's elite type determines whether the economy will succeed in achieving permanent financial stability or experience recurring fiscal emergencies.

Elite behaviour in Ukraine is shaped by both external pressures and domestic institutional constraints, which together influence fiscal outcomes. The IMF conditionality and EU fiscal benchmarks and currency stabilization requirements establish a framework that selects reform-oriented elites as preferred candidates according to Götz & Ekman (2024) and Dunford (2023). The ongoing war with Russia requires exceptional spending on defence and social protection, which creates a situation where oligarchic groups will try to take control of government funds for political gain (Barkawi, 2022; Focacci et al., 2022). The financial sustainability of Ukraine depends on both institutional design and elite composition and behaviour during global integration and conflict situations.

The existence of globalized elites leads to better fiscal indicators and structural reform compliance, while oligarchic dominance results in unstable fiscal conditions that restrict economic development (Shapovalova et al., 2023). Technocratic elites can use digitalization policies, public procurement transparency, judicial reform, and green transition policies to create structural reforms that will attract investments and help balance public finances (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022; Gumenyuk et al., 2021). Elite transformation in Ukraine has become a vital financial sustainability factor because it connects governance quality with the country's ability to handle debt, attract investments, and achieve macroeconomic stability during global market turbulence.

The process of political elite transformation in Ukraine directly impacts how structural reforms should be created and executed. The reform initiatives that these globalized technocratic elites implement enable economic modernization through their digital governance systems, their anti-corruption systems, their public procurement transparency systems, and their green energy conversion systems (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022). The elites who hold this position tend to direct their policy decisions toward European Union standards and International Monetary Fund requirements, which results in attracting foreign direct investment and enforcing fiscal discipline (Götz & Ekman, 2024; Shapovalova et al., 2023).

Oligarchic systems and closed systems function as obstacles to progress because they protect established interests through financial aid, special treatment agreements, and secretive regulatory practices. The economy suffers because these practices halt new concepts while they also create financial system waste and make it harder to maintain currency value during war-related funding demands and extensive national debt (Tambunan, 2023; Wilson, 2023). Data confirm that Ukrainian institutional advancements occur at a faster rate when reformist elites hold power because they build better investor trust and implement fiscal regulations more effectively.

The research underlines that oligarchic dominance leads to insufficient progress because it creates a state of incomplete system transformations, which emerge at an unsteady rate through specific operational activities (Shapovalova et al., 2023; Minakov, 2023). The process of elite transformation serves as a connection point that joins political modernization with economic results because the ruling class's quality and direction determine the success of structural reforms and the achievement of financial stability.

Fewer studies investigate how international institutional forces (such as IMF conditionality and EU *acquis*) have changed elite attitudes, priorities, or recruiting practices in Ukraine, even as several studies look at oligarchic domination. Furthermore, there are few comparative studies, especially in qualitative terms, that situate the transition of the Ukrainian elite within a broader global framework. Additionally, there is a dearth of thorough research on inter-elite struggles, particularly between new reformists and established oligarchic elites, many of whom have international educations and extensive networks. Technical modernization and decision-making structures increasingly depend on managers with international training and political technocrats, as demonstrated by the energy-sector reform case (Kalantayevskaya et al., 2022).

This study employs a composite theoretical framework that integrates ideas from three key theories to thoroughly analyse how political elites have evolved in response to globalization: Saskia Sassen's theory of globalization and transnational institutional influence, Vilfredo Pareto's model of the circulation of elites, and C. Wright Mills' structural elite theory. In the specific, complex sociopolitical conditions of Ukraine, this triadic approach would represent a multifaceted lens through which to view global dynamics concerning elite formation, power dynamics, and institutional configuration.

Structural Elite Theory was an expression invented by sociologist C. Wright Mills in his 1956 book, *The Power Elite*, which postulated that an ingroup of persons inhabiting key places in commerce, politics, and the military wield great effect in modern societies. These elites, normally originating from comparable upbringings and social loops, do not typically concern themselves with comparatively trivial public contributions when prompting public policy, which has instant penalties for democratic contribution. Mills contends that this attentiveness of influence is not a coincidence. Still, the elites have a curiosity in keeping control: colleges, think tanks, and specialized networks are among the institutions through which they remove themselves from those of the past. They uphold this rank quo for many years afterward.

Mills' theory, therefore, offers an understanding of the functioning of political power in Ukraine. According to Shevchuk et al. (2024), many Ukrainian elites are operating through informal networks of support that avoid the legal operation of political parties. These influences may comprise representatives, media characters, and business magnates, allowing a small cluster to uphold political influence and use impact disdain an electoral system with democratic institutions. This type of clarification offers insight into how Ukraine's elite power constructions have remained mainly intact despite significant and symbolic events, such as the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan uprisings in 2014. Mills' viewpoints highlight the struggle of displacing elite assemblies in democratic transition countries.

Vilfredo Pareto considered the theory of circulation of elites in *The Mind and Society* (1916). Pareto apprehended that in any form of domination, whether democratic or despotic, elites occur and disappear through selection, not exclusion. Pareto did not assume that political achievement leads to a more democratic government; in its place, he intended a cyclical procedure of change amongst elites whereby new power vessels tend to copy the activities of

their precursors. He classified elites into two major categories: "lions," who rely on tradition and authority, and "foxes," who are flexible, crafty, and manipulative. Pareto argued that political stability required a balance between the two elites, and dominance by any one group started an unstable or stagnating process. He believes elite circulation renders structural reform impossible, for in that process elite circulations instead reinforce than erode existing relations of power.

This model could lead to a better understanding of Ukraine's political development after 1991. Following the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan events, new characters came into play, several of whom hailed from civil society or were educated in the West. Many later adopted the more conventional practices of the elite, often seen as reformers; in point of fact, they mainly operated under the same hierarchical control and patronage systems.

According to Pareto, Ukraine's elite reform may be rather more of a human adjustment than a significant structural change. Herein lie crucial questions regarding how to distinguish between elite adaptation and genuine transformation in transitional democracies.

Sassen (2006), a Dutch-American sociologist, is the foremost authority on globalization. In her book, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, she defines the effect of globalization on the original foundations of power and how the elites operate within it. Unlike the theorists of the earlier globalized school who restricted their field of study to commerce and markets, Sassen emphasizes the transnational body, digital networks, and the creation of global cities as bearing on the meaning of nation-state sovereignty and elite power.

A concept that brings her Home is called "Denationalization," which implies the increasing application of international or foreign agents in the control of state operations and elite authority. New York, London, and Brussels, which are global capitals and financial hubs, also serve as media, intellectual, and political centers. The elites who operate in or close to these cities utilize these venues to escape national accountability frameworks.

This is sufficiently valuable knowledge to understand the elites emerging in Ukraine. A new branch of elites is emerging as a consequence of the country's efforts to deepen its contacts with Western institutions, particularly following the 2014 Euromaidan movement. Most have global influences, have studied out of the country, or were associated with international nongovernmental organizations (Bondarenko et al., 2022). These companies have donated to aligning Ukraine's internal policies with broader Western standards of democracy, directness, and change.

Sassen (2006) advises, yet, that these elites, whose national limits may be increasing or flouting down, will misplace their trust in their local groups. And, like in many transitioning democracies, these elites will be seen as loading onto the fragile democratic scaffolding foreign agendas, urging further anti-elitist counterattack, and confusing the alteration process. One of the main difficulties is the battle between local legitimacy and global engagement. In Sassen's mind, elite changeover is not just the replacement of old facts but the presence in a distant new power assembly. So, elite movement and resistance in Ukraine happen in two stages: as much interior, with intensely established oligarchic nets, as exterior, with globalizing services, with civil society frequently caught amid them.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the transformation of political elites in Ukraine in the context of globalization. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring complex political and institutional dynamics, particularly when the objective is to

understand the perceptions, motivations, and interactions of key actors involved in governance processes. Such an approach enables the identification of patterns in elite behaviour, institutional relationships, and reform trajectories that may not be easily captured through purely quantitative methods.

Case studies provide an effective method for systematically examining elite behaviour and relationships in complex social and political contexts (Yin, 2018). This paper improves its study and highlights the counterparts and alterations amid these political settings in comparison of Ukraine with Brazil, a middle-income democracy branded by well-established elite networks, and Poland, an affluent post-socialist nation that has positively joined the EU.

The research design combines semi-structured interviews with documentary analysis. This methodological combination allows for the triangulation of data sources and enhances the reliability of the findings. Interviews provide direct insights into the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in policymaking and reform processes, while documentary analysis offers contextual information on institutional reforms, governance initiatives, and policy developments.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals representing different segments of the Ukrainian political and institutional landscape. The interview participants included policymakers, government officials, civil society representatives, and experts involved in governance reform initiatives. This diversity of respondents allowed the study to capture multiple perspectives on elite transformation and the role of globalization in shaping governance structures.

The interviews focused on several key themes, including the recruitment and professional backgrounds of political elites, the influence of international institutions on domestic policy decisions, and the interaction between political actors, business groups, and civil society organizations. Respondents were also asked to assess the extent to which globalization has influenced the implementation of structural reforms in Ukraine.

In addition to interviews, the study analysed relevant policy documents, institutional reports, and publicly available materials related to governance reforms. These sources included government strategies, reform implementation reports, and analytical publications produced by international organizations and research institutions. Documentary analysis helped contextualize the interview data and provided additional evidence regarding institutional reform processes.

Target Sample Size

A purposive sample of 10–15 participants is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample structure

Category	Number	Target Diversity
Ukrainian political elites	5	Different parties, generations
Business representatives	3	Public-private sector mix
Civil society leaders	3	NGO/activist/media roles
International experts	2 – 4	EU, Poland, Brazil

Source: Authors' compilation based on purposive sampling of interview participants.

Questions on perceptions of how globalization affects elite structures, interactions with transnational organizations, and changes in the dynamics of elite, business, and civil society after Euromaidan are all included in the interview guide.

Document analysis will be done on the following to support interviews and address any possible access restrictions:

- Official speeches, legislative texts, and policy papers;
- Civil society reports (e.g., Transparency International Ukraine);
- Media investigations (e.g., Ukrainska Pravda, Kyiv Independent);
- Reports from institutions such as the IMF, EU Commission, and World Bank.

In addition to ensuring data validity, this multi-source triangulation will lessen elitist bias.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. This approach involves identifying recurring themes and patterns across interview responses and documentary sources. The analysis process consisted of several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions. The analysis followed several stages, including interview transcription, open coding, and axial coding to identify the main analytical themes (e.g., *elite reconstitution*, *external conditionality*, *civil society co-optation*). NVivo software was used to organize and visualize coded data and to support the identification of thematic patterns across interviews and documentary sources.

During the coding process, key themes were identified and grouped according to their relevance to the study's analytical framework. Particular attention was given to themes related to elite recruitment patterns, institutional reform dynamics, and the interaction between domestic political actors and international governance institutions. The themes were then compared across interview responses and documentary sources in order to identify areas of convergence and divergence.

To improve analytical reliability, themes were reviewed and refined iteratively throughout the research process. The resulting thematic structure enabled the identification of broader patterns in elite transformation and reform implementation within the Ukrainian political system.

Given the politically sensitive nature of elite studies, particular attention was paid to ethical considerations during data collection and analysis. Participation in interviews was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent prior to the interviews. To protect participants' identities and reduce potential political risks, responses were anonymized during transcription and analysis. Only aggregated findings are presented in the study to ensure confidentiality.

The study also acknowledges contextual limitations related to conducting research in a conflict-affected and politically volatile environment. Access to certain respondents and institutional documents was limited, and some interview responses may reflect strategic positioning or political sensitivities. To mitigate these challenges, the study relied on triangulation between interviews and documentary sources and focused on identifying recurring patterns across multiple sources rather than relying on individual statements. This approach helped strengthen the robustness of the analytical conclusions.

3. Research Results

This part offers the study's results, resulting from a thematic examination of the interviews and article reviews. These results are organized into four major themes based on the research topics:

- Transformation of elite composition under globalization;
- Shifting relationships with power, business, and civil society;
- Global vs. Ukrainian elite dynamics;
- Impact on socio-economic reforms and inequality.

Anonymized quotes are used to support each theme, and policy documents, studies, and international comparisons are consulted for cross-referencing.

The sociological composition and recruitment practices of Ukraine's political elites have changed as a result of globalization. The results show that, especially after Euromaidan and in response to pressure from Euro-Atlantic institutions, there has been a gradual but noticeable movement toward younger, globally educated, and technocratically oriented elites.

Our current ministers have attended universities in Berlin, Paris, and London. This was uncommon ten years ago. Along with people, globalization also came with expectations. (U-P1, MP, Ukraine, interviewee)

Even while a large number of elites still come from industry or government, previous cabinets have featured technocrats from the private sector and leaders of non-governmental organizations, particularly in the Ministry of Digital Transformation and anti-corruption agencies. Compared to Poland, where generational change has largely eliminated past communist-era power holders, this country exhibits more advanced elite turnover. On the other hand, reformists and oligarch-affiliated players coexist in Ukraine's hybrid elite system (Bondarenko et al. 2022)

According to interviews, under EU and IMF supervision, globalization has promoted institutional decoupling, especially in security, judicial, and regulatory institutions. "Most reforms, particularly judicial reforms, would languish in the absence of IMF or EU benchmarks. At times, our elites react more to Brussels than to civil society" (Interviewee U-G2, advisor for governance).

Robust oligarchic elites have long dominated Ukraine's business sector, mainly in key segments such as heavy industry, media, and energy. Before 2014, these oligarchs had extended unsanctioned influence over campaign fundraising, political policymaking, and regulatory assemblies, resulting in a closed-loop system where political power and corporate interests were closely linked. Transparency was often marginalized, and this equally beneficial linking strengthened clientelism.

Though there have been distinguished fluctuations in these elite-business relations after the 2014 Euromaidan movement and the start of the Russian war. These informal networks have increasingly come under pressure from external scrutiny, including international sanctions and anti-corruption initiatives led by organizations such as the National Agency for Corruption Prevention (NACP) and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU). Interviewees disclose that, though oligarchic power remains noteworthy, it has diminished, representing a gradual yet obvious erosion of conservative business-political ties.

Amongst the current alterations of Ukraine's business setting are the following:

- Augmented contribution from the Western side since 2014, as political uncertainty and weak controlling outlines discouraged such appointment before. The rise in

appointments is chiefly due to Ukraine's program toward EU values, enticing foreign direct investment, and resolutions for further incorporation into global markets.

- Importantly understated traditionally, the SMEs are becoming courageous in both political and economic events. This change aligns with alterations to guidelines aimed at endorsing entrepreneurship, easing market entry, and gathering political provision for this rising sector (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022).

Table 2. Summary of Elite-Business Dynamics in Ukraine

Actor Type	Influence Pre-2014	Influence Post-2014	Trend
Oligarchic Elites	High	Moderate	↓ Declining
Western Investors	Low	Increasing	↑ Rising
SME representatives	Negligible	Moderate	↑ Rising

Source: Authors' compilation.

Subsequently 2014, oligarchic supremacy has reduced, as seen by the downward-pointing projectile. Even though they are still influential, their comparative effect has reduced as a result of international criticism and anti-corruption initiatives that have augmented the option of overt political-business partnership (Table 2).

The rising arrow shows that Western capital and commercial actors are becoming more intricate and powerful. Their rising impact encourages power changes, market liberalization, and convergence to European standards. An increasing arrow titles this group, which embodies the rising meaning of small and medium-sized enterprises. As the driving force behind economic change, SMEs create jobs and are more involved in politics, supporting laws that inspire entrepreneurship.

Public society oversight has been strengthened by globalization, chiefly thanks to global regulator models and aid from the EU and USAID. Analytical media and NGOs are consolidating their accountability of elites. "Our impact increased after Maidan, but numerous elites now construct NGOs or co-opt civic platforms to imitate obedience" (Interviewee U-C3, civil society leader).

Ukraine demonstrates relatively strong civil society engagement in elite political discourse. but lags behind Brazil and Poland in terms of formalizing elite accountability systems. For example, Ukrainian elites rely more on media ownership and unofficial coalitions, which are frequently bolstered by narratives about conflict. In contrast, Brazilian elites typically preserve power through party structures and federalism (Khylo & Khylo, 2024).

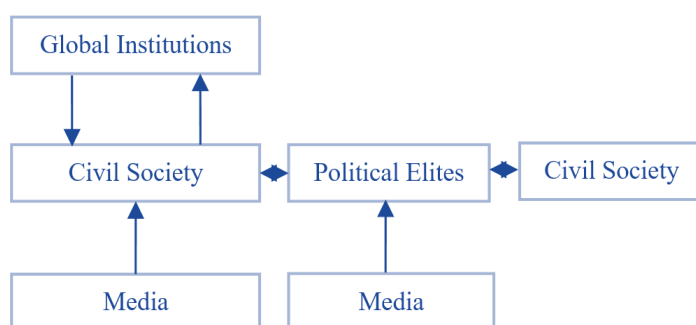
The following reform results have been influenced by elite change brought about by globalization:

- The majority of respondents named public procurement reform (ProZorro) as a success story propelled by elite buy-in and international norms.
- Social inequality is still considerable; despite outside pressure, established business elites opposed tax and pension reform.
- Civil society respondents pointed out that although there was elite turnover, there was no redistribution of wealth.

"In Parliament, we have changed the nomenclature, but not the privilege or access structure. Informal rules continue to defend disparity. (Interviewee U-C1, anti-corruption NGO)

The transformation of governance structures in the post-globalization environment increasingly reflects the interaction of multiple stakeholders operating across national and transnational levels. Decision-making processes are no longer shaped solely by domestic political institutions but are influenced by a broader network of actors, including global institutions, media organizations, civil society groups, and political elites. To conceptualize these multidirectional relationships, Figure 1 illustrates the main channels of stakeholder influence within the post-globalization context.

Figure 1: Stakeholder influence in the post-globalization governance framework



Source: Authors' synthesis based on interview data and document coding.

Figure 1 presents a simplified conceptual framework of stakeholder interactions. Global institutions influence domestic civil society actors, while political elites operate as central intermediaries connecting different stakeholder groups. Media organizations serve as information conduits that both shape and transmit narratives between political elites and civil society. The bidirectional arrows emphasize the dynamic nature of influence, indicating that communication and pressure flow in multiple directions rather than through a strictly hierarchical structure. Overall, the framework highlights how governance in the post-globalization era is increasingly mediated by interconnected institutional and societal actors.

4. Discussion

This part examines the paper's results within the background of the theoretical basis and the wider scientific literature on globalization and political elites. It establishes how globalization is renovating the arrangement of Ukraine's elites and their relations with society, opposing these dynamics with instances from around the world, and reflects the implications for socioeconomic growth.

This unit debates the clarification of results concerning globalization and elite renovation in Ukraine. The outcomes of such alterations are understood in: power, business, and civil society, in their features, including demographic change, particularly behaviour as a real event from the time after 2014 in Ukraine, with respect to Euromaidan.

The post-Euromaidan reversal in political elites has transported generational and expert variations in Ukraine. More and more new individuals with a background in teaching from the past are entering the political arena after getting work in the private sector, international organizations, or NGOs. Reform-oriented ministries and advisory positions are introducing them into politics and governance. This demographic change exemplifies Pareto's theory at work in elite flow, where an outside shock wave, such as a revolt, drives a comparatively enhanced income of elites. These new leaders are more content with the governance values of the European Union, as they promote more or less technocratic, rule-based approaches than those popularly driven, patronage-based politics.

Globalization has also contributed to redesigning the relations between elites and trades. The appearance of new political actors has often favoured cornerstone creativities on anti-corruption and slide in public gaining through ProZorro and a list of other economic liberalizers that contested with rooted oligarchic nets (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025; Mbabu & Gulali, 2024). Most of these signs would designate a decrease in impact, particularly ministerially, as power by traditional elites has continued to be important in the most critical subdivisions, such as energy and media. Still competing with each other is this double construction, thoughtful of the competition between globalized reformist elites and the oligarchs with origins in the national scene.

In post-Maidan Ukraine, civil society has managed to strengthen its advocacy, partly through international support and global norms of accountability. Institutionalizing watchdog functions, strengthening participatory mechanisms, and increasing the visibility of civic actors are contributions of globalization. The new elites often have backgrounds in civil society and international NGOs. They are more prone to public scrutiny and accepting accountability practices, differentiating themselves from the older political networks whose opacity and informal arrangements have fostered their purposes.

In general, globalization has brought about a partial change in Ukraine's political elite, characterized by a generational shift, greater openness to global norms, and changing connections with both business and civil society. However, all these elements coexist, and abstract oligarchic constructs persist across these changes, resulting in a fusion of the two elite structures.

Transformations within Ukraine's elite indeed reflect and contest classical and contemporary theorized elites, as well as globalization.

The theory of the power elite, as proposed by C. Wright Mills, refers to a tightly connected elite class that dominates political, military, and economic spheres through its institutionalized networks. This is partly true of Ukraine, especially with the elder oligarchs being in control of media, energy, and parliamentary coalitions. However, Mills' structurally integrated elite does not give impartiality in the case of Ukraine, as its elite outline remains runny and disjointed. Power is still chiefly individualized, and coherence within the elite is feeble, marked by unstable associations that replace official steadiness. This exemplifies a hybrid elite scheme where informal oligarchic supremacy exists with developing technocratic activists, a construction that deviates from Mills' centralized model.

The admission of globally cultured, reform-minded persons into Ukraine's political elite after the 2014 Euromaidan revolution reproduces Pareto's idea of elite flow. New elites replace the old after a social transformation. The emerging elites are indeed gaining space in the political arena, but will not completely replace established actors: Ukraine exhibits a layered transition rather than a complete replacement. This cohabitation proposes a nonlinear lapping model of elite alteration under globalization.

This feature exemplifies how the effect of international agencies, such as the EU and the IMF, as well as many Western-funded non-governmental organizations, has certainly shaped an elite class of international elites in Ukraine. These actors are most frequently foreign-educated, which gives them a net link to global organizations and brands them more in tune with exterior standards concerning policy and behaviour. An appearance of the international elite corps, as seen in Saskia Sassen, whereby national actors adopt global norms, creating dual answerability: one for international stakeholders and the other for local electorates.

David Held's (1999) idea is that globalization leads not to consistency but to cross-form interceded contextually, finds robust assertion in the case of Ukraine. The connection between technocrats and entrenched oligarchs exemplifies a hybrid elite assembly, formed both by global pressure and national historical legacies.

Related to Poland, which established elite income through EU agreement, party system growth, and administrative reform, elite regeneration in Ukraine is at least semi-formalized and ad hoc, prepared under support nets and with wartime instability. Routinized recruitment of political elites would be inhibited not only by the absence of well-structured political parties but also by inadequate civil service mechanisms.

Both Brazil and Ukraine exhibit informal characteristics and are entangled with elite-business interests. However, civil society participation in these two countries differs significantly. In Brazil, elite influence is facilitated and perhaps protected by rooted party structures and federal preparations. Equally, in the post-Maidan setting stated above, civic activism and regulatory roles have been authorized, thereby providing a means for reformist elites. Though this situation contributes to elite variability as new actors face official breakability and political confrontation.

The outflow of cosmopolitan elites related to international investment and education in Brazil is similar to that found in transformed Ukraine. Though one might claim that in Ukraine, the difficulties with their multicultural elite run deeper, in contrast to Brazil, where the imitation of elites is more entrenched within the party-state construction. These contingent effects illustrate how globalization varies in relation to the capacity of national institutions, the strength of civil society, and historical configurations of elites.

Elite Transformation and Structural Reforms

The transformation of Ukraine's political leadership has had direct implications for the implementation of economic structural reforms. The emerging technocratic elite, supported by international networks and specialized expertise, has promoted a reform agenda aimed at strengthening fiscal sustainability, improving institutional transparency, and attracting foreign investment. These initiatives often interact with domestic economic actors, including oligarchic business groups, shaping both the pace and the scope of reform implementation. Table 3 summarizes several key reforms introduced in recent years with their corresponding economic significance in terms of efficiency gains, governance improvements, and investment attractiveness

Table 3: Major Structural Reforms in Ukraine and Their Economic Implications

Reform	Economic Meaning
Digitalization (Diia)	Reduces transaction costs, increases efficiency in public services, and improves transparency (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022)
ProZorro	Enhances public expenditure efficiency, reduces procurement corruption, and maximizes budget impact (Shapovalova et al., 2023)
Green Transition	Attracts ESG-focused foreign investment and fosters sustainable economic growth (Bozhkova & Halytsia, 2022)
Judicial Reform	Lowers investment risk by strengthening property rights and contract enforcement, boosting investor confidence (Gumenyuk et al., 2021).
Anti-Corruption Measures	Improves tax compliance, reduces rent-seeking, and increases fiscal revenue (Shapovalova et al., 2023)

Source: Authors' compilation.

Table 4 presents selected governance and fiscal risk indicators for Ukraine, Poland, and Brazil, including the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores and projected debt-to-GDP ratios. These indicators provide a comparative framework for assessing institutional transparency, governance quality, and fiscal sustainability across transitional and emerging economies.

Table 4: Corruption Perceptions and Public Debt Indicators Across Selected Economies

Country	2024 CPI Score	Debt-to-GDP Ratio (2025)
Ukraine	35 (105th of 180)	~106.5 % of GDP (projected)
Poland	53 (53rd of 180)	~58.1 % of GDP
Brazil	~34 (similar low score)	~77.8 % of GDP

Note: CPI scores from Transparency International (2024). Debt-to-GDP projections based on IMF and national statistical sources.

Source: Authors' compilation.

The CPI data released by Transparency International (2024) indicate that Ukraine's score (35) remains lower than Poland's (53) and is broadly comparable to Brazil's (approximately 34), suggesting higher perceived corruption levels in Ukraine and Brazil relative to Poland. At the same time, Ukraine's projected debt-to-GDP ratio (approximately 106.5%) substantially exceeds that of Poland (58.1%) and Brazil (77.8%), reflecting the fiscal pressures associated with wartime expenditures and reliance on international financial assistance.

From a political economy perspective, these differences illustrate how institutional quality and elite configuration influence macroeconomic outcomes. According to institutional economics, stronger governance structures, characterized by transparent institutions, credible legal frameworks, and professionalized political elites, reduce transaction costs and improve policy credibility, thereby enhancing fiscal discipline and investor confidence. Poland's relatively higher CPI score and lower debt ratio can therefore be interpreted as outcomes of more stable institutional arrangements and a technocratic policy orientation embedded within European governance frameworks.

Conversely, lower institutional trust and weaker governance mechanisms tend to increase fiscal vulnerability, as governments rely more heavily on debt financing and external support. In this context, Ukraine's fiscal trajectory reflects both structural institutional constraints and the extraordinary fiscal demands generated by the wartime environment. The comparison therefore highlights the broader theoretical proposition advanced in elite theory: the orientation, professional capacity, and international embeddedness of governing elites significantly shape policy effectiveness and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Addressing the Research Questions

This section synthesizes the findings with respect to the original research questions and situates them in appropriate theoretical and comparative frameworks.

RQ1: In what manner does globalization shape the composition and behaviour of political elites in Ukraine as well as in other global environments?

Globalization has reshaped the composition of Ukraine's elite primarily on three fronts: generational turnover, foreign education, and exposure to transnational norms. The post-Euromaidan influx of younger and globally educated professionals, mostly politically experienced in international organizations or civil society, into political and bureaucratic activity is a visible confirmation of trends detected in other transition countries (e.g., cosmopolitan

elites in Brazil and technocratic elites in Poland) and thus provides further credence to theories of elite pluralization and transnational influence (Held et al., 1999; Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025; Mbabu & Gulali, 2024).

However, unlike in more consolidated democracies, reformist elites in Ukraine coexist with, rather than replace, entrenched oligarchic actors, making such hybrid arrangements extremely troublesome to the linear elite transformation supposition. This leads to another interpretation of elite change, suggesting that global drivers propel these partial changes in behaviour (e.g., increased transparency, technocratic governance) that stop short of relegating traditional power holders to the fringes. Accordingly, this finding adds to the literature by conceptualizing the inherent resilience of informal structures in extremely globalized but weakly institutionalized contexts.

RQ2: In what way are global economic and political pressures transforming the relationships of political elites with power structures, business, and civil society in Ukraine?

Globalization pressures, especially those exerted by the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and Western donors, have reshaped elite relations with institutional power, business interests, and civil society. It is these pressures that would incite normative shifts toward transparency, such as ProZorro, meritocratic hiring, and legal reforms. This has finally limited the unopposed clout of oligarchic networks, particularly in sectors affected by foreign capital or regulatory values.

However, this is not an alteration that is being made uniformly. Some activist elites have allied themselves with civil society and international actors, while others have appointed the global discourse to uphold their grip on control, thereby duplicating informalism in another appearance. The civil society, after 2014, arose as a more influential force acting in the capacity of a regulator and for accountability. In contrast to Brazil, in which federal buildings insulate elites, Ukraine's disjointed power structure illogically creates better entry points for civil society while interpreting a larger degree of elite variability.

These results partly validate Held's (1999) claim that globalization facilitates elite-institution relations with numerous outcomes in a de-homogenizing sense, while spreading Mills' theory by representing that global forces may thus weaken rather than reinforce elite unity.

RQ3: How do these altered relationships produce socio-economic variations in the domains of reforms or disparities in Ukraine, in contrast with global trends?

These variations in elite subtleties include shifts in process, such as augmented transparency in obtaining systems, anti-corruption outlines, and limited decentralization. On the whole, though, such labours have failed to speak to the significant structural disparities. As a result, most of the improvement effort emphasizes presentation rather than redistributive justice, representing a technical approach to global norms rather than a deeper socio-economic alteration. That design resembles Brazil's knowledge, where improvements for transparency coexisted with ever-present disparity.

Globalization, then, has raised in Ukraine a social layer of elites that is more receptive to the gravity of external accountability. Yet, the fruits of reform are unfairly allocated, chiefly to urban, connected people. This result calls into question the naive viewpoint that elite

globalization means broad-based expansion and highlights the role of national power assemblies in mediating global weight.

The elite alteration in Ukraine can only be understood by factorization in its weird geopolitical and official context on the one hand, and the continuing war between Ukraine and Russia, as well as its enhanced sequence towards European Union incorporation, on the other hand. Such an alteration comes with quite some inconsistencies at the level of elite behaviour.

Russia's full-scale assault, which began in 2022, has multifaceted effects on elite dynamics. While on the one hand, the centralization of the decision-making expert and delay of electoral income can be defensible in most areas with the need for attentiveness in decision-making created by warfare, some political statistics have used patriotic fustian in an attempt to protect themselves from inspection or answerability in public; henceforth, informal power practices have strengthened. The war, on the other hand, has required urgent preparations, including swift arrangements with Western norms, especially in areas such as defence procurement, anti-corruption, and digital governance.

Therefore, it has augmented the Europeanization of the elite in certain areas, though it has supported endurances among the elite in others. This is a feature of the broader hybridization theme where weights to globalize get arbitrated through domestic crises and flexibility logics.

EU candidacy in 2022 put strong external conditions on the elite's behaviour of change. The reform benchmarks of the European Commission for continental membership included those on judicial independence, anti-corruption bodies, and media pluralism. Additionally, in precise sectors of the elite, these standards instil obedience with EU values, chiefly among reformist technocrats. Unfortunately, compliance is partial and politically selective. Legislative initiatives targeting monopolies in media and offshore assets have been passed, but oligarchic control remains evident in the energy and infrastructure sectors (Shapovalova et al. (2023).

In comparison with Poland's post-accession trajectories, where institutional routinization in elite recruitment and party competition has transformed into institutionalization, Ukraine's path today is more volatile. Elite transformation is externally driven but internally fragmented, resulting in uneven adoption of democratic norms in the country.

For a long time, Ukraine's political development has been characterized by weak party institutions, personalist networks, and oligarchic patronage, which have complicated elite renewal even under external pressures. However, the rise of civil society and independent watchdogs, the majority of which are connected to global donors, in the post-Maidan context formed another channel of accountability through which the older elite's impunity is challenged. The pressure exerted by civil society above and EU conditionality below sets Ukraine apart from Hungary and other ex-socialist states, where elite closure is so pervasive that it goes unchecked.

There are certain limitations in this study. First, although the sample size was small, purposive sampling and triangulation with policy documents and public statements enhanced the validity of the limited elite interviews. Second, access to high-ranking elites, especially those linked with oligarchic networks, was restricted. File examination and secondary data narrowed this limit. Third, elite descriptions may have been exaggerated by self-reporting prejudice. To minimize this, answers were cross-verified with the use of autonomous sources, such as Transparency International reports and NGO files. These stages safeguarded a more stable clarification notwithstanding operational access restraints.

Conclusion

This study examined how globalization influences the transformation of political elites in Ukraine, with particular attention to their evolving relationships with business actors, civil society, and institutional governance structures. The findings indicate that globalization has facilitated the emergence of a new cohort of internationally educated and technocratically oriented elites, while simultaneously reshaping interactions between political elites, oligarchic business groups, and civic actors. Despite these shifts, post-Maidan Ukraine demonstrates a hybrid elite configuration in which technocratic, activist, and oligarchic elements coexist within a multi-layered power structure.

The results further suggest that the socioeconomic effects of these transformations remain uneven. While reforms such as digital governance and transparency initiatives have improved administrative efficiency and strengthened institutional accountability, deeper redistributive changes have been more limited. These patterns indicate that although globalization exerts significant pressure for institutional modernization, the direction and extent of elite transformation continue to be shaped by domestic political economy structures, historical institutional legacies, and the constraints associated with the ongoing war.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to elite and globalization scholarship by illustrating how external governance norms interact with domestic elite circulation. The findings support Pareto's concept of elite renewal while also highlighting the role of transnational networks in reshaping elite cohesion. Future research should expand comparative and quantitative analyses to further examine how elite backgrounds and institutional contexts influence reform trajectories in transitional and conflict-affected economies.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Nazarchuk, O. contributed to the conceptualization of the study and the formulation of the research framework. Ostapenko, M. was responsible for the development of the research methodology and the theoretical analysis of political elite transformation. Nikolaieva, T. conducted data collection and data curation, including the organization and interpretation of qualitative interview materials. Lysenko, Y. performed the formal analysis and contributed to the interpretation of empirical findings. Kulyk, V. participated in the investigation process, supported the literature review, and contributed to the preparation and editing of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical Approval Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the guidelines of the Ukrainian National Research Ethics Committee. All interview participants provided informed consent, and their identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and all collected data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team.

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