

UKRAINIAN ELITE NETWORK: BUSINESS VS. POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

The paper presents a map of business ties between members of the Ukrainian political elite (and overlaps with other types of connections) based on an analysis of elite members' common biographical experiences. The research objectives were: to identify interlocks and subgroups within elite circles, focusing specifically on common business affiliations as defined by previous employment of political elite members by the same enterprise; and to analyze the patterns of informal contacts of key actors in the group of 'businessmen-politicians'.

Keywords: *Ukrainian political elites, business networks, central actors, power interlocks.*

As evidenced by an increasing number of publications on the topic, during the last decade social researchers in Ukraine and abroad, as well as journalists and political analysts, have tended to pay a great deal of attention to the phenomenon of so called 'oligarchs', or 'business groups'. Some authors argue that one of the defining characteristics of the post-Socialist state is the mutual affiliation of political elites with big enterprises and vice versa (they describe 'clans' and so called 'oligarchs'), which enables key political-business actors to use political capital and positional power to secure resources for their businesses and increase their profits [1]. Though these studies emphasize the importance of informality in elite functioning and decision-making processes, they do not paint an overall picture of the relational structures that exist between power agents. Other authors trace connections between economic and political elites by analyzing the levels of funding of political parties originating from 'business groups', thus showing a kind of hidden governance of the state through informal linkages between business and political actors [5]. Such studies apply approaches to exploring power interlocks between interest groups developed in the US where contributions to election campaigns from different companies and directorates are commonly traced [13].

However, the extent to which these financial contributions make business actors really important agents in decision-making remains an open question, especially taking into account the official positions in power structures of key 'businessmen-politicians' – as heads or deputy heads in parliamentary committees, for instance. Identification of overlapping biographical experience may assist in the analysis of formal and informal connections between political elite members affiliated with business activities, and result in a map of the network of such

overlapping connections between political elite members, thus helping to define key actors within this network.

Embeddedness of economic elites in governing structures

The role of informal connections between businesses of large or medium size and state authorities, as well as different favourable outcomes of such cohesion was widely explored and described in studies referring to the phenomenon of the 'Komsomol economy' in the late USSR and afterwards, during 'privatization' [3; 14; 19; 9; etc.]. Recent research on Ukrainian banks and their affiliation with political authorities has shown that the efficiency of banks' business activity to a large extent depends on interaction with governing and legislative authorities on national and regional levels [6].

Within this paper, the concept of elites refers to the *overlapping higher circles* of people connected together through their affiliation with several power institutions, i.e. occupying strategic positions in large corporations, civic organizations, and governing authorities being able to influence state decision-making regularly [12]. Consequently, big companies or even groups of companies should aim to have influence on political authorities through lobbies in government or parliament. In order to understand the functionality of this influence, the researcher is prompted to investigate 'elite networks'¹ – a key concept within this research. Mills emphasized that an increasing number of overlaps between economic, military and political structures leads to reciprocity which may be observed as state

¹ Concepts of 'power interlocks', or 'interlocking directorates', became actively explored after Mills' work titled "Power Elite"[12] which in particular distinguished so called 'higher cycles' – elite members interconnected through membership in common political, economic and military authorities.

influence on business and enterprises, and vice versa where private sector actors have impact on state decision-making processes.

American researchers William Domhoff [8] and later Michael Patrick Allen [4], argued that ‘interlocks of directors’ result when top-managers (non-owners) are invited to sit on corporate boards not only because of their professionalism but also due to their interpersonal connections with each other – a common practice among successful companies nowadays. Domhoff also remarked that interlocks are extremely important for fostering information flows within a corporate network, and in addition, these interlocking actors are often invited to sessions of state committees. This approach continues previous research on ‘interlocking directorates’, i.e. between corporations, banks, and state institutions [4; 16].

Resources and networks

One of the reasons individuals seek to enter elite groups is that they provide opportunities to access exclusive and/or substantial resources of various types. As Olga Kryshchanovskaya argued [3], those who are in the center of the state organizational hierarchy accumulate and personify political capital. On the one hand, the fact of one’s membership in the political elite enables the use of resources that are concentrated in a particular position, and on the other hand, different forms of capital are exchanged during the process of one’s vertical or horizontal mobility. Kryshchanovskaya describes the political space as a market where individuals trade and make deals. Consequently, the more transactions and contracts one is involved in, the wider network he or she has, and the more obligations he or she has exchanged with other actors. Here, two components are emphasized – transactions, or relations, and obligations closely connected with trust.

Several authors have suggested that continuous interaction and resource exchange in general, and social capital accumulation in particular, provide a basis for the development of social network analysis (SNA) as a unique research approach. Thus, Lin and Burt argued that network interaction results in the formation of stable structures; effective capitalization of resources, their accumulation and multiplication results in social group cohesion – especially in states undergoing transformation or during rapid social changes [11: 3–25]. Lin emphasized that social capital accumulated through the operation of network ties actually stimulates the circulation of other kinds of resources during interaction.

Trust as a crucial component of social capital is one of the factors that assist in building informal

networks. Actually, this component exists due to social embeddedness and continuous interaction, adding density to the network and stability to its structure. Sztopka mentioned two types of trust – personal and institutional [15]. Under the circumstances of transition, when changes in social structures are rapid, the importance of interpersonal trust for transacting parties increases because actors are limited in their ability to appeal to common cultural or social patterns (norms) shared by all. At the same time, interpersonal trust can serve as a basis for the building and functioning of social networks when institutional trust is low and social norms unstable. Thus, members of a business elite who are connected with each other through ties grounded on interpersonal trust can feel safer in a ‘partnership’ network where even a small piece of information about one’s unreliability or trickery might exclude the actor from the network – a form of punishment that precludes further communication or transactions with network members. When interpersonal trust is present in relations between business and state authorities, the economic activity of enterprises controlled by network members is safer and more stable.

Consequently, social capital as a network-based resource is also important in establishing the ‘rules of the game’ – norms of interaction acceptable for the majority of actors within the network. During a period of transition when old norms are eliminated (discredited) but new ones are still to be formulated, actors need to reach consensus regarding the interpretation of norms. Interpersonal trust then becomes the basic condition for effective interaction – at least until formal and informal rules become institutionalized.

In summary: when political and business elite networks overlap, trust develops, as economic agents gain influence on state decision-making, while political agents profit from business. One of the ways to explore the overlapping of business and political elites is to apply the concept of ‘interlocking directorates’ and to investigate the network ties of members of the political elite with big business. Specifically, we analyze recent business affiliations of Ukraine’s Parliamentary deputies – a link that is especially important due to the frequency of elections in Ukraine, and the fact that these campaigns are presented in the mass media as ‘struggles for resources’.

Methodology

Publications on power networks and interlocking directorates are focused on different topics – from mapping the interlocks to forecasting how network members may behave in the future. In this paper, the possible network connections within

Ukraine's political elite are analyzed using social network analysis, specifically the concept of affiliation networks [17:291–307] widely applied in the research of political and policy networks [10]. As Wellman argues, the networks perspective broadens analyses of inter-individual connections by focusing on interpersonal ties that do not form strict groups, but rather are flexible and not limited to exact groups [18:19–49].

Within this paper, the SNA approach was applied to trace the overlapping of economic connections between the political elite members with other types of ties between them¹. The main tasks were:

- a) to map linkages between members of the political elite
- b) to analyze the overlaps between different types of ties,
- c) to identify key players in the subset of actors connected with common business affiliations in the past.

Analysis of elite member biographies was conducted first to identify possible ties between the actors based on common biographical experiences. The initial data allowed for a depiction of five types of ties – political, economic, civic, educational, and kinship. For purposes of this paper the subset of those elite members who appeared to have common experience of owning or managing businesses in the past were extracted from a larger dataset. Thus, the final sample included 79 actors and five types of ties between them, with the analysis focusing on overlaps between business connections and other types of linkages.

Empirical Results

Analysis of official biographies of political elite members showed that business ties appeared to be not as numerous as expected in the beginning of the research project – a fact that may derive from a widely held assumption that some deputies prefer not to mention their business affiliations in their official published biographies.

In order to specifically investigate the role of business network ties in Ukraine's political sphere the group of 79 actors with common business activity in their pasts was extracted. Chart 1 displays business ties only². Thus the number of actors is smaller in order to show only those political elite

members whose biographies provided information about overlapping periods of being employed as a top-manager or director by the same enterprise, or being shareholders of the same company. Mapped ties show affiliations with the same enterprise.

In the next stage of analysis, the political ties (i.e. common membership in Parliamentary committees of the previous terms, overlapping periods of work in the state and/or local authorities of the legislative and/or governmental branches, the role of a local representative of the presidential candidate, etc.) of those politicians with common business biographies were analyzed. Specifically, this meant identifying previous common work in a state or local administrative organ in addition to common business ownership and/or firm management. The results are shown in Chart 2 below.

When comparing the structure of connections on these two charts, one can notice that 'business' and 'political' ties generally do not overlap. This finding may be explained by a possible strategy of politicians: two (or more) political elite members who have common business affiliations may wish to expand their network further, to establish connections with colleagues in Parliament, to diversify opportunities to influence legislation and state decision-making through different committees and commissions.

Finally, the analysis of the most 'leading' actors within this group of businessmen-politicians was complied running the procedure of centrality measures analysis³. In order to define actors with the highest possible level of influence, centrality measures should be calculated for each node, i.e., degree and betweenness centrality measures which show the level of actor's influence in different ways depending on: a) an actor's own connectedness, number of direct ties with alters, and b) one's position as a 'gate-keeper' between different dense subgroups of actors [17]. Thus, actors can be perceived as influential and powerful through being well-connected *directly* or *indirectly* with others.

As it is stated by Wasserman and Faust, the measure of degree centrality "is focused on the most visible actors in the network", and key persons thus can be defined as those who occupy a central network location, thus appearing to act as a "major channel of relational information" (17:178–180). These actors can be perceived as influential and powerful due to their roles in making the network more dense and cohesive.

Table in Appendix 1 allows for a comparison of actors according to their degree centrality scores, showing indicator values in each of five types of

¹ The complete data includes 493 biographies of political elite members (including MPs, Ministers of the Cabinet of Ministers, and high-level functionaries within the Presidential Administration). The biographical data was collected from the web-pages of state institutions, from periodicals, handbooks such as "Who is who in Ukraine", and from the press interviews with them. Besides, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted during last two years to verify the connections based on common biographical experiences of elite members. For more details on sample description and SNA method application, please, see [2].

² UCINET software package with application NetDraw was used for running network statistics and network visualization [17].

³ In general, a network measure that determines the relative importance of an actor within the network based on the relational pattern of each actor with regard to the rest of the network [17].



ring to their connections. Accordingly, the following subgroups of actors can be identified among those who were affiliated with a common business enterprise in the past:

- a) the first subgroup includes those whose degree centrality scores are much higher than the mean for business ties, but their scores for other possible connections (i.e. of other types) are low. This situation can be explained as having been a result of the relatively short experiences of such actors as members of state authorities in general and Parliament in particular (i.e. *Akhmetov, Vilkul, Prasolov, Hlushchenko, Hlazunov, etc.*)
- b) the second subgroup includes those whose degree centrality is high as a result of their political ties being higher than average. In some cases this large number of political connections is due to their having been members of Parliament during several previous terms, working in different committees during different terms (i.e. *Baburin, BuriakOV, Vasadze, Bilorus, Dovhyi, Demianko, Zviahillskyi, Zhevaho, Labunska, Lukianov, Osyka, Tretiakov, etc.*). These actors generally have only 1–2 ‘business’ connections (i.e. previous employment in the same enterprise), which is a low number compared to actors from the previous group, but this cannot be taken as evidence of their low business activity – official biographies and other official information sources may omit this kind of data. This will be the subject of further verification during future interview research;
- c) the third subgroup of analyzed actors has high degree centrality scores not only for political ties but also for civic, meaning that these political elite members head philanthropic, party, sport, or scientific-research organizations. This subgroup is somewhat similar with the previous one in that high scores for degree centrality of their political ties are a result of their having been members of multiple previous Parliaments (i.e. *Yankovskyi, Sobolev, Skudard, Stetskiy, KliuevAP, Kolesnikov, Hudyma, Bohdan, etc.*)

Further analysis of the 79 actors’ positions in Parliamentary committees yielded additional findings. There are five committees that play a major role in the economic development of the state: the Economic Policy Committee, the Budget Committee, the Industrial and Regulatory Policy and Entrepreneurship Committee, the Finance and Banking Committee, the Committee on Taxation and Customs Policy. Three more committees provide legislative initiatives important for economic development on a national and international level: the Committee on Fuel and Energy Complex, Nuclear Policy and Nuclear Safety, the Agrarian Policy and Land Relations Committee, and the Transport and Communications Committee. These eight committees (from a total of 27) construct and support the legislative framework of the Ukrainian economy, both on national and international levels.

The distribution of the analyzed network members (consisting of 79 political elite actors) across Parliamentary committees during 2007–2009¹ was the following: 49 actors from all 79 appear as members of the eight committees dealing with economically important issues (see Table 2). Those five committees that are directly involved in national economic issues include from 6 to 10 representatives of the sample each, and those committees that are mostly focused on economic issues within a specific sphere have 3–10 persons from the group of ‘businessmen-politicians’ each. What is more important, those actors appear not only as ordinary members of the committees but as deputy chairmen, even 1st deputy chairmen in some cases, and chairmen of subcommittees that focus on particular issues within one committee.

Results displayed in the Table 2 can be treated as evidence of the primarily economic interests of parliamentarians who were affiliated with business before coming to politics, and supports the claim that such political elite members sought election as a means of gaining more influence on the economic affairs of the state. This could show a duality of causal interdependence: either these former businessmen become members/deputy chairmen/chairmen of parliamentary committees due to their experience in the economic sphere, or the actively seek to gain resource advantages for businesses that they continue to be affiliated with through control over legislative initiatives.

Conclusion

The presented typology is not a final variant since other SNA procedures can and will be applied to the sample in the future. Transformation of ‘biographical’ network (past) ties by current connections may result in significant changes in particular actors’ degree centrality scores – this is a question to be answered through analysis of dynamic network data, continuous monitoring of elite members interactions, etc.. The main conclusion of the analysis presented here is that not all MPs who appeared connected through common economic activity in the past actually form ‘business groups’ in Parliament. The data showed that for a number of political elite members, common business activity does not seem to be the sole determinant of their network ties: in addition to maintaining their business links, these deputies expand connections with colleagues in the political sphere through membership in the same committees or common involvement in re-

¹ The analysis included period before the term Presidential elections in Ukraine and contains only “snapshot” only for the mentioned period, but it can be extended with adding dynamic component and another periods, before and after the Presidential elections.

Table 1. Distribution of the actors from ‘businessmen-politicians’ group in the Parliamentary Committees (number of persons in the committee)

	Committee Chairman	Committee 1st Deputy Chairman	Committee Deputy Chairman	Committee Secretary	Sub-Committee Chairman	Committee Member	Total number of actors in Committees/ Subcommittees
The Committee on Fuel and Energy Complex, Nuclear Policy and Nuclear Safety	0	1	1	0	0	8	10
The Committee on Economic Policy	0	1	1	0	3	3	8
The Committee on Industrial and Regulatory Policy and Entrepreneurship	0	1	1	1	2	2	7
The Committee on Transport and Communications	1	1	0	0	0	4	6
The Committee on Finance and Banking	0	0	3	1	2	0	6
The Committee on Budget	0	0	0	0	2	4	6
The Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information	0	1	0	0	1	3	5
The Committee on Environmental Policy, Use of Natural Resources and Elimination of Consequences of Chornobyl Disaster	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
The Committee on Agrarian Policy and Land Relations	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
The Committee on Foreign Affairs	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
The Committee on Taxation and Customs Policy	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
The Committee on Justice	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
The Committee on Fighting Organized Crime and Corruption	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
The Committee on Judicial Policy	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
The Committee on Public Health	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
The Committee on National Security and Defence	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
The Committee on the Matters of Pensioners, Veterans and the Disabled	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
The Committee on Construction, Urban Development, Housing and Communal Services and Regional Policy	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
The Committee on Rules of Parliamentary Procedure, Ethics and Support to Work of The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
The Committee on Legislative Support of Law Enforcement	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
The Committee on State Building and Local Self-Government	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
The Committee on Family Matters, Youth Policy, Sports and Tourism	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
The Committee on Social Policy and Labour	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total number of actors as Chairmen/ Deputy Chairmen/ Secretaries/ etc.	2	5	12	4	20	35	78

gional state authorities. In addition, a third subgroup of deputies affiliated with business has demonstrated that civic activities were quite important for them as well.

Finally, the conducted analysis the positions in Parliamentary committees occupied by “businessmen-politicians” supports the claim that this group of political elite members possesses legal opportu-

nities to influence the economic development of Ukraine; membership and/or leadership of a parliamentary committee allows one to influence legislative changes that can secure and/or aid big business both on the state level (in a number of economic sectors or within a specific sector of economy) and in the context of international economic collaboration.

APPENDIX 1

Table. Degree centrality of actors who were affiliated with a common business enterprise in the past

		STATE	ECONOMIC	CIVIC	EDUCATIONAL	KINSHIP
	Maximum	82.000	18.000	39.000	14.000	4.000
1.	Abdullin	6.000	1.000	0.000	9.000	0.000
2.	Ariev	0.000	1.000	14.000	0.000	0.000
3.	Akhmetov	7.000	18.000	5.000	6.000	0.000
4.	Babaev	0.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
5.	Baburin	24.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
6.	Bahraev	10.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
7.	Bevzenko	0.000	4.000	0.000	3.000	0.000
8.	Belousova	8.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	0.000
9.	Bilyi	6.000	5.000	0.000	6.000	0.000
10.	Bilorus	14.000	1.000	2.000	3.000	0.000
11.	Bohdan	0.000	1.000	10.000	0.000	0.000
12.	Bohuslaev	2.000	1.000	4.000	0.000	0.000
13.	Boiko	2.000	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
14.	BuriakOV	19.000	1.000	0.000	5.000	0.000
15.	Vasadze	21.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
16.	Vilkul	0.000	7.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
17.	Vlasenko	1.000	1.000	1.000	5.000	0.000
18.	Voropaiev	7.000	3.000	0.000	2.000	0.000
19.	Herasymchuk	2.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
20.	Heller	5.000	1.000	4.000	0.000	0.000
21.	Hlazunov	1.000	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
22.	Hlushchenko	0.000	5.000	0.000	6.000	0.000
23.	Horoshkevych	6.000	2.000	5.000	1.000	0.000
24.	Hryvkovskyi	0.000	4.000	7.000	0.000	0.000
25.	Hryniv	7.000	1.000	33.000	12.000	0.000
26.	Hudyma	19.000	4.000	24.000	3.000	0.000
27.	HumeniukIM	1.000	2.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
28.	HumeniukOI	8.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
29.	Deich	9.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
30.	Demianko	18.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
31.	Dzharty	13.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
32.	Dovhyi	21.000	2.000	0.000	6.000	0.000
33.	Zhevaho	16.000	3.000	3.000	2.000	0.000
34.	Zviahilskyi	17.000	2.000	4.000	0.000	1.000
35.	Zlochevskyi	6.000	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
36.	Zozulia	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
37.	Ivaniushchenko	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
38.	Kaliuzhnyi	10.000	1.000	5.000	0.000	0.000
39.	KliuevAP	20.000	2.000	17.000	7.000	0.000
40.	KliuevSP	7.000	1.000	16.000	3.000	0.000
41.	Kozak	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
42.	Kolesnikov	10.000	1.000	8.000	2.000	0.000
43.	KoliesnikovD	2.000	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
44.	KorzhPP	9.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
45.	KravchenkoMV	5.000	1.000	0.000	4.000	0.000
46.	Krainii	0.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
47.	Labunska	15.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
48.	Landyk	8.000	1.000	4.000	2.000	0.000
49.	Landik	7.000	1.000	4.000	1.000	0.000
50.	Lytvynov	5.000	2.000	0.000	2.000	0.000
51.	Lisin	9.000	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
52.	Lukianov	19.000	2.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
53.	Malyshev	4.000	3.000	0.000	2.000	0.000
54.	Maltsev	11.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
55.	MelnykSA	1.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
56.	Moroko	0.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
57.	Osyka	31.000	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
58.	PavlenkoVV	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
59.	PavlenkoSG	6.000	4.000	6.000	0.000	0.000
60.	Poluneiev	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
61.	Prasolov	0.000	6.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
62.	Pryhodskyi	6.000	4.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
63.	Safullin	2.000	1.000	3.000	2.000	0.000
64.	Selivarov	9.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
65.	Skudar	20.000	1.000	15.000	2.000	0.000
66.	Sobolev	12.000	1.000	15.000	7.000	0.000
67.	Stetskiv	8.000	1.000	27.000	4.000	0.000
68.	Sukhyi	4.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
69.	Titenko	1.000	2.000	0.000	4.000	0.000
70.	Tretiakov	38.000	3.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
71.	Tryndiuk	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
72.	Fedun	7.000	1.000	5.000	0.000	0.000
73.	Khmelnyskyi	15.000	3.000	7.000	2.000	0.000
74.	Chechetov	4.000	5.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
75.	Sharov	17.000	3.000	5.000	0.000	0.000
76.	Shevchenko	7.000	1.000	0.000	2.000	0.000
77.	Shmidt	0.000	4.000	5.000	0.000	0.000
78.	Yankovskyi	28.000	1.000	15.000	1.000	0.000
79.	Yatsenyuk	1.000	2.000	0.000	1.000	0.000

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МЕРЕЖА УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ЕЛІТИ: БІЗНЕС-ЗВ'ЯЗКИ VS. ПОЛІТИЧНІ ЗВ'ЯЗКИ

Стаття пропонує результати дослідження мережі економічних зв'язків, що накладаються на інші типи зв'язків, між представниками української політичної еліти. За основу для вирішення зв'язку взято спільні біографічні відомості щодо керування чи володіння одним і тим самим підприємством у певний період.

Ключові слова: політичні еліти України, бізнес-мережі, центральні актори, владні вузли.