

Post-Communist Transition Models

Differences and Similarities in Europe and Asia



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Executive Summary

In the last decade, the Communist ideology has been a key point in international discussions and disputes. 1989 marked the demise of the communism and brought room for transitions. This report provides an analysis of the post-communism at the hand of economic and political transitions, as well as commemoration cultures. The aim of this research is to answer the question *'What are the key differences and/or similarities in the post-communist transition models of Europe and Asia?'.* The European and Asian model of post-communist transition are each conceptualized based upon two separate case studies. Russia and Poland are used to conceptualize the European model, whereas the Asian model is based on post-communist transitions in China and Vietnam. Each case study is divided into four main parts, namely, *'Brief history of Communism'*; *'Economic transition'*; *'Political transition'* and *'Commemoration culture'*.

The research method include desk research and field research. Academic journals, news articles and subject specific sources are used for the desk research. Additionally, field research was conducted on Vietnam's commemorative practices from August 2017 until January 2018 in Hội An, Huế, Hồ Chí Minh' city and smaller villages of the Quảng Nam province.

There are three main findings. Firstly, the economic transitions in the European and Asian model oppose each other. The European countries engaged in Shock Therapy, based on the neoliberal Washington Consensus, whereas the Asian ones adopted the Beijing Consensus favouring gradual economic reform, state-capitalism and the maintenance of Communist rule. Secondly, in line with the Beijing Consensus, no meaningful political transition occurred in China and Vietnam. In both countries, the Communist Party is still in power. However, the politician transitions in Europe differ. Poland's impressive reform resulted in a liberal democracy, whereas Russia is an autocracy. Thirdly, the commemoration practises in the European oppose those of the Asian model.

In conclusion the European model of post-communism is defined as the assertive separation of the periphery from its core, whereas the Asian model is conceptualized as the voluntarily convergence of the periphery to its core. Within the European model, consistency is found in the inconsistent transitions and commemoration cultures. Contrarily, consistency and similarities in the transitions of the Asian model are at its core. This study concludes that there are only differences in the comparison of the European and Asian models of post-communist transitions.

The research is limited because the models are only based on two countries. Further research should be done to investigate the validity of the European and Asian models conceptualized in this paper. It should concentrate on the dynamics between the center in relation to the peripheral countries in a similar manner as this paper.

Preface

Before you lies my bachelor dissertation '*Post-Communist Transition Models: Differences and Similarities in Europe and Asia*', the final part of the bachelor European Studies at the Hague University of Applied Sciences. After a lot of long hours and dedication, I am proud to deliver this dissertation as the pinnacle of my bachelor.

The past years at the Hague University of Applied Sciences have been a great experience for me. Through my specialization, I expanded my knowledge on European politics and from my internship in Vietnam, I expanded my knowledge on myself. I have had memorable encounters, was taught by inspiring lecturers and created lasting friendships.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mr van Hengel. At the beginning of the writing process, Mr. van Hengel guided me into the right direction and provided valuable insights. I am thankful for his patience and words of encouragement.

A separate word of thanks goes out to Guus for all his support. Especially during the hard times.

Dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, who always trusted in me, whatever path I took.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

After the Communists obtained power in Russia over one century ago, the ideology became popular among countries seeking for an alternative to capitalism. Some did so to offer a solution to the persisting problems facing their societies, such as rising wealth disparities, environmental degradation or having lost trust in the capitalist world system (Ramsay, 2009). Contrarily, a large part of Eastern Europe forcefully transitioned to communism as a result of negotiations at the end of the Second World War. Besides Europe, communism spread to Asia, Latin-America and Africa (Kriger, 1993).

The Second World War sparked the beginning of another military conflict, namely the Cold War. It was an ideological dispute between two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, and their allies. A war fought over the ideology proves to what extent the world was focused on the Communist ideology.

The Communists claimed victory at the end of the Cold War, but those victories were only short lived. The demise of communism started in 1989. This year can be marked as a turning point in two distinct ways. Firstly, it was the year in which the Berlin Wall fell. Consequently, this led to a decrease in authority of the Soviet Union over numerous countries in Eastern Europe and its implosion (Sarotte, 2009). Secondly, at the same time, thousands of protestors on Tiananmen Square in Beijing gathered to demand for political reform. Although the Chinese protestors were hoping for a peaceful turn of events, tanks and military enforcement were sent by the Chinese government to take down the protest resulting in 10,000 deaths (BBC, 2017; Sarotte, 2009). Subsequently, the Chinese leaders reaffirmed their tight grip on society (Zheng, 1997).

The actions of two governments sharing a similar ideology stood diametrically opposed to each other. A question arose on what kind of changes have occurred in countries who were under communist rule prior to 1989. This leads to the focus of this dissertation and the central research question, *'What are the differences and/or similarities in the European and Asian post-communist transition models?'*.

In this dissertation, these changes will be measured by post-communist transitions. A transition can be defined as a change from one form to another, or the process by which this happens. In this case, a post-communist transition is made. This refers to a transition made from communist rule and ideologically to a condition in which changes have occurred politically, economically, or both. As 1989 marked the turning point, post-communist transitions will be measured from this year onwards.

Furthermore, the aim of this research is to determine whether there exist differences and/or similarities in the post-communist transition models of the two continents. A model is a descriptive and explanatory tool that helps in identifying similarities to ultimately impose some order in the findings. Therefore, the conceptualization of the European and Asian model of post-communism will be based upon the information presented in this paper. It is important to note the use of the terms 'European model' or 'Asian model' does not imply their existence in other scientific literature. As the central research question is comparative of nature, the use of the two models is a personal choice. The terms 'European model' and 'Asian model' are used on the grounds that a model serves as a tool to simplify in identifying similarities and classify information strategically. The aim of the conceptualization of both models is to identify the dynamics in the relationship of the center and the periphery. In a center-periphery relationship, the larger, more advanced and powerful center often extracts an economic surplus from the smaller, underdeveloped and dependent periphery (Simon, 2011). In this paper, the center are Russia and China, whereas Poland and Vietnam are the peripheries.

The European and Asian models will be conceptualized based on the information presented in this paper aiming to identify the dynamics between the bigger and the smaller country. To elaborate, the aim of the conceptualization of the European model is to identify the dynamics between Russia and Poland, whereas the Asian model focusses on the dynamics between China and Vietnam.

The central research question is narrowed down into four sub-questions. The first sub-question, '*What is post-communism?*', provides useful information on the communist ideology and sets the three characteristics by which post-communism will be measured, namely: economic transition, political transition and commemoration culture. Furthermore, the theoretical framework is established based on these characteristics. The second and third sub-questions, '*How can the European model of post-communism be characterized*' and '*How can the Asian model of post-communism be characterized*' are both divided into two separate case studies. The European case studies have Russia and Poland as their subject, whereas the Asian case study uses China and Vietnam. At the end of the second and third sub-questions, a transition model for both countries will be defined. In the fourth sub-question, '*What are the key differences and/or similarities of the post-communist transition models in Europe and Asia*' the central research question will be answered. In the last sub-questions, a conclusion is made.

Structured into six chapters, the paper will first provide an overview of the methodology used by the writer. Attention will be given to the research outline and the various research methods. A second chapter will be dedicated to the theoretical framework and provides three characteristics

of post-communist transition which will further be used in this paper. This chapter will be descriptive of nature. A large section of the fourth chapter is dedicated to the case studies of Russia and Poland to determine what the European model of post-communist transition is. The fifth chapter focusses on the Asian model of post-communist transition, using case studies of China and Vietnam. The sixth chapter will outline whether there exist similarities and/or differences in the European and Asian model of post-communism, taking into account the information gathered in the previous chapters. The sixth and last chapter will contemplate what these differences actually mean and stand for.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology for this dissertation. The aim of this research was to analyze the economic and political transitions, as well as the commemoration culture of Russia, Poland, China and Vietnam and to create a European and Asian model of post-communism. The main question, *'What are the differences and/or similarities in the European and Asian post-communist transition models?'* demands a comparative literature analysis. To be able to answer the main research question, qualitative and quantitative data was gathered through literature research. The following section provides an explanation on which methods were used to conduct this research.

2.1 Research outline

The main research question *'What are the differences and/or similarities in the European and Asian post-communist transition models?'* demands a comparative literature analysis. The first sub-question, *'What is post-communism?'* is descriptive of nature to define the variables according to which the comparison will be made. This section introduced the term post-communism and describes according to which variables the economic and political transition, as well as the commemoration culture, will be characterized. To answer the first sub-question, literature review was performed.

The second and third sub-questions, *'How can the European model of post-communism be characterized?'* and *'How can the Asian model of post-communism be characterized?'* was answered by more in-depth country specific desk research and literature review. For the determination of both post-communist transition models, case studies were created. The case studies in the second sub-questions revolved around Poland and Russia. China and Vietnam were used as case studies in the third sub-question. More than one country was used to increase the reliability of the content. Each case study provided a brief summary of communism in the concerned country, an outline on economic and political transitions, and a description of the commemoration culture. Finally, the similarities in transition in Russia and Poland were used to create the European model of post-communism. Similarly, this was also done for China and Vietnam to create the Asian model of post-communism.

The fourth question, *'What are the key differences and/or similarities of the post-communist transition models in Europe and Asia?'* is a comparative question based on the research gathered throughout the previous sub-questions.

2.2. Literature Review

This literature review will provide a bird-eye overview of the significant literature available relating to the topic of this paper. It will be divided into four subsections. The starting point is to an overview of the most important books and articles on post-communism. Secondly, the most important literature on the economical aspect of post-communism will be provided. What follows is significant literature on the political dimension of post-communism. At last, literature on the commemorative practices will be elaborated on.

Finally, this literature review will relate this paper to previous literature. To do so, two main questions will be answered, *How does this paper relate to the works of other authors?* and *How does this paper contribute to the already existing literature?*

2.2.1. Post-Communism

Richard Sakwa (1999) defines post-communism as having ‘both a universal and specific meaning. In the universal sense, postcommunism suggests that the fall of communist regimes changed the political and political philosophical terrain not just in the countries directly affected but everywhere else as well – we are, from this perspective, all postcommunists now’. Built on this definition, the term post-communism is starting to take its shape in a global context.

Instead, Lanczi (2007) suggests that post-communism refers to the notion of progress and implies that a country has transformed its political and socio-economic features away from communism. The definition provided by Lanczi will be used in this paper, given that it highlights the transformative nature of post-communism.

Sarotte (2009) work *‘1989: The struggle to create post-Cold War Europe’* provides a better contextual overview of post-communism and connects historical events with transitions.

Furthermore, works by Sandle (2014); Kamiński & Sołtan (1989) and Kriger (1993) successfully elaborate on what communism entails, the evolution of it, why they ceased to exist and how post-communist transitions were initiated.

2.2.2. Economic Transition

To familiarize with the terms ‘shock therapy’ and ‘Washington Consensus’ the works by Marangos (2002;2007) are recommended Furthermore, to gain insights on how Russia and Poland underwent shock therapy, the following articles provide excellent material: Marvin (2010); Sherstinev (2015); Paczynska (2002) and Gel’Man & Starodubstev (2016).

Contrarily, to understand the gradualist approach to economic reforms in Vietnam and Asia and the term 'Beijing Consensus', Malesky & London (2014) and Zhou (2012) are works that cannot be missed. Moreover, Bottelier (2007) gives insights on the Chinese reforms, their goals and what they have achieved so far. Furthermore, Dosch & Vuving (2008), Grinter (2006) and Hong Hiep (2012) provide in-depth knowledge on the Vietnamese transformations.

2.2.3. Political Transition

The work of Siaroff (2013) concentrated on the differences in various political regimes. By the hand of this work, a better comparison could be made between the political situations before and prior to the post-communist transitions. A definition of neo-communism was provided in Tudoroiu (2011) which was used to describe the current political situations in China and Vietnam. Moreover, Guo (2007) analysis of political developments in Asia was used to amplify on the shape of political transformations in Vietnam.

Other recommended works include Xiaocai (2014); Kekic (2007); Hunter & Ryan (2008); Malesky & London (2014) and (Marangos (2002).

2.2.4. Commemoration Culture

The foundation for the chapters on commemorative practices is Nauruzbayeva's article '*What Was Socialism About? The Politics of Remembering and Repressing the Communist Past*' (2005). This article clearly defines the three ways in which communism can be remembered, namely: counter-memory, forgetting and nostalgia. Nauruzbayeva provides a definition for each commemorative practice.

A better understanding of commemorative practices and the stance of post-communist countries towards its communist past can be found in Shleifer & Treisman (2014). Boym (2001) highlights the nostalgia in Europe. In Blood (2014) the recollection of the Great Famine and Mao is the focal point. Other works on this scope include Etkind (2009), Mazzini (2018), Medina (2011) and Nguyen (2016).

2.2.4. This paper in context

Numerous works have been published on how former communist countries have transitioned. For instance, Lovell (2013) provides an overview of how Russia emerged from the Soviet Union, Czaputowicz & Wojciuk (2017) describe Poland's transition towards a democracy, in Yun & Morita's (2009) work the transitions and developments in China are provided at the hand of growth, and lastly, Ravallion (2008) tackles the issue of poverty relieve by reforms in Vietnam. Other works,

such as '*Pathways – a study of Six Post-Communist Countries*' by Johannsen & Pedersen (2009) provide a comparative analysis of the post-communist transitions in different countries.

The works provided in this chapter and so many more have been valuable resources for the conduction of the necessary research in this paper. In relation to others, this paper can be seen as a summary of the most important post-communist transitions in the various case studies. However, this paper also provides some novelty into the research on the relationship between the core and periphery in post-communist countries. No extensive literature has been found on this topic.

In sum, this research is an extension of the already available literature on post-communist transitions and offers a new angle on the relationships between the core and its periphery.

2.3. Research methods

Desk research, including a literature review, was most frequently used to gather the necessary information. Additional attention was given to the trustworthiness of sources. Desk research was based on different types of sources. The most important sources included: academic journals, news articles and subject specific sources. Quantitative and qualitative data was used throughout this dissertation.

Additionally, field research was conducted to gain insight on the commemorative practices in Vietnam. Field research was conducted from August 2017 until January 2018 in Hội An, Huế, Hồ Chí Minh' city and smaller villages of the Quảng Nam province.

2.3.1. Academic Journals

The online academic platforms JSTOR and EBSCOhost were used to gather information from academic journals. Academic journals published on these platforms can be classified as trustworthy. Journals that were frequently used were *Demokratizatsiya*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Sojourn and Problems of Post-Communism*. For instance, the work by Shleifer & Treisman (2014) was read to put post-communist transitions in perspective of time and place. Furthermore, work by Brezis & Schnytzer (2003) was used because it gave an in-depth overview of the differences in transition between Eastern Europe and China. As this paper offers similar transitional differences, It was valuable for the research.

2.3.2. News Articles

News articles have been used to obtain present-day information on the status of certain contemporary issues or on issues that have obtained recent media attention. News articles were

gathered from a variety of sources. The most important source is The Economist. This hebdomadal newspaper focusses on a broad range of issues, such as politics, economic and trade. Other sources for news articles were the websites of the BBC, Eurozine, Aljazeera, the Diplomat, the Financial Times, the Global Times and the Atlantic.

As restrictions on media outlets are present in Russia, China, Vietnam, and, to a lesser extent, Poland, news articles coming from those countries were not used. This is done to ensure valuable information was not censored.

2.3.3. Subject Specific Sources

This last category of desk research sources revolve around (supra-national) organizations that have acquired professional knowledge in their subject specific field. For instance, Freedom House, an organization measuring democracy and freedom in the world, proved to be useful in determining the electoral process in each country and gaining insight on human rights situations. This source was extremely useful as it provided detailed information on all four countries. Moreover, sources from the World Bank on economic reforms and progress have been read and used to the organization's objectivity. Other sources included Human Rights Watch, the United Nations and the European Union.

2.3.4. Quantitative and qualitative data

Although qualitative data was mainly used in this paper, some quantitative data was used as well. Qualitative data provided underlying reasons, trends, opinions and motivations required to gain a better understanding of the post-communist transitions. Contrarily, quantitative data was used to provide exact numbers and statistics and mostly revolves around the economic transitions.

2.3.5. Field Research

Field research was conducted in Vietnam in the period between August 2017 and January 2018. It was made possible to conduct field research while working for Children's Hope in Action, a non-governmental organization providing services for families in need. Information was gathered through Children's Hope in Action by the responsibility of certain work duties, such as visiting educational facilities, governmental institutions and villages located in the countryside. Furthermore, visits to Huế and Hồ Chí Minh' city allowed the insights to be more trustworthy, as it was not only based on one location.

Field research was performed by making observations on the Vietnamese commemorative practices in a variety of spaces. Based upon the consistency of these observations, conclusions were drawn.

2.4. Limitations

The most important limitation that may influence the outcome of this research is that the post-communist models are only conceptualized at the hand of two countries. Therefore, it may now be consistent with other, relatable, post-communist transition models. Additional research is suggested to conclude whether the consistencies, or the lack thereof, in this paper can be applied to other post-communist transition models.

Moreover, due to the extensive and complex literature on the topic, some significant reading might have been overlooked.

Chapter 3: What is post-communism?

To provide an answer to the question, '*What is post-communism?*', a clear explanation of the communist ideology must be provided. Although the etymology of the term 'communism' remains unknown, the contemporary use stems from the publication of the Communist Manifesto, written by German political philosopher Karl Marx in cooperation with his lifelong sparring partner and co-editor Friedrich Engels, in the early nineteenth century (Krieger, 1993; Sandle, 2014). Marx and Engels envisioned a utopian society, which embraced two distinctive features. Firstly, it included the aspiration for the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, meaning that of making money would reside in the hands of the government (Sandle, 2014). Secondly, everyone would be free and equal. Consequently, the class division would be abolished (O'Neil, 2015).

It was not until 1917 that Communists claimed power in Bolshevik-ruled Russia. Although great expectations for the flourishing of communism in world politics existed, the Bolsheviks remained the only ruling Communist Party until the 1920s (Sandle, 2014). As Russia was the first country to put the communist theory to practice, their forms of applications are often seen as the leading approach by which communism should be applied (Sandle, 2014). However, one must note that communist thought in Russia has been heavily influenced by Russian populism and the sudden dismantling of the tsarist autocracy (Outhwaite, 2008). Russian populism refers to a movement led by the Russians which can be linked to Marx's thought and European socialism (Qualls, 2003). Russian populism was concerned with the exploitations of farmers and the acknowledgement the country was behind in comparison to the West (Qualls, 2003). However, this does not imply that the Marxist communist theory has not been at the base of the creation of Russian communism (Outhwaite, 2008).

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union functioned in an authoritarian command structure (Krieger, 1993). Authoritarianism is a form of government in which there is 'little political freedom with strict government controls imposed on political institutions [...], strict government-imposed constraints on social freedoms such as suppression of political opponents and anti-regime activities' (Longley, 2018). Moreover, such regimes can rarely be held accountable for its actions and citizens cannot enjoy constitutional protection from their government.

To become a communist state, the Russian government had to change two main aspects of their economy. Firstly, the economy was nationalized. This means that private means of production were abolished and that the state would rule all industries and markets (Krieger, 1993). Secondly, central planning was installed. Central planning gives the state the power to decide what would be

produced, in which quantities and by whom (O'Neil, 2015). Consequently, all workers would be employed by the state.

As the only communist regime, Russia made the expansion of the communist ideology their mission (Sandle, 2014). The expansion of communism to Europe finally occurred at the end of the Second World War, when most states in Eastern Europe were taken over by the Soviets (Sandle, 2014). Simultaneously, the Chinese Communist Party had acquired power in 1949 and the Vietnamese communist regime won the battle for independence from colonial France and the Vietnam War (Sandle, 2014). The communist ideology also further expanded to Latin-America and Africa, but this paper will only focus on Europe and Asia.

3.1 Post-communism

As previously mentioned, 1989 marked a year that sparked a change throughout the two largest communist states in Europe and Asia. In China, protestors gathered on Tiananmen Square in Beijing to demand democratization from the government. However, the Chinese Communist Party aggressively cracked down the protests, in fear of losing its control over society (Hala, 2009; Sarotte, 2009). The aggressive military counter-action resulted in the death of thousands of Chinese, the majority of which were intellectuals and students (Zheng, 1997).

European governments expressed their disgrace for the manner in which the Chinese government had acted leading to a further parting from friendship (Sarotte, 2009). Meanwhile, in Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the decrease of the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and simultaneously initiated its demise (Johannsen et al., 2009). The demise of the Soviet Union was characterized by the unwillingness to use as much destructive forces as China had done to silence dissents (Sarotte, 2009). It was Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union who promoted serious reforms and promised peaceful leadership (Kramer & Schweitzer, 2009). Finally, the Soviet Union returned sovereignty to the states previously under their influence and became the Russian Federation in 1991 (Wood, 2018). Consequently, the first free elections were held in liberated Poland in 1989 resulting in a undeniable loss for the Communist Party (Snyder, 2009).

Even though the Vietnamese Communist regime only came to power in 1954, by 1989 it was already undergoing significant economic reform. These reforms included loosening public ownership and establishing trade relationships with non-communist regimes (Sandle, 2014).

In summary, changes in the economic and political spheres occurred in Russia, Poland, China and Vietnam from 1989 onwards. Post-communism refers to the notion of progress and implies that a country has transformed its political and socio-economic features away from communism (Lanczi,

2007). Consequently this means that post-communism can be defined as a set of transformations that have occurred in countries (previously) under communist rule. As the transformations in these countries diverged from each other by 1989, it can be deducted that these transformation would also be incoherent with the communist ideology, or at least with the varying ideas on how a communist state should operate. Therefore, in this paper, the transitions occurring after 1989, will be labeled as post-communist transitions.

This chapter will further be divided into three sub-chapters. Each sub-chapter will outline one of the three characteristics according to which post-communist transitions will be measured. The first part will revolve around the economic transitions. Secondly, the political transitions will be discussed. A last part will discuss the way in which communism is remembered.

3.1.1. Economic transition

In a communist society, the economic system was characterized by government ownership of all the means of production and the replacement of the market by central planning (Kamiński & Sołtan, 1989; O'Neil, 2015). The ownership of the means of production was preceded by the nationalization of the state's economy (Kriger, 1993). Under this construction, communist states often promised universal employment, thereby artificially keeping the unemployment rates low (O'Neil, 2015). A centrally planned economy is characterized by the decisions on what to produce, by whom, when, and in which quantities made by the state (O'Neil, 2015). Alongside with the nationalization of industries, central planning tightened the relationship between the politics and economics of a country. This was highly desired, as the communist political parties wanted complete control over society (Kamiński & Sołtan, 1989).

The comparison of economic transitions in post-communist states will be done according to two variables, privatization of state owned enterprises and the liberalization of the market. The privatization of state owned enterprises was done to create a class of property owners, import foreign knowledge and investment, and to improve corporate governance (The Economist, 2013). Privatization contradicts nationalization, and will therefore be used to measure economic transition.

Furthermore, according to the United Nations, the inclusion of 'government policies, that promote free trade, deregulation, elimination of subsidies, price controls and rationing systems, and, often, the downsizing or privatization of public services' (2009) are the characteristics for economic liberalization. Liberalization of the market, as opposed to central planning, excludes the government from economic decisions made in a country. The aim of economic liberalization, is to create a free-market economy (O'Neil, 2015).

To sum up, the most significant characteristics of the economy under communist rule include the elimination of private property and the adoption of central planning by the government. However, it is expected that post-communist countries converge towards type of economy that differs from the economic system under communist rule. Thus, the characteristics according to which economic post-communist transitions will be measured are privatization of state owned enterprises and market liberalization.

3.1.2. Political transition

According to Professor Siaroff, all communist regimes have experienced totalitarianism for some moment throughout their existence (2013). Totalitarianism is an oppressive political regime which can be defined at the hand of four main conditions. Firstly, a monastic party power must be in place. This refers to a system where governing structures are heavily diminished and in control of one single group (Siaroff, 2013). In communist states, political power resided within the small policy-making and executive committees of the communist parties (Kriger, 1993). Secondly, a transformative ideology must be in place (Siaroff, 2013). Logically, in this case, this ideology is communism.

Likewise, the notion of terror was used to define totalitarianism. Political terror can best be described as 'the arbitrary use, by organs of political authority, of severe coercion against individuals or groups, the credible threat of such use, or the arbitrary extermination of individuals or groups as means to achieve political control' (Siaroff, 2013).

The mass mobilization of citizens is the last condition (Siaroff, 2013). By this is meant the active participation in politics, rewarding loyalty to the Communist Party and the placement of devoted members of the party in high ranking positions (Kriger, 1993). On the other hand, the imprisonment, execution and exploitation of activists, dissents and individuals holding a different opinion than the communist government is not unheard of (Nanci, 2010). Furthermore, in the worst case, individuals were even asked to denounce and betray their own family members if they did not agree on the direction chosen by the Communist Party (Xiaocai, 2014). This can also be seen as an act of political terror.

Since totalitarianism highly opposes democracy, this will be used to measure political transition from 1989 onwards. According to Mrs. Laza Kekic, director of the Economist Intelligence United's Index of Democracy, democracy can be seen as 'a set of practices and principles that institutionalize and thus ultimately protect freedom' (2007). The protection of freedom is done with the protection of human rights and civil liberties (United Nations, n.d.). Human rights, as adopted in the United

Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, the leading document describing the fundamental rights, should be adopted and protected for each individual (United Nations, 1948. & United Nations, n.d.). Civil liberties exist to guarantee a set of rights and freedoms to citizens from their government (Trueman, 2018). To illustrate, some powerful civil liberties include 'the right to a fair trial, the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly and association and the prohibition of slavery and forced labour' (European Court of Human Rights. & Council of Europe., n.d.)

Moreover, free and fair elections are considered to be at the heart of democracy (United Nations, n.d.). Free and fair elections exist when there is 'a competitive, multiparty political system; universal adult suffrage for all citizens, [...]; regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in absence of massive voter fraud and that yields results that are representative of the public will; and significant public access of major political parties to elaborate through the media and through generally open political campaigning' (Freedom House, 2012).

A system incorporating all the previously mentioned factors, can be called a liberal democracy (Freedom House, 2016). Political transition will be measured according to two important aspects of a liberal democracy, namely: democratic electoral values and the protection of personal freedoms and civil rights.

3.1.3. Commemoration culture

According to Adam Michnik, a former anti-communist dissident, 'The worst thing about communism, is what comes after it' (Shleifer & Treisman, 2014). Hereby, Michnik means that the recollection in retrospective is worse than living through communism. This last sub-chapter focusses on the memory and perceptions of communism. A commemorative practice can be defined as something that is done to remember a person or event. The perception of post-communist transitions will be measured by the opinion of citizens and government official commemoration practices. The question arises to what extent optimistic euphoria of democratization and/or market reform policies remain once they have passed? (Nauruzbayeva, 2005). There are three main forms of commemorating the communist past: counter-memory creation, forgetting and nostalgia (Nauruzbayeva, 2005).

The notion of counter-memory can be defined as the practice of opposition to hegemonic discourses (Nauruzbayeva, 2005). In this case, the hegemonic discourse is the communist totalitarian state and the communist past can therefore be seen as a collective burden upon society

(Nauruzbayeva, 2005). Counter-memory can be recollected to reactivate struggles or bring attention to other forms of resistance (Medina, 2011).

Forgetting, also referred to negative remembering, emphasizes actively repressing the communist past and instead deleting it from collective memory (Nauruzbayeva, 2005). Forgetting can also go hand in hand with forging new stories of nationalistic nature to a country's history (Nauruzbayeva, 2005).

The last way of remembering the past is nostalgia. According to Svetlana Boym, writer and Professor of Slavic Studies and Comparative Literature, nostalgia is 'a longing for that shrinking "space of experience" that no longer fits in the new horizon of expectations' (2001). However, nostalgia also refers to the way in which memories can be used strategically in politics of the present (Nauruzbayeva, 2005).

Chapter 4: How can the European model of post-communism be characterized?

What follows are two case studies, specifically those of Russia and Poland. Both case studies are structured in an identical way, starting with a brief history of communism. Secondly, the economic transitions will be examined. Hereafter, political transitions will be elaborated on, followed by a review of the commemoration culture. At the end, each case study will be summarized briefly. The aim of the case studies is to gather information on the transitions Russia and Poland have made since 1989.

At the end of this chapter, the similarities found in the transitions in Russia and Poland will be highlighted at the hand of the information gathered in the case studies. Finally, based on these similarities, the following question will be answered '*How can the European model of post-communism be characterized?*'.

4.1. Former superpower, weak transitions – a case study of Russia

4.1.1. A brief history of communism in the Soviet Union/Russia

Food shortages, military failures in World War I and discontent on the way in which the country was governed resulted in the uprising of riots in Saint Petersburg, the capital of Russia. At that time, Russia had been one of the least advanced countries in the world (Hook, n.d.). Unable to regain legitimacy, the Tsar gave up his position making way for a new governing system to take its place (BBC, 2017). The Bolshevik Party ultimately gained power after several politically unstable months. Their leader, Vladimir Lenin, was responsible for transforming the Marxian thought into the spirit of the current Russian political and socio-economic situation (Daniels; 2001; Lovell, 2009).

The Bolshevik Party, a front-runner of the in 1919 created Russian Communist Party, initiated the reforms towards a communist society (Daniels, 2001). Ultimately, the Russian Empire changed into the Soviet Union, which can be seen as its extension (Barner-Barry & Hody, 1994).

The ideology carried out in the first years of communism in the Soviet Union can best be described as dictatorial. It was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that held power. The Communist Party was centrally organized and constructed in a hierarchical manner, which steered its direction from the top (Hook, n.d.). Although Lenin might be remembered as a great leader, he was also known by his government as controlling and was responsible for the imprisonments or executions of those who disagreed with his direction for the Soviet Union (BBC, 2017).

The combination of his leadership and charisma resulted in the creation of Lenin's personality cult in the early 1920s. Lenin himself felt uncomfortable using his image for propaganda and thus the cult remained modest (Dreeze, 2013). Yet this changed once Joseph Stalin succeeded Lenin after

his death. The Stalin era today, will most likely be remembered as a period of terror, famine, purging, but above all, self-glorification (Sandle, 2014; Daniels, 2001). His self-glorifications quickly took forms of a cult of personality. Stalinist propaganda was spread across the Soviet Union, indoctrinations occurred from early ages onwards and conditioned people to believe that he was god-like and had the best interests for his people (The New York Historian, 2015).

Under the rule of Stalin, the Soviet Union radically transformed its governing structures, expanded geopolitically, saw an increase in surveillance and restrictions on civil rights, and underwent economic development. Firstly, Stalin increased his personal power and the political system became to take the form of a dictatorship (Sandle, 2014). Secondly, at the defeat of Nazi Germany at the end of the Second World, Stalin successfully demanded to increase the Soviet influence on Eastern Europe. This led to the geopolitical expansion of the Soviet Union (Ghere, 2010). Furthermore, the secret police gained more power and heavily carried out surveillances on citizens (Sandle, 2014). Dissents or suspects of dissent, their families, friends and acquaintances were interrogated, exiled, send to labor camps or even executed (Sandle, 2014). Stalin's rule caused terror across the country.

Lastly, Stalin had also initiated the heavy industrialization of the Soviet Union (Lovell, 2009).

The economy of the Soviet Union was both centrally planned and nationalized (Sandle, 2014). This led to an inefficient work space across the country that was highly depended on the exploitation of the peasants and workers (Sandle, 2014). Consequently, life was difficult and food shortages resulted in many deaths (Bianco, 2016).

As previously mentioned, the Soviet Union expanded its geopolitical influence over Eastern Europe in the 1940s. The expansion of the Soviet influence was a means to achieve political and territorial control (Roberts, 1999). Furthermore, modeled after the Soviet Union, communism also rose in Asia, Latin-America and Africa (Kriger, 1993). On the other hand, capitalist countries feared the rise of communism. The ignition of the Cold War and the economic and military support during the Vietnam War resulted in further isolation and increased defense spending (Lauritzen, 2011).

The Soviet Union and its sphere of influence continued to exist under these circumstances for several decades. When Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader in 1985, four weaknesses presented in the Soviet Union, '(1) obsession to maintain political power at all costs, (2) faulty priorities, which led to inefficiencies, (3) high emphasis on military and defense spending, and (4) its inability to handle external shocks' (Lauritzen, 2011). Unable to foresee progress in the current political and socio-economic system, Gorbachev announced a set of reforms that would ultimately result in the implosion of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence (Sarotte, 2009).

4.1.2. Economic transition

Gorbachev decided to economic course of action for development with the processes of '*perestroika*', a set of reforms that would not only change the Soviet economy, but also its politics, ideology and all spheres of people's lives (Gorshkov, 2005). *Perestroika* was adopted because the Soviet leaders finally acknowledged the stagnation of the economy and admitted the country could no longer continue this way (Gorbachev, 2010).

Nonetheless, after the implosion of the Soviet Union, a more radical form was opted by the newly elected President Boris Yeltsin, namely 'shock therapy' (Gorbachev, 2010). The Russian version of shock therapy was influenced by Poland's design of this radical mode for transformation. The immediate implementation of reforms was favored and the desired changes had to occur with respect to privatization with minimum state intervention, immediate price liberalization, and the adoption of free international trade (Marangos, 2002). Yeltsin and his government believed this rapid transition model to an open-market economy by the means of hasty economic reforms would quickly lead to a healthy entrepreneurial middle class, relatively more sustainable economic growth and greater economic output (Person & Landry, 2016).

In the end, little of these expectation would be met. Instead, as an unintended outcome, the entire Russian economy collapsed. To illustrate the extend economic collapse, the gross domestic product [hereafter GDP] per capita, dropped by a dramatic 42% from 1990 to 1996 (Person & Landry, 2016). As a reference, we compare this diminished GDP per capita to that of the United States during the Great Depression in the 1930s. At that time, the GDP per capita merely declined by 29% (Person & Landry, 2016). The social impacts of economic reforms were disastrous. Scarcity of food was a serious problem, along with hyperinflation occurring at 2600% in 1992 (Round & Kosterina, 2005). Even though Yeltsin promised the economic situation would soon return to a stable situation, it was not until 2007 that the Russian GDP per capita had returned to pre-1991 levels (Person & Landry, 2016; Sherstinev, 2015).

Being part of the shock therapy reforms, the Russian government prioritized the privatization of state-owned enterprises [hereafter SOEs] (Åslung, 2007). By 1996, 70% of the Russian GDP came from the private sector (Pipes, 2000). As the Russian economy primarily consisted of large enterprises, an equalitarian division among the population (Shevtsova, 2017). Instead, in an insider-deal, Yeltsin sold off the country's most dominant and powerful enterprises to a small elite (Keller, 2008). In other cases, former managers could lease the enterprises until the payment of a certain amount of money would make them proprietaries (Åslung, 2007). As high levels of monopoly existed among manufacturers in the Russian market, the new owners of newly privatized

enterprises could maximize their profits (Sherstinev, 2015). Contrarily, the privatization also had negative social consequences. For instance, job insecurity rose, poverty lingered and class division was revitalized (Bahry, 2002).

Another step in shock therapy was the liberalization of prices. As a consequence of the reforms, shortages of produces occurred, leading to the augmentation of prices up to 250% (Åslung, 2007). In addition to the hyperinflation and increased job insecurity, poverty reached many Russians (Round & Kosterina, 2005).

Under those circumstances, it is not unlogic that Russians had to be innovative and hardworking to safe their economy. However, the transition to a market economy posed a problem. After living under communism and diplomatic isolation from the West, neither the ordinary Russians, nor the elites understood what a market economy entailed (Åslung, 2007). Some new industries emerged, but it were mainly the already developed industries that flourished (Sherstinev, 2015). Especially the defense and heavy industry sector claimed a large percentage of the total industrial output (Sherstinev, 2015). Today, the Russian economy is still dominated by the primary sector industries, which include the extraction and collection of natural resources and farming (Sherstinev, 2015).

According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's [hereafter EBRD] transition index, Russia has reached the level of a fully adapted market-economy by 1996 (Åslund, 2007). This means that most decisions on the topics of economic resources are made by individuals, whether this be persons or companies (Connolly, 2015). In reality, the Russian economy contains large problems that still remain unresolved today. To demonstrate, the Russian economy still heavily depends on the extraction of natural resources, has low production rates and suffers from a decline in innovation and entrepreneurship (Connolly, 2015).

On the contrary, some argue that the Russian economy today is an imperfect version of a market economy. For instance, Mr. Connolly, director of the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies, argues that it is best to be qualified as a limited access order [hereafter LAO] (2015). 'LAOs are societies in which organizations (including the state) limit market entry and competition to ensure that individuals or organizations with market power can accrue rents (or profits)' (Connolly, 2015). The creation of LAO's therefore is a mechanism to purposefully deny or impede market penetration in areas that are not necessarily dominated by state-owned enterprises with as its aim to enrich the already existing companies (Connolly, 2015). Since large sectors of the Russian industry are protected from competition by the means of LAO's, the efficiency and productivity is much reduced and wealth remains to be unequally distributed (Connolly, 2015).

In the 2000s, with the election of Vladimir Putin, a new set of economic reforms were adopted to strengthen state capacity and to reduce the influence of oligarchs, persons who have become rich as a consequence of the privatization (Gel'Man & Starodubstev, 2016). Alongside with Putin's leadership, his reforms marked a period of extreme economic growth in the 2000s, reaching roughly 7% per year from 1999 to 2008 (Gel'Man & Starodubstev, 2016; Connolly, 2015). Today, Russians are wealthier than they were in Soviet times (Connolly, 2015).

The reforms of shock therapy are marked by the deep economic recession it caused. As a result of privatization and market liberalization, hyperinflation occurred, poverty prevailed and oligarchs could acquire wealth by their monopoly position in the market. The positive sides only started to show once the economy started to pick up again, in the early 2000s. New entrepreneurial opportunities arose and Russians today are wealthier than during the Soviet times. However, the state intervention in the economy by limiting the access for enterprises to enter the market and heavy reliance on the extraction of natural resources pose some problems. As the state still intervenes in the economy, it can be deduced that a market economy has not yet been reached.

4.1.3. Political transition

Political transitions began with the implementation of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* by Gorbachev. *Glasnost* represented the opening up of public debate and freedom of speech, whereas *Perestroika* stood for real institutional reform (Yablokov, 2017; O'Neil, 2015). Under the latter, extensive constitutional reform took place in the political and electoral arena (Sharlet, 2003). To illustrate, Gorbachev crowned the state with a president which would be elected by the Russian people (Nichols, 2003). Besides, Gorbachev also institutionalized the 'Congress of People's Deputies', a representative body outside the Communist command structure (Pipes, 2000).

Moreover, Gorbachev decentralized political power throughout the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence (Nichols, 2003). Ultimately, this led to the increase in political autonomy in the satellite states of Eastern Europe and eventually to the implosion of the Soviet Union (Sarotte, 2009). A satellite state is an independent country severely influenced or controlled by another country. This influence can be economically, politically and socially. The act of allowing autonomous rule in Eastern Europe can already be seen as a first step in the democratization process (Guseinov, 2009). Boris Yeltsin, Gorbachev's successor, won the first Russian elections in 1991 and was re-elected for his second term in 1996 (Shuster, 2012). When he first came to power, Yeltsin did not show any interests in the luxuries a man in his position was entitled to and thus became a national hero to

the ordinary Russians (Pipes, 2000). During his first Presidency, Yeltsin pushed for a more democratic Russia, which was given support by many western governments (Steele, 2007).

Differently, his second presidential term showed a different side of Yeltsin. Having suffered a heart attack, Yeltsin found himself unable to operate and conduct his affairs. Consequently, the management of his state affairs passed on to 'The Family', consisting of his younger daughter Tatjana, the oligarch and a small number of trustees (Pipes, 2000). Moreover, judges, governors and legislators who hindered him, were fired (Fareed, 2007). Ultimately, Yeltsin's political and economic misconduct resulted in chaos and corruption led by businessmen who gained wealth during the previous privatization of enterprises (Fareed, 2007; Steele, 2007). Even though crime and corruption flourished, western governments continued to support Yeltsin (Steele, 2007).

In contrast to his early years in politics, Yeltsin became captivated by the privilege, power and entitlements his presidency brought (Pipes, 2000). Together with his family, Yeltsin was connected to massive bribery scandals and received high priced gifts from influential businessmen (Cohen, 2000). Yeltsin's presidency ended abruptly. His abrupt resignation had an underlying reason, namely to leave the opposition unprepared (Sharlet, 2003). In this fashion, he secured Vladimir Putin to be his successor (Fareed, 2007).

The second period of Yeltsin's rule, his regime can best be defined as a kleptocratic. In a kleptocracy, 'the state is controlled and run for the benefit of an individual, or a small group, who use their power to transfer a large fraction of society's resources to themselves' (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2003). Furthermore, corruption is a prevailing problem in a kleptocratic state, as was the case during the Yeltsin period (Fan, 2005).

Although Putin claimed victory in the subsequent elections, the elections were too abrupt to be deemed as fair. Moreover, the balloting was described as fraudulent (Sharlet, 2003). Unsurprisingly, on the first day of his presidency, Putin gave Yeltsin immunity from prosecutions for his actions while in office and granted him presidential pardon (Winstor, 2000).

When researching the inclusion of democratic electoral values in Russia, no huge differences can be detected between Putin's 1999 and 2018 elections. In comparison to 1999, the last election of Putin, held in March 2018, can to a small extent be marked as more transparent and less corrupted than previously experienced in Russia, with a decline in procedural violations (Hille, 2018). Even though these efforts have received praise from important democratic instances, such as The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, this does not automatically imply that true democratic values in the electoral process were present (Hille, 2018). Michael J. Abramowitz, president of Freedom House, an organization measuring democracy around the globe, mentions

that 'Russians know the outcome of the presidential election even before casting their votes' (Freedom House, 2018). Additionally, at the start of Putin's second presidential term in 2004, it became clear that Russia would remain in a state of one-man rule by the presence of propaganda through the state controlled media and the repression of political opponents (Shevtsova, 2017; Freedom House, 2018).

Although legislation enacted in 2012 allows for more freedom in the creation of political parties, none have since posed real threats to the authorities in office (Freedom House, 2018). The political opponents that do speak up, face incarcerations or assassinations (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016). Additionally, journalists and ordinary citizens face threats, arrests and censorship if they do not support the current government (Freedom House, 2017). Moreover, with the adoption of the 'undesirable organizations law', which came into effect in 2015, any organization the Russian government alleges as a threat can be banned from the country (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

In Russia, many restrictions on personal freedoms are in place. In detail, there are restrictions on the freedom of assembly, association and freedom of expression (Hille, 2018). In the recent years, the government has even tightened their control over their restrictions even further (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

By adopting new legislation expanding the power of law enforcement and security agencies, the government has legitimized the use of violence against its citizens (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Furthermore, the authorities are granted the right to intervene in any event or activity that is not officially supported by the government (Freedom House, 2018).

Discrimination based on sexual orientation remains a problem (Freedom House, 2018). Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community are not protected from abuses of power by their government. For instance, in 2018, authorities carried out an anti-gay purge, torturing men based on presumptions on their homosexuality (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Although the bigger religions, such as the Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Jews, can practice their religion without serious constraints, smaller religious groups, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists and other splinter groups often experience refusal from the authorities to recognize them as a religious institution (European Parliament, 2016). Recently, this even led to the ban of the Jehovah's Witnesses because the Russian state sees them as an extremist sect (Dearden, 2017). The above mentioned situations prove problematic in the relationship between the Russian government and its citizens. Many of these problems worsened by the absence of an independent

judiciary (Freedom House, 2018). In the absence of independent courts, abuses of power are not punished (European Parliament Think Thank, 2016).

In summary, Russia has undergone several transformation since the fall of the Soviet Union. It started off as a Communist dictatorship, which was followed by a period of kleptocratic rule during the Yeltsin period. With the accession of Putin to power, the democratization process and civil society conditions have worsened. Elections are not fair and free. There is no political opposition and dissents face prosecutions and are at risk of assassinations. Severe restrictions of personal freedoms exists and the government cannot be held accountable for its actions since the judiciary is not independent. Since Putin became president, the government has been reasserting control over all aspects of society. This indicates the country is on the verge of returning to a dictatorship. At best, Russia can be characterized as an electoral authoritarian state (Siaroff, 2013).

Even though Russia's transition cannot be deemed successful in terms of democracy, one should not forget the transition it has undergone in comparison to its Communist rule. Surely, the monistic party power is still in place. However, Russia is no longer ruled with a transformative ideology in mind, neither is there extensive mobilization of the citizens. These changes can be an indication of a passive transformation into a competitive democracy. However, these transitions require time and patience (Balzer, 2003).

4.1.4. Commemoration culture

The trauma that the Russians underwent in the post-communist transitions, left a significant imprint that no policy maker at that time had predicted (Person & Landry, 2016). Both the political and economic realms of society were changing consecutively and thus this would bound to have its consequences on society's stance on the past.

By means of statues and monuments, leaders left their mark of power during the Soviet era (Pyzik, 2014). Today, many signs of its Soviet past are still visible in every day's life. For instance, many Soviet monuments of Lenin have not been taken down (Boym, 2001). Thousands of statues of Lenin remain in public squares or in private courtyards across Russia (Gessen, 2016). And although the acts of Stalin can be defined as horrible, there are signs that the Russian government is promoting his glorification today. For instance, many of his statues and monuments that were toppled in 1991, were neatly restored (Gessen, 2016; Moskwa, 2018). Some of Stalin's statues reappeared in city centers, whereas others are on display in sculpture gardens in city centers (Boym, 2001; Gessen, 2016).

Although Lenin's status as a historic hero is not often questioned, the public image of Stalin ameliorated over the years (Gessen, 2016). The Russian government wants its citizens to remember Stalin as the person who won the Second World War and who was responsible for making the Soviet Union an economic and political superpower in its aftermath (Moskwa, 2018). This is enforced by legislation that prohibits the denial rejection of the victorious Soviet Red Army in the Second World War and protects heroism through memory. The spread of information disapproving either of the above mentions, is penalized by law (Gliszczynska-Grabias, 2018).

Furthermore, popular Soviet culture and history are widely broadcasted and promoted in films and on television (Ekaterina, 2017). This has led to the implication that the Russian media is nurturing nostalgia to its communist and Soviet grandeur (Ekaterina, 2017). The question remains whether the Soviet times are being honored as a means of promoting nostalgia, or if the Russians simply enjoy watching films and television series about Soviet times because they feel a nostalgic connection with these topics.

Research on the Russian attitudes towards the Communist Regime found that a large portion of the Russians still identifies with the Soviet Union and that more than one-third feels nostalgic about the times of communism (Gherghina & Klymenko, 2012). Two main reasons for the nostalgic feelings towards Russia's Soviet past have been identified.

To start, Russians feel dissatisfaction in relation to the political and socio-economic changes that occurred with the implosion of the Soviet Union (Gherghina & Klymenko, 2012). With the transition away from communism, the much appreciated social-economic system preventing unemployment, unfair wages and poverty disappeared (Povov, 2008). Consequently, the economic reforms also resulted in the decrease of standards of living of many Russian non-elites (Round & Kosterina, 2005). Furthermore, there exists a mis-trust of the new government and its institutions fed by the sentiment that the communist regime was superior to the current one (Gherghina & Klymenko, 2012). Likewise, many Russians feel their country enjoyed higher levels of social justice and higher standards of living during the communist ties (Popov, 2008).

The second reason for nostalgia toward the Soviet past is the disappointment about the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union had Russia at its political, economic and social heart, it is important to realize that a large portion of the Russian population today still identifies with it (Gherghina & Klymenko, 2012). This identification with the Union goes hand in hand with its former status as a superpower, especially economically and militarily (Povov, 2008). Recently, the annexation of the Crimea can be seen as an example of Russia's longing for becoming a strong empire once again (Ekaterina, 2017).

4.1.5. Summary

Under communist rule, the economy of the Soviet Union was centrally planned and nationalized. After 1989, Russia underwent shock therapy, a plan for rapid reform concentrating mainly on liberalization and privatization. As a result, Russia's economy collapsed and the standards of living plummeted. Privatization of state owned enterprises under Yeltsin caused the creation of a wealthy oligarchy and high monopoly levels. The Russian economy has not yet reached a fully functioning market economy yet, as the Russian government still intervenes in market penetration.

At the peak of communism, the Communist Party controlled every aspect of society and began to function as a dictatorship. The Soviet Union gained power and influence over Eastern Europe as a consequence of negotiations at the end of the Second World War. Reforms by Gorbachev resulted in the implosion of the Soviet Union. He also decided a freely elected president would rule over Russia. During the Yeltsin era, Russia turned into a kleptocracy, ruled by the rich and tormented by corruption and chaos. With the accession of Putin to power, indications that Russia is returning towards a dictatorship are visible. For instance, elections are not free, nor fair and personal freedoms are heavily restricted. Furthermore the state aims to control every aspect of society.

4.2. From the Soviet sphere of influence to the European Union – a case study of Poland

4.2.1. A brief history of communism in Poland

During the Yalta Conference, Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union discussed in which form post-World War II Europe would continue (Ghere, 2010). Oddly enough, even though Poland's was majorly influenced by the decisions taken at this conference, no representatives of the country were present (Ghere, 2010). A critical decision was to divide Europe into two spheres of influence. The first sphere, under which Poland was divided, were to become a Soviet zone. This zone ranged from the Oder-Neisse rivers to Russia, covering most of Eastern Europe. The remaining western part of Europe would belong to the American zone of influence (Wallerstein, 2011).

Despite Stalin's promises to offer help in the establishment of democracies in Eastern Europe, Poland ultimately transformed to a communist state after the first post-war elections in 1947 (Ghere, 2010). From that moment onwards, Poland's sovereignty was in the hands of Stalin and his Soviet Union (Behrends, 2009). The manner in which the Soviet Union was organized politically, economically and socially became the role model for the transition towards communism in Poland (Wallerstein, 2011). Poland also existed in a state of terror, similar to that of the Soviet Union

(Morson, 2013). Furthermore, all Polish national symbols were replaced by Soviet monuments or statues, especially serving in Stalin's cult of personality (Behrends, 2009).

The Solidarity movement came into existence in 1980 out of the growing discontent on the Soviet influence on Poland. Although it was only a labor union at first, Solidarity transformed into a social movement aiming for socio-economic restructuring, democratization and increasing human rights (Mays, 2011). With the reforms initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev opened some doors for the Solidarity movement to further press for liberalization of the country (Sarotte, 2009; Behrends, 2009). Against all odds, the movement succeeded and Poland became the first Eastern European country to start the democratization process in 1989 (Mays, 2011).

4.2.2. Economic transition

Under the Soviet sphere of influence, Poland adopted the system of central planning and nationalization of the economy. During the winter of 1988, the economic situation reached a low point and caused persistent strikes among workers (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Once the first free elections were held and the Communist Party had lost its dominant position in politics, the new government's main economic concern was to stabilize Poland's economic performance, structure, and decision-making (Paczynska, 2002). Leszek Balcerowicz, the Minister of Finance, was in charge of lifting up the economy, which found itself in a state of crisis (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). To demonstrate the extend of the recession Poland was undergoing, some figure prove helpful. For instance, unemployment increased from 0.3% in January 1990 to 15,7% in December 1993 (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Furthermore, by 1990, inflation had reached roughly 586% as a result of the decline in artificial price controls and the standards of living had dropped by 35% in the first three post-liberation years (Hunter & Ryan, 2008).

Balcerowicz was given the task to restructure the Polish economy. To do so, he designed a Polish version of a program called "shock therapy", later named 'the Balcerowicz-Sachs Plan' (Hunter & Ryan, 2008; Rydlinski, 2017). The aim of shock therapy was 'rapidly reform the Polish economic structure from a centrally planned economy into a privatized market-based one' (Marvin, 2010).

Balcerowicz's design of shock therapy was based upon five pillars of economic transformation. These five pillars were '(1) rapid transformation of the system of central planning into a private functioning market economy; (2) liberalization of economic functions; (3) privatization of state-owned enterprises; (4) construction of an effective social safety net; and (5) the mobilization of international financial assistance to support this process' (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Furthermore, Balcerowicz also tackled issues such as inflation, liberalization of prices from state control, opening

up foreign trade, budget deficits, simplifying entry to the market and foreign debts in his time in office (Paczynska, 2002).

Poland was the first newly liberated Eastern European country to adopt the shock therapy method for its economic reforms (Leven, 2008). Some of its consequences had large impacts on the lives of the Poles. For instance, the high numbers in unemployment were not foreseen by the Polish government (Rydinski, 2017). Furthermore, in 1990, the industrial output decreased five times higher than expected by the government, causing a steep decline in the standards of living (Rydinski, 2017). These consequences had not been foreseen by the architects of the reforms (Marvin, 2010).

With the Mass Privatization Law enacted in 1993, Poland started its mass privatization program (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Apart from a small section of agriculture, the private sector was absent from the Polish market prior to this law (Winiacki, 2002). Logically, the privatization of previously state owned enterprises was paired with the augmentation of the percentages of economic output, GDP and employment contributed by the private sector (Winiacki, 2002). The Mass Privatization Law had as its goals to move towards a maturely developed market system, to encourage the development of a competitive and dynamic private sector, and to reduce the influence and size of the public sector (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). State owned enterprises or industries were privatized by means of auctions and direct sales (Marvin, 2010).

As a result, the amount of private companies officially operating in Poland doubled between 1989 to 1999 and has continued to enlarge ever since (Winiacki, 2002). Between the adoption of the Mass Privatization Law and 1999, the GDP growth in Poland averaged at roughly 5.4% annually, simultaneously the gross national income per capita increased by roughly 5.8% annually (World Bank, n.d., World Bank, n.d.). In addition, inflation started to normalize again after 1995 (Trading Economics, n.d.).

Of course, the privatization of the market also had some negative consequences. For instance, job security provided by the state diminished and as a result, unemployment rose to 11 percent in 1991 (Leven, 2008; Marvin, 2010). Furthermore, wealth disparities grew (Paczynska, 2002). Moreover, the amount of women participating in the workforce decreased. During the reforms, many benefits targeted at women were abolished. These socialist benefits included 'extended maternity leave, heavily subsidized childcare, free summer camps for children, and various other programs to assist' the employment of mothers (Leven, 2008). Prior to the reforms, Polish women consisted of half of the country's labor pool. However, steeply declined in the years following the economic transitions (Leven, 2008).

Women unemployment became a persistent problem in Poland, touching over 55% of women since 1998 (Leven, 2008). This can be linked to the growing power the Roman Catholic Church has gained. This results in pressure for women to adopt roles of primary caretakers and being the center of the family (Leven, 2008).

The Polish economy started to recover by the end of the 1990s, becoming one of the fastest growing economies in Europe (Paczynska, 2002). During the 1990s, a remarkable increase in foreign direct investment occurred simultaneously. Whereas the Polish economy received 153.246 billion dollars in 1992, this increased to 961.898 billion dollars in foreign direct investment in 1999 (World Bank, n.d.). Poland acknowledges that foreign direct investment is fundamental to successfully privatize its economy and increase its economic growth (Kornecki, 2018). In comparison to its wealth under communist rule, Poland had become 50% more wealthier (Marvin, 2010).

On May 1st, 2004, Poland joined the European Union after having successfully met the entry criteria. One of these criteria was that Poland had a functioning market economy with the capacity to meet the competitive standards and market forces within the European Union (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). To meet these criteria, foreign trade was fully liberalized by reducing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers (Marvin, 2010).

After accession, Poland successfully uses the resources the European Union has made available which allowed its economy to further progress. Intra-EU trade accounts for 80% of Polish exports and 72% of its imports (European Union, n.d.). The standards of living were brought closer to those of many Western European country (Orlowski, 2011). To emphasize, the GDP per capita has risen from 44% of the European Union average on its accession to 67% in 2014 (Adekoya, 2014).

Yet, the financial recession starting the 2008 prevented the Polish economy to continue its growth (Rydlinksi, 2017). Although Poland's GDP remained well above European average, the government had to adopt some cost-effective state policies to save some of its budget (Marvin, 2010; Rydlinksi, 2017).

Today, Poland's economy is regarded as one of the most successful transitions among post-Soviet countries and has become a middle income country (Marvin, 2010). According to the World Bank, Poland's economy is expected to increase its GDP by 4.2% in 2018 (Reuters, 2018). Moreover, in April 2018, unemployment reached record levels amounting to only 6.3%, the lowest unemployment rate since 1990 (Trading Economics, n.d.). The demand for labor further stimulates these trends in the decrease (OECD, 2018).

To summarize, by the means of radical transformations adopted through shock therapy, Poland has successfully transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a functioning market economy.

Although the initial stages of the transition came with an increase in poverty, inflation, unemployment and wealth disparities, Poland's economy started to recover by the late 1990s. Under the Mass Privatization Law, state owned enterprises were sold or auctioned and in the years that followed, GDP growth attained 5.4% on average. With the opening up of the market, foreign direct investment increased by 528% between 1992 and 1999. Poland admitted these investments played an important role in its economic progress. Today, intra-European Union trade has become most dominant in exports, as well as imports. Poland's economic transition is considered as the most successful among post-Soviet countries.

4.2.3. Political transition

Poland was the first country to liberate itself from the Soviet sphere of influence. The country defeated the regime with help of the social movement, Solidarity, in 1989 (Paczynska, 2002). Soon thereafter, the 'Round Table Talks' were organized. Participants of these talks were the Polish government, the Communist Party, the opposition and the Roman Catholic Church (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). The aim of the talks were to reach consensus on how Poland would organize itself politically in the upcoming period. During the discussions, two significant consensus were reached. Firstly, the upper house, or Senate, was created consisting of 100 freely elected senators (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Secondly, partially open parliamentary elections were to be held (Paczynska, 2002).

All the seats in the Senate were to be elected through majority voting. The democratic Solidarity movement won 99 of those (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Contrarily, prior to the elections of the parliament, it had already been decided during the Round Table Talks that at least 60% of the seats would be reserved for *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, the ruling communist party, and its allies, and 5% of the seats were to be set aside for organizations linked to the Roman Catholic Church (Paczynska, 2002; Hunter & Ryan, 2008). Remarkably, Solidarity was victorious of all the remaining freely elected seats in the parliament as well (Hunter & Ryan, 2008).

The undeniable defeat of the Polish Communist Party and the popular desire to convert back to the governmental structures and institutions it had prior to foreign invasions, resembling to those of Western Europe, led to the decision of President Wojciech Jaruzelski to put forth the first completely free and fair elections in 1990 (Magdalena & Zdzislaw, 2017; Hunter & Ryan, 2008). At the announcements of the free elections, 370 new political parties were officially registered (Hollander, 2017). Since then, Poland has been a parliamentary democracy (Chapman, n.d.).

1990 also marked the year that Poland submitted the official application for starting the dialogue for accession to the European Union (Hunter & Ryan, 2008). For Poland to be eligible for EU

membership, several requirements had to be fulfilled. Politically, these requirements were 'stability of political institutions, essentially proving evidence of a functioning 'civil society', including political and social institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, and respect for minority and human rights' (Hunter & Ryan, 2008).

Even though many post-communist regimes experience difficulties transforming its political institutions to democratic ones, Poland has done a considerably good job (O'Neil, 2015). The country's accession to the European Union was finalized in 2004 (Shields, 2007). Poland was the largest, in size and in population, of the former Soviet-influenced countries to join the EU (Chapman, n.d.).

Concepts of political ideologies posed some minor problems in scaping the Polish political landscape post-1989. In the past, the Communist Party was associated with the political left. Thus, left-wing political parties were often labeled as conservative. Au contraire, right-wing parties were often associated with progress and advancement (Holubec & Rae, 2010). This is a direct opposition of how the left-right political spectrum is perceived in Western Europe. The conservative right dominated Polish politics and is highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church and its values (Holubec & Rae, 2010).

Poland is a parliamentary democracy where the President is directly elected for a maximum of two five-year terms (Freedom House, 2018; Chapman, n.d.). Since the first freely held elections in 1990, the electoral system and its functioning have overall been marked as free and fair and Polish political parties can operate and organize themselves in complete freedom (Freedom House, 2018). At the most recent presidential elections in 2015, the highly conservative Law and Justice party won by roughly 37% of the votes and has been in office since (Csaky, 2017).

In the recent years, Law and Justice has become notorious for seeking to weaken the democratic institutions, such as the judiciary branch of government and the independent media (The Economist, 2017; Chapman, n.d.) Furthermore, pending some legal changes, Law and Justice is increasing their political power over the elections process and is reducing the checks and balances between the three branches of government (Freedom House, 2018; Czaky, 2017). Especially the dissolution of the independent body in charge of the appointment of judges and the plans to make the judges of the Supreme Court retire early are signs the judiciary is no longer separated (Broniatowski, 2017). Instead, the President will be in charge of the appointment of judges, potentially granting Law and Justice to replace roughly 37% of the judges currently in the Supreme Court (Gostynska-Jakubowska, 2018). Moreover, the chairman of the party, recently announced that Law and Justice needed at least three terms in office to make significant change (The

Economist, 2018). This casually implies that the prospects for the upcoming years do not seem to be in favor of democratic. Despite the large amount of criticism from the Polish opposition, human rights groups and the European Union and its member states, the Polish government claims the amendments made to its judiciary branch are in consonance with European standards (Strupczewski, 2017).

Meanwhile, Law and Order has also sought to weaken the independent media. Highly placed managers at public television and radio were fired and replaced by ones controlled by the Polish government (Chapman, n.d.). Supplementary, media access to parliamentary sessions is restricted to only five selected television station (Kelly, 2016). Obviously, preventive censorship and licensing requirements have been set up, even though this goes against the protection of freedom of the press adopted in the Polish Constitution in 1997 (Chapman, n.d.).

Ultimately, the control over the media will also influence the electoral process. The media has engaged in propaganda, praising Law and Justice and its allies, while criticizing its opponents (Ciesla, 2017). Consequently, this will lead to a weakened position for the opposition and thus a weakened democracy.

Although the Polish state is officially secular, the Roman Catholic Church remains in a position of influence (Freedom House, 2018). The conservative wing of the Church strongly opposes the acceptance of refugees, thus Poland has accepted only a small number of asylum seekers (Cienski, 2017). For instance, in 2017 only 44 of the 650 000 thousand Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Europe arrived in Poland (Eurostat, 2018; Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, n.d.) Furthermore, xenophobia-motivated violence is increasing but the government has failed to publicly distanced themselves from those acts (Flückiger, 2017).

Other civil rights and personal freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, assembly and the freedom of speech are largely respected within the Polish society (Freedom House, 2018).

In sum, Poland went rapid democratizations and the first free and fair presidential elections were held in 1990. Poland entered the European Union in 2004 after having met four main requirements. In short, they included: signs of a functioning civil society, political and social institutions that guarantee democracy, an independent rule of law, and respect for minorities and human rights. Since the victory of the Law and Justice party at the 2015 elections, all the requirements previously successfully adopted have been affected. Firstly, civil society was damaged by the weakening of the independent media. Propaganda and censorship have become common. Secondly, the judiciary branch of government can no longer be considered as independent. This troubled both the maintenance of democratic institutions and an independent rule of law. At last, xenophobic related

incidence have augmented. Having failed to distance themselves from those actions, the government is not respecting minorities, not their human rights.

In spite of Poland's promising democratizations in the years after 1989, today, the country's credibility as a liberal democracy by standards of the European Union is decreasing. With the political developments since the accession of Law and Justice in 2015, a reversal can be detected towards a more autocratic form of government. Granting that Law and Justice has announced the party requires more time in office to make more significant alterations in politics, the prospects for further autocratic reform seem realistic. The question remains whether Poland is looking to exit the European Union's or how far autocratic reforms can go until their departure is demanded.

4.2.4. Commemoration culture

In the years that followed liberation, many of the Red Army commemorative practices quickly disappeared. For instance, status of Soviet leaders and Red Army war monuments were demolished, Soviet street names were changed and communist liberation anniversaries were not celebrated anymore (Ewa, 2010). These actions were destructive of nature and had a political motive. This practice can be defined as iconoclasm (May, 2012). Since commemorative monuments often held a prominent place in cities and towns, empty spaces occurred (Ewa, 2010).

More recently, the discussions on the Polish communist past escalated. Since 2007, the nationalistic Law and Justice party has drafted legislation that obliges a nationwide removal of all communistic symbols (Ewa, 2010). These symbols include names of streets, bridges and squares, statues and memorial sights. An estimated 1.500 streets, bridges and squares will be subjected to name changes to show Poland's opposition to the promotion of totalitarian regimes (Day, 2016). Moreover, statues, public monuments and memorials relating to communism need to be removed in one year (Lyman, 2017).

Since these Soviet statues and memorial sights were often located in well-visited places, such as townhalls or squares, new monuments had to be constructed (Ewa, 2010). However, this turned out to be rather problematic. Although the vast majority agreed that these new monuments should shed light on Polish national heroes or prominent persons of its past, differences occurred what should be placed there due to the highly fragmented political situation (Ewa, 2010). Another interesting dimension to the removal of these commemorations, is that the Soviet Union had already taken down all the Nazi ones, thus focusing largely on the removal of communist signs from society (Lyman, 2017).

Furthermore, legislation has been adopted prohibiting the denial of the Holocaust (Gliszczynska-Grabias, 2018). This resulted in historical revisionism, as one official truth of history was adopted in legislation (Mazzini, 2018; Gliszczynska-Grabias, 2018). In politics, memory now focusses on the consolidation of Poland's borders following independence and victorious battles or uprisings (Napiorkowski, 2018). Furthermore, an anti-German sentiment arose. Law and Justice continues to play victim of the past, resulting in wobbly German-Polish relations (Zaborowski, 2017).

Although similar legislation exists in Russia, the content is opposing to the memory law and commemoration practices introduced in Poland. To illustrate, the memory of heroism and victorious roles of the Soviet Red Army in the Second World War is protected. This law also prohibits the spread of information stating otherwise (Gliszczynska-Grabias, 2018). This is subjected to pose problems in the already fragile Polish-Russian relations.

According to Mateusz Mazzini, the new influence of politics in national memory, 'it has become a tool employed in an effort to redefine the meaning of nationhood and national identity [...] and as a replacement for present-day issues' (2018). Polish national memory now serves to increase patriotism, victimhood and revenge over its invaders (Dempsey, 2018).

From this sub-chapter, two main commemorative practices can be deduced. The adoption of legislation on Holocaust denial and the nationwide obligation to remove all symbols connected to Communism are signs of actively repressing the past. This form of remembering can be referred to as negative-remembering, or forgetting. Secondly, Poland is trying to replace its dark past, with patriotic heroes from a seemingly different past. This is visible in the focus on Polish independence, its victorious battles and uprisings and in the replacement of Soviet symbols with new ones shedding light on its national heroes. The use of these commemorative practices is strategically used in Polish politics to increase patriotism and national identity.

4.2.5. Summary

Poland became part of the Soviet sphere of influence at the end of the Second World War. After regaining independence, the 'shock therapy' method was used to privatize and liberate the Polish national economy. This first resulted in a decrease of standards of living due to higher unemployment and hyperinflation. With the adoption of the Mass Privatization Law in 1993, Poland's economy started to recover. State owned enterprises were auctioned or sold. Moreover, foreign direct investment as a result of opening up the market, also played an important role in its economic revival. Poland's transition to a market economy is considered successful.

Despite Poland's successful transition to a liberal democracy in the years following 1989, democratic institutions have recently been weakened by the nationalistic Law and Justice party.

The judiciary branch of government has become arbitrary, the independent media is subjected to censorship, public broadcasting agencies promote pro-government propaganda and the heads of country have failed to distance themselves from xenophobic behaviors. With these autocratic reforms, Poland is jeopardizing its membership to the European Union.

The use of commemorative practices are strategically used in politics to increase patriotism and national identity. Laws have been adopted demanding the nationwide removal of all symbols related to its communist past and to penalize Holocaust denial. In this manner, the government is creating its own history. Furthermore, patriotic heroes from a different past have been resurrected.

4.3. How can the European model of post-communism best be characterized?

In this last sub-chapter, the European model of post-communism will be conceptualized based on similarities, or a lack thereof, in the Russian and Polish case studies. This model aims to identify the dynamics of the Poland-Russia relations.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union came from within its heart, Russia. The implosion of the Union led to an increase in political autonomy in Poland who had, in its turn, expressed the desire to gain more political freedoms. Initially, both Russia and Poland opted for democratization. In the case of the latter, this quickly resulted in the first free and fair elections in 1990. Contrarily, Russia turned into a chaotic state which can best be defined as kleptocratic.

In a second, the governing systems diverged from each other. Whereas Poland had transformed itself into a liberal democracy, highlighted by its accession to the European Union in 2004, Russia remained under the rule of one man, President Putin. With an absence of political freedoms, an arbitrary judiciary and severe restrictions on personal freedoms, Russia has been returning to a dictatorial form of government.

Today, the course of Russia's political transition remain unchanged. Poland, however, has been increasingly weakening its democratic institutions. These institutions include the judiciary and the independent media. This change in direction might indicate a return to tighter governmental control and ultimately a return to autocratic rule.

Conflicting commemoration cultures exist in Russia and Poland. Despite the fact that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was based upon decisions of its own leaders, Russians today still identify with it. Russians feel nostalgic about being the political and economic heart of the Soviet Union, as well as have the status of a superpower. Contrarily, Poland has been actively trying to repress all aspects of its communist past. Instead, the focus lies on gaining independence.

To make economic progress, Poland underwent shock therapy, a rapid economic reform program focusing on privatization and market liberalization. State owned enterprises were auctioned or sold and the country opened up for foreign investment. Today, Poland is a full-market economy, showing little signs of government interference in its economic sector. The need for economic growth existed in Russia as well. Inadequate of deciding on reforms fit for Russia, a set of reforms based on the Polish shock therapy was launched. The privatization of state owned enterprises led to an increase in corruption, kleptocracy and higher levels of monopoly. Moreover, where the Polish successfully opened for foreign investments, Russia's market can best be describes as a limit access order. The state still intervenes in the economic sector.

Taking everything into account, the conceptualization of the European model of post-communism will be based upon the differences in the economic and political transitions and the commemoration cultures in Russia and Poland. Poland has managed to separate itself from the Russia and their common Soviet past and has largely profited from its autonomy. Meanwhile, Russia has not been as successful. The country has not been capable of establishing democracy and the government still intervenes in its economic sector. Whereas Russia still longs for its Soviet past, the Poles are actively repressing it. In this manner, Soviet influences are further disregarded.

Thus, the European model of post-communism can be characterized as the assertive political and socio-economic separation of the periphery from its core. To clarify, the core is Russia and its periphery is Poland. The Polish transitions described in this chapter pinpoint Poland's desire to detach itself completely from Russia, as they completely move away from the Soviet-imposed economic and political structures.

Even though the core profited from its relationship with the periphery in the past, today, the periphery benefits the most of its liberation. The periphery has progressed, whereas the core has failed to transition significantly. The transitions undergone in Russia and Poland are antagonistic and the dependency of the periphery of its core had ceased to exist.

It is important to note that the European model proposed above is theorized at the hand of two case studies only. To increase trustworthiness, similar research must be conducted to outline the relationship between Russia and other countries former under the Soviet sphere of influence. However, similar outcomes are expected. This speculation is led by the accession of the remaining Visegrád countries, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, and the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to the European Union.

Chapter 5: How can the Asian model of post-communism be characterized?

Similar to the previous chapter, this part will consist of two case studies. China and Vietnam have been chosen. Both case studies are structured in the same as in the previous chapter, starting with a description of the history of communism. Secondly, the economic transitions will be elaborated on. What follows is an examination of the political transitions. At last, each case study will shortly be summarized. The aim of the case studies is to gather information on the transitions China and Vietnam have undergone since 1989.

At the end of this chapter, the similarities or differences found in the transitions in China and Vietnam will be highlighted. Based upon this, the following question will be answered '*How can the Asian model of post-communism be characterized?*'.

5.1. Where communism and capitalism collide - a study of China

5.1.1. A brief history of communism in China

It was the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 that allowed revolutionary thoughts to enter Chinese politics (Lampton, 2014). In 1949, Mao Zedong emerged as the great victor and obtained power through the Chinese Communist Party [hereafter CCP] (Lampton, 2014). The CCP gained much support from Comintern, an organization supporting communism internationally founded in Soviet Russia (Ke-wen, 1998). As the People's Republic of China was subjected to hostility from non-Communist countries, it strengthened its relationship with the Soviet Union (Ke-wen, 1998). Under Mao, China changed in many ways. His most notable communist actions included changing the ownership system, the class system and the political culture (Zhou, 2012). However, Mao's leadership resulted in a dictatorship, where most power resided with the man itself (Lampton, 2014). This resulted in poor economic decisions, leading China into deep economic recession (Zhou, 2012). During the Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966, Mao effectively sought to eliminate political opponents and furthermore diverted even more power to himself resulting in a dictatorial CCP leadership (Ke-wen, 1998).

During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese citizens were encouraged to denounce all individuals who expressed negative opinions towards the leadership of Mao. This resulted in the death of over 1 million whereas many more were banished to exile in the countryside (The Economist, 2016). During these times of terror, higher education facilities were closed for an extensive amount of time to diminish educated individuals in doubt of Mao's rule (The Economist, 2016). The CCP controlled every domain of both public and private life which lasted until Mao's death in 1976 (Tudoroiu, 2011. & Lampton, 2014).

Mao's death resulted in a struggle for power (Gittings, 1976). Several years later, with the accession of Deng Xiaoping to power, order returned. Under Deng's leadership, the CCP made its top priority to improve the extremely low standards of living and to reform the country's economy (Zhou, 2012). With Deng in power, the CCP was cleaned of Mao extremists and the Cultural Revolution came to an end (Ke-wen, 1998).

In 1989, a protest arose on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The protestors, consisting of mainly students and intellectuals, were protesting for democratization (He & Feng, 2008). Some forms of protest included hunger strikes and setting army equipment on fire (BBC, 2017). After seven weeks of protesting, the CCP aggressively took down the demonstrations, killing around 10,000 Chinese individuals (BBC, 2017). The events of Tiananmen Square remains a national tragedy today (He & Feng, 2008).

5.1.2. Economic transition

Deng Xiaoping, the initiator of reforms in China, feared that a lack of economic growth would lead to political instability, as was the case in the Soviet Union (Bottelier, 2007). To help China's economic grow, Deng loosened the restriction of individuals to do business (Link, 2016). Furthermore, he promised that the standards of living would be quadrupled by 2000, as a result of industrial, scientific, agricultural and defense successes (Ke-wen, 1998).

Consequently, growth in GDP became the most significant indicator of performance (Tudoroiu, 2011). And thus, making profit was no longer a means of measuring inequality, but would in the future serve to measure success (Link, 2016).

Deng's reforms can be summarized by five characteristics, namely: '(a) a gradualist approach to reform choices; (b) willingness to experiment with policy choices; (c) export-led growth; (d) state capitalism or an explicit role for state-owned enterprises [hereafter SOEs] in production, where they are allowed favored access to land and capital and dominate strategic industries or "leading heights" of the economy; and (e) maintenance of an authoritarian regime during dramatic economic change' (Malesky & London, 2014). The process of slow economic reform in China was called the 'Beijing Consensus', in opposition to the 'Washington Consensus' (Zhou, 2012). The term 'Washington Consensus' refers to a neo-liberal process of economic reform in favor of a free market, privatization, and limited government intervention (Marangos, 2007). The application of Shock Therapy in Poland and Russia was based upon these principles of the 'Washington Consensus'.

It was in cooperation with the World Bank, that China shaped its early stages of economic transition (Bottelier, 2007). For instance, the World Bank respected China's decision to reform slowly, in

opposition to 'Shock Therapy' seen in during the European post-communist transitions. The organization further aided in creating new policies supporting institutional reform and facilitated gaining insights in the international market (Bottelier, 2007).

Special Economic Zones were opened where the reform process was more advanced and in favor of free market (Bottelier, 2007). Often located at the coastline, river or border area, these zones can be seen in China's first steps in participating in the global economy (Matt, 2018). Also known as 'Free Trade Zones', they have an advantageous position because they employ free-market principles, are subjected to low export taxes and market interest rates are favorable (Ross, 2013). Throughout the years, these zones have successfully attracted foreign direct investment (Li, 2015). Besides the six Special Economic Zones, 14 coastal cities were granted similar advantages. Moreover, four new free trade areas are being piloted (World Bank, n.d.).

In line with the recommendations of the World Bank, China initially focused on the light manufactory industry (Bottelier, 2007). Goods produced under the 'Made in China' logo started to make their way into the international market by the 1990s (Jiang, 2016). The success of this widespread distribution of goods was due to the high supply of workers which were largely underpaid and under-protected (Link, 2016). As a result, China has become the world's leading export country in 2013, overtaking the United States of America (Monaghan, 2014; Li, 2015). Exports from the Special Economic Zones amounted to 60% of the country's total (World Bank, n.d.)

In the early 1991, the first signs that the Chinese economy started to flourish were visible (Bottelier, 2007). To illustrate, GDP rose around 14% in 1992 and kept growing at a rate of 10% in the three years that followed (Bottelier, 2007). Over the past three decades, China has successfully aided millions out of poverty by the help of its continuous economic growth (Li, 2015). However, income inequalities rose, especially between the Special Economic Zones and in-land China. To demonstrate, in 2016 the poorest quarter of the Chinese population held just 1% of the country's wealth. Contrarily, the most affluent 1% held one-third of its China's wealth (Wildau & Mitchell, 2016).

By slowly weakening the restrictions imposed on the private sector, the Chinese economy has undergone some major changes (Kyong Choi & Xiao Zhou, 2001). One remarkable aspect to mention, is that during the first stages of privatization, only the unemployed or retired gained permission to work for or start a private enterprise. This was done to ensure that SOEs would not lose their employees to the private sector (Kyong Choi & Xiao Zhou, 2001).

However, in the early stage of privatization, the government worked hard to disable the private sector to create new businesses and publicly shamed people engaged in this. For instance, the government raised speculations that these persons were engaged in theft from the state or highly unproductive (Kyong Choi & Xiao Zhou, 2001). The combination of these events led the pioneers of business in China to be (former) criminals, the elderly, the retired, farmers and others who did not succeed in obtaining a successful job (Kyong Choi & Xiao Zhou, 2001).

Privatization of SOEs started in 1994, with the adoption of the Company Law. This law established a more contemporary enterprise system through corporatization of SOEs and provided laws for the various new forms of ownership, including private firms (Bottelier, 2007; Dorn, 2016). Many smaller SOEs were abolished or privatized and the bigger ones remained in possession of the state (Dorn, 2016). As many Chinese were employed by these smaller enterprises, unemployment increased by 45 million between 1995 and 2003 (Bottelier, 2007). Especially young and poor farmers left agriculture to seek for a job in the private economy (Ke-wen, 1998). Altogether, this led to an increase in employment and power in the private or entrepreneurial sector (Kyong Choi & Xiao Zhou, 2001).

Although the initial aim of China's economic reforms were to strengthen its SOEs, the private sector has now become the engine of its economy (Dorn, 2016). With the constraints on entrepreneurship and trade detached, wealth and employment were increasingly created by the private sectors (Dorn, 2016). Moreover, in recent years, 30 million jobs were created by the Special Economic Zones (World Bank, n.d.).

Legally, Chinese citizens are permitted to set up their own private business, but this often remains impossible without connections to powerful government officials (Freedom House, 2018). Moreover, private companies are now further influenced by the Chinese Communist Party who are taking small stakes in big corporations (Economy, 2018). Foreign private companies often face obstacles in settling in China, such as censorship, demands for bribes or arbitrary regulatory obstacles (Freedom House, 2018).

With the economic boom of the 1990s, the income inequalities between rural and urban China rose, especially between the Special Economic Zones and the inland provinces (The Economist, 2016). This led to the migration of many Chinese to seek better employment opportunities (Tiwari & Doi, 2002). However, a large percentage of these labor migrants work in the informal sector, earning less than minimum wage. This is because these labor migrants do not have the right to live and work where they wish, and therefore cannot be formally employed (Tiwari & Doi, 2002). As a consequence, wage gaps remain high (Tiwari & Doi, 2002). To illustrate, the real per capita income

of households in the richest Chinese provinces, Beijing and Shanghai, were four times the amount of the lowest income regions (Wen, 2018).

Numerous strategies to battle the geographical unequal distribution of wealth have been used, including building roads, railways, pipelines in the West, stimulating economic bonds with Central and South-East Asia and providing the inland regions with aid and advice (The Economist, 2016). For a small amount of time, these measures were working. However, today, the convergence in wealth has slowed down (The Economist, 2016). To balance wealth, adjustments need to be made in the tax systems, including real estate and inheritance tax (Peng, 2016). Additionally, non-governmental organization and philanthropic missions need to be encouraged and allowed (Peng, 2016).

In 2001, China was finally accepted to the World Trade Organization [hereafter WTO] (Bottelier, 2007). Before its successful accession, China was asked to reduce the tariffs and non-tariff barriers on imported goods (Tiwari & Doi, 2002). For instance, the amount of imported consumer goods under price controls was reduced from 97% prior accession to roughly 12% after accession (Tiwari & Doi, 2002). Although many non-tariff barriers remained in place, WTO membership has required China to remove them all (Tiwari & Doi, 2002).

Accession to the WTO was an important event in Chinese economics. Not only did it help the country into entering the global economy, it also introduced its companies with the rules and regulations of the global trade regime (Dorn, 2016).

The successes of the 'Beijing Consensus', also named 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', has become attractive for emerging economies seeking an alternative to Western liberal democracies (Dorn, 2016; Li, 2015). Increasingly so because one of the characteristics of this gradual mode of reform focusses on keeping an authoritarian regime in place during the times of transition (Li, 2015). Moreover, this has become even increasingly attractive when China's successes were further exhibited when it became the first economy in size based on purchasing-power-parity in 2015 (Willige, 2016).

Xi Jinping became President of China in 2012. With his accession, many market-based reforms were slowed down or totally aborted. To elaborate, the positions of SOEs greatly increased and they obtained a leading position in economic campaigns (Economy, 2018). State-planning is still an important part of the Chinese political economy (Dorn, 2016). Besides, the Chinese government also controls important sectors of the economy, such as the banking and energy sector (Freedom House, 2018). Contrarily, the Chinese government announced projects to further privatize the

financial sector in the upcoming years. The plans include lifting or diminishing limits on foreign ownership of banks and security firms (Wan, 2017).

Today, China and 'the West', referring to non-communist countries, have largely benefitted from the modernization of the Chinese market. Chinese products are cheap and of high quality, simultaneously, and therefore an unthinkable part in stores around the world (Matt, 2018). The development of China's economy was well thought-out over the past 35 years (Zhou, 2012). Even though large wealth disparities still exists, it is undeniable that China has evolved to one of the most important economic world powers (Matt, 2018). This growth rate has been increasingly profound since the adoption of capitalist values within the Communist state since the mid-2000s (Li, 2015).

Since the beginning of reforms, China has abolished the planned economy, the distribution of 'each according to his work' and, in parts, the public ownership (Tudoroiu, 2012). In this sense, the Chinese economy has shifted towards the use of a more market based system (Li, 2015). Furthermore, it has successfully opened up to foreign trade and investment and became a key player in international economics (Guo, 2007). Nevertheless, the transition will only be completed once three main criteria have been met: 'a communist party no longer has monopoly power, the dominant means of production are in private hands, and the market is the dominant coordinator of economic activities' (Peng, 2012).

To summarize, China's economy has transitioned in many ways in comparison to its previous system guided by communist principles. The creation of Special Economic Zones have industrialized and modernized the country's economy and have increased wealth. Having adopted free market principles, these capitalist playgrounds for businessmen have largely contributed to the increase in exports and the decrease in unemployment.

Another achievement is the emergence of the private sector. However, the government still dominates or influences major SOEs in the most important sectors and some minor trade barriers are still in place favoring the Chinese market. Moreover, the government still interferes with many business practices. From this, it can be deduced that the Chinese economy, apart from the Special Economic Zones, is still transforming to a full market economy.

Whether China will continue to transition towards a market based economy highly depends on the reduction of government interference in the economy and its shares in SOEs. However, for now, China has proved there is an alternative solution to economic growth.

5.1.3. Political transition

During the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989, Chinese citizens were demanding democratization from their government. Their demands got taken down aggressively without being heard. Although Deng Xiaoping, the successor of Mao Zedong as the leader of China, promised to push for shared responsibilities within the party rather than with all power residing within one individual, his political reforms were weak (The Economist, 2014). Instead, he believed China was not ready to be governed more democratically and first needed economic strengthening before real political changes could be made (Li, 2015).

Although his reforms might not have been significant, some occurred. On national level, this merely resulted in the decision-making authority shifting from one-person to be shared among the highest members of the Communist Party (Economy, 2018). On the contrary, collective leadership was successfully promoted at local level, resulting in a varied group of persons joining the local political discussions (Guo, 2007). Deng also further imposed a two five-year term limit for presidents to ensure Mao-like figure would not attain power (Vick & Campbell, 2017). To sum up, in collaboration with presidential term limits, this shared power of the executive branch of government should assure no leader similar to Mao would gain power (Vick & Campbell, 2017).

Some other minor demands in terms of democratization were met as well. For instance, political pluralism, relative separation of power and the weakening of the communist ideology have been pursued (Guo, 2007). However, until this day, many of the governmental structures remain intact and the Chinese political system has not significantly changed in favor of democracy (Guo, 2007). Despite the minor changes outlined above, the same political systems and ideology largely remain intact (Guo, 2007). The party-state apparatus has remained unchanged throughout the decades and the Communist Party continues to be in full control over all governmental institutions (Turadoriu, 2011). There are no political alternatives to the CCP as national executive leaders (Freedom House, 2018). Moreover, many of the communist personnel, structures, military and secret services have prevailed as well (Turadoriu, 2011).

The reforms proposed by Deng continued until the accession of Xi Jinping as President of the People's Republic of China. Since becoming president in 2013, Xi has dismantled the system of collective rule (The Economist, 2014).

The 19th Party Congress of the Communist Party in 2017 marked an important moment in this dismantlement. The 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism With Chinese Characteristics for a New Era', was embedded into the party's constitution (Economy, 2018). This included Xi's thoughts, visions and ideology on all aspects touched by the Communist Party. Apart from Mao, Xi is the only Chinese

leader to put his name and ideology in the CCP's constitution (Economy, 2018). Consequently, this cemented his power on the CCP and personal power within politics. One can assume that by his actions, Xi is working towards creating a cult of personality similar to that of Mao (Freedom House, 2018). Additionally, Deng's reforms were further dismantled with the announcement that the CCP was abolishing the two five-year presidential terms (Vick & Campbell, 2017). Practically, this means that Xi can remain in power for the rest of his life, further dismantling collective leadership into a one-man system (Vick & Campbell, 2017).

Moreover, during his years as president, Xi has effectively gained exclusive power over cyber issues, economic reform and national security (Economy, 2018). Additionally, he oversees all government reforms, finance and the armed forces (The Economist, 2014). On top of this, Xi is the leader and holds the power to appoint the members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest ranking executive body and its leaders (Freedom House, 2018).

More recently, in March 2018, the National Supervision Commission was established, a watchdog to consolidate Xi's new anti-corruption campaign (Gilholm, 2018). The establishment of this organization has been long awaited since Xi initiated the anti-corruption campaign in 2012 (Giang, 2018). Since 2012, more than one million government officials have been penalized, including hundreds of high-level leaders (Skidmore, 2017). However, it can be expected that the National Supervision Commission will not operate independently and will instead be an effective tool of Xi's increasing power (Gilholm, 2018). Be that as it may, the launch of the anti-corruption efforts has made Xi extremely popular among the Chinese people (Skidmore, 2018).

The increase in power of the CCP has also resulted in the re-appearance of the party in the private lives of the Chinese citizens. The appearance of a restrictive firewall that denies access to most foreign news sites and social-media channels. This shows to what extent the Chinese are subjected to censorship and are made incapable to receive information that the government does not approve of (The Economist, 2017).

Moreover, the regime has become increasingly repressive on its control over civil society (Freedom House, 2018). For example, the state has started installing a nation-wide system of 'social credit', combining personalized information of all Chinese in one system (Economy, 2018). This system has as its goal to detect whether an individual is truth worthy and lives in line with the CCP. Information is gathered based on online interactions, banking information, location and even the amount of video games played (Economy, 2018). Rewards are offered to trustworthy and responsible citizens, whereas the government can target citizens with punishments if negative behavior is detected. Punishments might include the denial to international travel, to obtain certain jobs and restrictions

on public transport or restaurants (Economy, 2018). The government claims that the official reasons for launching the social credit system are to raise its efficiency and confidence through big data; to tackle unfair and unsafe companies and to raise trust between citizens and the government. However, with this system in place, the CCP is showing signs of changing into totalitarian state, seeking to control all aspects of life (The Economist, 2016). It is not surprising that media control and censorship in China can be classified as the most restrictive in the world (Freedom House, 2018).

With the tightening of social media outlets and the online sphere, the CCP is tackling the voices of the people even further (Freedom House, 2018). Previously, many intellectuals and critics shared their opinions online. The voices of these people would find their ways into the masses through e-mail, the internet and other online social media (Gou, 2007). However, with the new Cybersecurity Law set in place, further restrictions and regulations, alongside with a worsening censorship and surveillance, make it harder to express opinions online without bearing the consequences (Freedom House, 2018).

The CCP has been increasingly monopolizing all forms of political organizations and does not allow for real political competition (Freedom House, 2018). Severe punishments are imposed on those who seek to establish independent political or democratic organizations. Political opponents can be imprisoned for life on ambiguous charges (Richardson, 2016). Even though no free and fair elections exist in China, roughly 68% of urban residents expressed their satisfaction with their right to vote (Guo, 2007).

Although Xi's rule is shifting towards a Mao-like division of power, some positive aspects of political life in China have been identified. Suzanne Ogden, professor of political science and expert on China, argues that Chinese today enjoy increased freedoms in their everyday lives, such as a more vibrant mass media, increasing importance of interest groups and associations and a more equitable legal system (Guo, 2007). The Chinese government has also become more open, releasing more official documents and information to the public (Freedom House, 2018).

Despite Ms. Ogden's statement that the personal freedoms of many Chinese have increased in the last decades, large restrictions of personal freedoms, such as the freedom of speech, assembly and political organization still exist (Guo, 2007). For example, publicly expressing criticism of the Communist Party is not allowed (Gou, 2007). Recently, bloggers, activists and human rights lawyers have been arrested and prosecuted for not complying with CCP rules (Freedom House, 2018).

Similarly, the CCP holds all power of the judicial system and supervises all courts, and influences the appointment of judges (Freedom House, 2018). Hence, the judiciary branch of government is

not separated from the other branches. It is not unheard of that officials interfere with judicial cases, protecting the CCP, the local industries and potential liability of political officials (Freedom House, 2018).

Challenges for the Chinese government in the upcoming years include the increasing unequal distribution of wealth and environmental degradation (Li, 2015). Xi publicly acknowledges these challenges but still believes other countries should follow 'a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind' (Economy, 2018). Nonetheless, no real reforms have been set in place to work on the issues surrounding corruption and the unequal distribution of power (Freedom House, 2018).

Even though discriminations based on nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference or religion are prohibited by Chinese law, these protections of personal rights are often not met (Freedom House, 2018). Especially ethnic and religious minorities, people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and people with disabilities face boundless discrimination, especially in employment and education (Freedom House, 2018).

All things considered, with the accession of Xi to power, most of the democratizing reforms imposed by Deng have been stopped or reverted. To sum up, Xi has embedded his vision in the CCP's constitution, abolished the maximum of two five-year terms for presidency and ensured he gained personal power over many aspects of politics that were previously divided.

Furthermore, increasing surveillance and censorship show a growing distrust of the government towards its citizens. Especially the social-credit program shows the extend of this. Human rights conditions and civil rights remain in a bad state. Citizens cannot enjoy personal freedoms and receive no protection by the judiciary from the actions of their government.

Based on the political transition undergone in China since 1989, it can be said that the People's Republic today can be defined as a neo-communist regime. To elaborate, neo-communist regimes can be classified as 'a postcommunist authoritarian regime preserving or restoring communist structures, methods, and personnel within the framework of a specific ideology [...]. Such regimes are fully aware of the danger represented by the development of civil society and do everything in their power to hamper or incorporate it' (Tudoroiu, 2011).

5.1.4. Commemoration culture

By Mao's decisions, the Chinese economy was severely damaged and 45 million people are believed to have lost their lives during the Great Famine caused by a catastrophic push for industrialization in the late 1950s (Philipps, 2016). After Mao's death, the Communist Party tried to avoid any public commemorations of the Cultural Revolution to avoid inquiries or introspections about the political

validity of the party (Shenshen, 2016). Despite the Party's acknowledgement that Mao's rule led to disorder, damage and recession, it remains silent about the dark chapters of the Cultural Revolution or the Great Famine (Lorenz, 2007).

Instead, Mao is remembered as a revolutionary hero (Phillips, 2016). Those who seek to commemorate and grieve this negative side of Mao's rule, face counterforce from the Communist Party. Censorship and threats are not uncommon, but individuals are also at risk of losing their jobs over such commemorations (Lorenz, 2007). However, on online platforms and occasionally in mainstream publications, the debate about it is ongoing (The Economist, 2016).

Instead, Mao's image has a prominent place in China today (Brown, 2016). For instance, there alone are 2.000 Mao statues spread across Chinese cities (Blood, 2014). Mao's corpse lies in a to him dedicated memorial hall, on Tiananmen Square, the square place where the protests for democratization were aggressively taken down by the Chinese government in 1989 (Tatlow, 2011). Three men who threw eggs at Mao's portrait during the pro-democracy revolutions, were handed over to the police. They were sentenced to ten years in prison (Mai, 2016).

Every year at the anniversary of Mao's death, thousands stand in line to get a glimpse of his embalmed body (Tatlow, 2011). Moreover, images of Mao can be found on banknotes, t-shirts, caps, key rings and commemorative plates across the country (Brown, 2016).

However, some aspects of the Cultural Revolution emerged on television as recreational programs. In these programs, the revolution is portrayed as a nostalgic cultural subgenre that dramatized and romanticized the events of the past (Shenshen, 2016). As the state controls the broadcasting stations and the content of recreational programs, this projection of the Cultural Revolution is not true representation of the past. Instead, it is constructed to the liking of the Communist Party (Shenshen, 2016). As this memory is not correctly preserved, it relies mainly on human memory today. Human memory is known to fade with time and this poses some problems in the perseverance of the history of the Cultural Revolution (Link, 2016).

Lastly, some minor signs of nostalgia for the Mao era can be detected. These sentiments go hand in hand with the longing for the simplicity of life during Mao's ruling and the equality among the Chinese (Lampton, 2014). More than 80% per cent of the 1.1 million respondents expressed their support for the Cultural Revolution or were nostalgic for it (Anderlini, 2016).

China's commemoration culture is largely based upon the remembrance of Mao and his actions. In sum, the commemorative practices of China are contradictory and take two forms. Firstly, the Communist Party seeks to discredit the negative aspects of Mao's rule, such as the Cultural Revolution or the Great Famine. This is done to prevent the citizens from asking questions on their

legitimacy. Instead, the Party allowed for a romanticized version of history to be broadcasted on television. Contrarily, it focusses on Mao's grandeur and leadership. His statues still remain in prominent places and his image can be found on a lot of user objects. Mao's image is also used to legitimize the Communist Party's rule. This second commemoration culture can be defined as nostalgia. Many Chinese had admitted to feeling nostalgic, longing for the simplicity of the Mao era. Moreover, by the commemorations of his death, this Chinese show they feel affection for Mao.

5.1. Summary

During the Mao-regime, China's economy was centrally planned and the CCP controlled every aspect of life. With the accession of Deng to presidency, the Beijing Consensus of reform was adapted. This included: gradual reform, export led growth, state capitalism and a prominent role of SOEs and the maintenance of the authoritarian regime. A slow privatization process was adopted and the Company Law came into effect in 1991. Today, the engine of China's economy is the private sector. However, important sectors still remain the hands of the state. State-planning is still present in China. Simultaneously, income and wealth disparities between provinces increased. Furthermore, due to its economic success, the Beijing Consensus proved to be an attractive model of economic reform for emerging economies. The Chinese economy enjoys a larger degree of market liberalization, but has not become a full market economy yet. To achieve this, the government must reduce its power on the economic sector.

Politically, a similar party-state apparatus exists without any free and fair elections. Recently, Xi has dismantled collective rule and gained much personal power. Furthermore, he oversees all governmental reform, finance, and the armed forces. On top of this, he has right power to appoint members and leaders of the Politburo. To cement its legitimacy, 'the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' was laid down in the CCP's Constitution. Previously, only Mao's thought had been embedded into the CCP's Constitution. This act, combination with gaining much personal power, can be seen as the emergence of a cult of personality of Xi Jinping. There are large restrictions on personal freedoms and with the social security system in place, the state enlarges its surveillance on citizens. There is no independent judiciary and corruption remains a big problem. The governmental system can best be classified as post-communist authoritarianism.

Many Chinese today feel nostalgic, longing for the simplicity of the Mao era. However, this nostalgia is not based on history. Instead, the Communist Party has created a romanticized version of history, to discredit the truth. This practice of forgetting is done to prevent citizens from questioning the legitimacy of the Communist Party.

5.2. Imitating its most successful neighbor – a case study of Vietnam

5.2.1. Brief history of communism in Vietnam

Despite French oppressions to opposition movements, the formation of communist thought in Vietnam started during the 1920s. (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). In 1930, the Indochinese Communist Party was founded by Ho Chi Minh (BBC, 2018). Another contributing factor to this insurgency was Germany's temporary victory in France in 1940. This event changed the perception of the Communist groups that the French military was invincible (Dosch & Vuving, 2008).

The northern half of the peninsula was declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh on September 2nd, 1945 (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). However, with this declaration, the fight for independence was not over. Prior to accepting their defeat, the French labeled the war as ideological (Grinter, 2006).

Consequently, this led to an international war, lasting thirty years and killing millions of innocent civilians, soldiers and guerilla's (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). The war gained an international element because numerous global parties were involved, supporting either side of the torn country economically or military (Podlaski, 2016). During this time, the country was split into two: the Communist North and the pro-American south (BBC, n.d.). The Communist's allies included China and the Soviet Union, who provided them with extensive economic and military assistance (Amer, 1993). The biggest support for Southern Vietnam was the United States of America, who was at its turn fighting the Communist ideology (BBC, n.d.).

It was Ho Chi Minh who steered the direction of the political and emotional components of the revolutionary war and led the quest for reunification (Grinter, 2006). Ultimately, Northern Vietnam claimed victory and absorbed capitalist Southern Vietnam in 1975 (Goodman, 2015; Dosch & Vuving, 2008).

Since the reunification, Vietnam became the world third biggest communist state, after China and the Soviet Union (Goodman, 2015). The Communist Party of Vietnam has been in power and its governing and party structures showed resemblance with those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). Similarly, the party also promised to re-build the country and raise the standards of living through collective ownership and central planning (Hong Hiep, 2012).

However, the Party faced difficulties in attaining its goal. The Sino-Vietnamese diplomatic relations had turned cold in 1978. This occurred over a dispute on the treatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Vietnam's ongoing friendship with the Soviet Union (Amer, 1993). This friendship and Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in 1978 had as a consequence that countries such as the United

States, the ASEAN Community (consisting of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand), and China pressured countries in Europe and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund to refrain from providing financial assistance (Hong Hiep, 2012; Goodman, 2015). Vietnam was diplomatically isolated and Soviet Union was the only country in the communist bloc that offered economic assistance (Goodman, 2015). Therefore, Vietnam relied heavily on the Soviet Union for its recovery. Frictions occurred in the relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union after Vietnam had failed to increase its economic efficiency. Despite over 8 billion dollars of Soviet investment between 1981 and 1986 and food and commodity support, the Vietnamese economy became a burden on the Soviet Union (Global Security, n.d.). Ultimately, the Soviet Union decided to decline its foreign aid to Vietnam in 1980 and ultimately discontinued it as a whole in 1990 (Trien & Hartley, 2016; Global Security, n.d.).

As the Vietnamese economy stagnated by the declining industrial output, food production, and exports and the standards of living sharply declined, a socio-economic crisis broke out in the 1980s (Goodman, 2015; Hong Hiep, 2012). Contrarily, Vietnam's neighboring countries were experiencing rapid economic growth since the mid-1970s (Goodman, 2015).

Unlike the previous mentioned countries, the CPV did not intervene the lives of its citizens as much, nor did it seek to control all aspects of society (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). Even during Ho Chi Minh's rule, no cult of personality was constructed which resembled those of Stalin or Mao (ECO, 2015).

5.2.2. Economic transition

The same year Mikhail Gorbachev announced economic reform in the Soviet Union, the government of Vietnam publicly announced the *Doi Moi*-policy, translating to renovation or opening up (Grinter, 2006). With the implosive events occurring in the Soviet Union, Vietnam's most important ally, the Vietnamese government began to privately criticize Mikhail Gorbachev and look up to Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms that seem to increase the legitimacy of the Chinese government (Dosch & Vuing, 2008). It was not illogic that the Vietnamese party started to look up to the Chinese gradualist reforms, as both countries shared a similar domestic and international environment, showed resemblance in both economic and political systems and both preferred economic over political reform (Dosch & Vuing, 2008).

Doi Moi, heavily influenced on the Beijing Consensus, was welcomed in impoverished and war-destructed Vietnam, as the Communist Party of Vietnam [hereafter CPV] had failed to raise living standards in the years after reunification of the North and South (Hong Hiep, 2012). The policy,

taken into effect in the late 1980s, mainly focused on creating a market-based economy in Vietnam and further exemplified the economic reform model China had adopted (Hong-Hiep, 2012., Malesky & London, 2014). For instance, the transformation to a market-based economy would also emphasize on maintaining political stability and control (Thang, 2000). This was in high contrast to the economic and political developments of the communist states in Europe. Furthermore, *Doi Moi* revolved around a set of reforms, including: 'confirming the long-term development of a multi-sector market-based economy, renovating the economic structure, stabilizing the socio-economic environment, promoting science and technology and adapting an open-door policy in relations with foreign partners' (Hong Hiep, 2012).

The creation of a multi-sector market-based economy meant that privatization of the state-owned enterprises and reforms allowing a private sector to exist had to be made. By 1989, central planning and collectivization were completely abolished, resulting in the beginning of the appearance of a labor market (Beresford, 2008). From the early 1990s onwards, state-owned enterprises received little to no financial support from the government anymore (Beresford, 2008). Additionally, the prices of consumer goods were liberated and the state subsidies for goods and the production were eliminated (Thang, 2000). Consequently, this resulted in poor performances of SOEs and an inflation rate of 260% (Thang, 2000). Furthermore, with the adoption of *Doi Moi*, the government stopped subsidizing job creation. Instead, it heavily focused on the creation of new, profitable, enterprises and to pass reform surrounding economic and business related freedoms for individuals (Beresford, 2008; Nguyen, 2002).

Vietnam's public institutions were built to mimic the Soviet-style economy of central planning, henceforth had a hard time adapting to the desires of a more market-driven economy (Nguyen, 2017). However, with the implosion of the Soviet Union, the idea that Soviet-styled institutions were superior faded. The aim of the government was the creation of a 'socialist-oriented market economy' (Nguyen, 2017). To elaborate, in policy, the government persistently expressed their intention to pursue 'state guidance' of the economic market through state-owned enterprises (Beresford, 2008). This highly resembled China's approach to giving SOEs favored access to land and capital to dominate strategic industries of the economy (Malesky & London, 2014).

Another explanation for keeping up the SOE and adopting a gradual approach to privatization in the early years of *Doi Moi*, was to keep up employment. Unemployment had already led to problems among the youth in the large cities and in the rural provinces (Beresford, 2008). Thus, rapidly liquidating SOEs would raise unemployment resulting in social unrest and dislocation as it had done during the early transitions years in former-Communist Europe (Beresford, 2008, Malesky

& London, 2014). Contrarily, many SOE workers also voluntarily quit their work in the search for new entrepreneurial opportunities. The change to the private sector generally paid off and granted individuals higher incomes, better standards of living and a more efficient usage of time at work (Nguyen, 2002).

It was not until the early 2000s that Vietnam started to obliterate and merge smaller and underachieving SOEs. Smaller SOEs with potential were absorbed into General Corporations whereas underachieving SOEs without a promising future were abolished (Beresford, 2008). Youth unemployment indeed rose due to the lack of future hiring by new SOEs, but many former workers of these enterprises successfully found employment in other sectors, such as the household sector (Beresford, 2008).

In 2013, the SOE sector contributed to more than one-third of Vietnam's GDP and half of its exports (OECD, 2013). However, the government has been working towards selling its remaining shares in Vietnam's largest and most profitable SOEs to strengthen the private sector and attract foreign investors (Nguyen, 2017). The plan is to target thousands of SOEs would accelerate Vietnam's economic liberalization process heavily (Cook, 2017). This process plays a crucial role in the *Doi Moi* target of renovating the economic structure. Moreover, this tactic of allowing the private sector to settle down prior to dismantling the SOEs can be seen as a gradualist tactic to reduce the negative consequences on reforms on society (Malesky & London, 2014). According to research conducted by Elise Brezis and Adi Schnytzer on economic reforms in communist regimes, this structure is called 'market-Leninism' and refers to a structure where SOEs are maintained while simultaneously, the private sector can compete directly without entry barriers (2003).

The transformations under *Doi Moi* has further also spiked foreign interest in the Vietnamese economy, replacing the previous international view of Vietnam as solely a war torn country (Hong Hiep, 2012). External factors brought beneficial financial resources. In detail, foreign development aid helped the socio-economic development, direct investment spiked the creation and aided in the survival of businesses and the international market brought a lot of trading opportunities (Hong Hiep, 2012). Vietnam created 325 industrial zones to provide appropriate infrastructure to attract foreign direct investments (Doanh, 2002). Until 2016, these zones had already attracted \$150 billion in foreign direct investment (Vietnam Briefing, 2017).

As direct foreign aid was increased, trading opportunities rose. The harmonization with the West, most significantly with the United States, played an important role in expanding Vietnam's tradable sector (Nguyen, 2017). This expansion in trade with the West led to an increase in export revenue by 20% annually from 1992 to 2010 (Hong Hiep, 2012). Moreover, in 2012, export amounted for

roughly 71% of Vietnam's GDP (Hong Hiep, 2012). Despite Vietnam's strong reliance on trade with the Soviet Union in the past, China has been the country's primary trading partner since 2006 (Dosh & Vuving, 2008). In comparison, in 2015 Chinese imports from Vietnam attained \$25 billion dollars, whereas Russia only imported \$2.1 billion dollars' worth of goods the same year (Trading Economics, n.d.; Trading Economics, n.d.).

Other contributing factors to the increase in export revenue in line with the open-door policy, include Vietnam's accession to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [hereafter ASEAN] in 1995 and its membership of the World Trade Organization [hereafter WTO] in 2007 (Hong Hiep, 2012). One positive effect of Vietnam's membership to the WTO is the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers (Grinter, 2006). Additionally, more recent free trade agreements with the European union, South Korea and the Eurasia Economic Union further cemented Vietnam's position as an export country (Nguyen, 2017).

Whereas the Vietnamese economy previously consisted of mostly agriculture, today, it enjoys a wide variety of sectors. For instance, Vietnam is home to many technology company's factories and a popular country for the garment industry to settle (Nguyen, 2017). The country is an especially popular destination among South Korean businesses seeking to relocate their factories (Grinter, 2006). However, the economy remains to be export-led based on the dominance of the manufacturing sector (Nguyen, 2017). The three biggest export products are machines, textiles, footwear and headwear and vegetable products (OEC, 2016).

Another interesting aspect to note is that *Doi Moi* was introduced prior to the outbreak of a nationwide socio-economic and political crisis during the 1980s, which would have questioned the authority of the CPV (Beresford, 2008). Mr. Hong Hiep (2012), fellow at the Singapore Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, argues that this liberating policy has become the main source of legitimacy of the CPV. This legitimacy would be reassured on economic performance in the decades following the adoption of *Doi Moi* (Hong Hiep, 2012).

Taking this into account, it must be acknowledged that Vietnam has undergone significant development since the transformative reforms. Vietnam remains the second fastest growing Asian economy after China, with an annual average GDP growth of 7.5% until 2006 (Hong Hiep, 2012). Moreover, since the reforms, the GDP per capita has quadrupled and the country has gotten the status of a lower-middle income country (Beresford, 2008; Nguyen, 2017). Furthermore, the percentage of Vietnamese living under the poverty line has been diminished from 58% in 1993 to 15% in 2007 (Hong Hiep, 2012). A large middle-class emerged, expecting to reach approximately one-third of the population by 2020 (Thu, 2015). The alleviation of poverty can be linked to a higher

percentage of primary and secondary school enrollment, improved health situations, increased farm productions, the orientation on export as well as job creation in the private sector (World Bank, 2012).

Whereas it can be argued that several negative developments occurred after this transformation, such as an increased crime rate, reduced availability to public health or rising inequalities among citizens, the quality of living has improved for many Vietnamese in comparison to the past (Beresford, 2008).

In cooperation with the World Bank, the Vietnamese's government launched a report in 2016, stating its prospects for 2035. The report states the aspirations to strive for modernity, industrialization and a higher quality of life (World Bank, 2016). With these goals in mind, a new set of reforms have been designed for the period between 2016-2020. These reforms are guided on the following three principles: 'gradually allowing market mechanisms to play a leading role in the economy and allocation of resources; developing higher-value-added industries to gradually become the engine of the economy, taking the place of current low-value-added ones; and actively undertaking international integration and improving Vietnam's international standing' (Nguyen 2017). These aspirations and reforms further stand on three main pillars: 'balancing economic prosperity with environmental sustainability, promoting equity and social inclusion, and bolstering the state's capacity and accountability' (World Bank, 2016).

In summary, throughout the 30 years of reform, Vietnam has gradually worked towards adopting principles of a market-based economy. The Vietnamese style of reforming the economy was seemingly heavily influenced by the Beijing Consensus, adopted in China. Although the state is working towards selling SOEs partly or in totality, they still make up 40% of Vietnam's economic output today. As the state still dominates the market in this manner, it cannot be said that the market has been fully privatized and liberated. However, it seems the Vietnamese government has accepted capitalist values. With the new set of reforms adopted in 2016, there are good hopes Vietnam further transition towards a market-based economy in the upcoming years. However, as standards of living are rising, Vietnam must find new ways to secure its positions within the East Asian market and refrain its newly acquired manufactural industry to move towards countries with a lower cost, such as Cambodia or Myanmar (Jennings, 2016).

5.2.3. Political transition

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam remains under control of one political party, namely the Communist Party of Vietnam (Kerkvliet, 2018). With the assimilation of the Soviet Union and the stop of Soviet, Vietnam started to turn to China. Due to the similarities in the Chinese and

Vietnamese economic reform policies, it is tempting to expect China would export its political model to Vietnam. However, no empirical evidence on this has been found (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). Similarly to China, Vietnam chose economic reform above political reform. Only some minor changes in Vietnam's governing structures have been adopted. Clearer distinctions have been made between the government and the state, resulting in a more pluralistic system (The Economist, 2017). Under this 'troika' structure, power is divided among three posts, namely the Secretary of the Communist Party, the President and the Prime Minister (Dosch & Vuving, 2008). This structure came into effect after the passing of Ho Chi Minh to provide a more equal distribution of power among his successors (Dosch & Vuving, 2008).

The National Assembly, or parliament, serves as the country's legislative body and is elected by citizens (Freedom House, 2018). Where the parliament had a reputation for passing government policies without truly discussing its contents in the past, today, it has successfully begun to carry out its legislative duties (BBC, 2016).

The National Assembly holds the right to elect the President for five-year terms (Freedom House, 2018). Although the role of the Vietnamese President can be described as titular or ceremonial, he holds constitutional power to have the highest command over the military (BBC, 2016; Vuving, 2017).

Furthermore, the Prime Minister is in charge of the daily operations and is also elected for a term of five years (BBC, 2016). Although collective leadership is the foundation of Vietnamese politics, abuses of power remain difficult to obviate. For example, former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung took advantage of his position by pursuing for power and personal wealth (Murray & Pham, 2017). After receiving a vote of 'low confidence' from the National Assembly, Dung was asked to retire quietly (Murray & Pham, 2017). Although Dung has not been to trial, his misconduct resulted in a new course for Vietnam's politics set by the Secretary of the Central Committee (Nguyen 2017).

The Politburo and the Central Committee remain the party's highest executive bodies (Freedom House, 2018). The Secretary of the Central Committee serves as the supreme leader of the country and holds the title of Commander-in-Chief of the military (Vuving, 2017). Until recently, an age limit imposed on the title of General Secretary of the Central Committee prohibited candidacy for individuals over 65 years old and decreased the chances of abuse of power (Vuving, 2017). Yet, in 2016, this rule was broken by re-electing Nguyen Phu Trong to this position (Petty, 2016). The reappointment of Trong as the most powerful man in Vietnam goes hand in hand with the party's mission to reaffirm and demonstrate its authority, abbreviate corruption and rent-seeking caused by Dung's leadership, and steer the country's most recent economic reform efforts (Nguyen, 2017).

Under Trongs's leadership, the Communist Party has become more conservative and applied more discipline in its rule (The Economist, 2017). Furthermore, Trong has also actively been seeking to consolidate power to himself. For instance, on top of being in charge of the military, he has also obtained a position in the Central Party Committee for Public Security, the leadership over the police forces (Giang, 2018).

An increasing amount of top positions in Vietnamese politics, such as the Secretary of the Communist Party, the President, Prime Minister, the parliament and membership to the Politburo, are elected through competitive elections (The Economist, 2017). This increase can be seen as a consequence of the appearance of different views and opinions of the ruling elite and intellectuals on how to run the country and which long-term political, socio-economical and strategic choices ought to be made (Nguyen, 2017).

Be that as it may, to be eligible for elections, one must be pre-approved or nominated by the party (Kerkvliet, 2018). Only a negligible amount of non-party members stood candidacy at any level of government (Grinter, 2006). Even though elections are increasingly competitive, authorities are reported to tamper with ballot boxes, especially to increase the voter turnout (Freedom House, 2018).

However, Trong aims to merge certain Party and governmental posts and thereby reducing the democratic election. Although he claims this will reduce the weight of Vietnam's political system, it will also effectively consolidate more power to the party and to himself (Giang, 2018).

With the forced retirement of Dung, the political landscape has changed in two distinctive ways. Firstly, dissents and activists face larger amounts of suppression (The Economist, 2017). Even though the government claims that there are no political prisoners in Vietnamese jails, members of independent organizations in the political, legal, labor or social sphere face arrests and imprisonments (The Economist, 2008; Grinter, 2006). On top of this, activists and citizens calling for democratization put to trial can even be sentenced as 'terrorists' by the judiciary (The Economist, 2008).

The illegality of such organizations does not imply pro-democracy movements do not exist. For instance, Bloc 8406 came into existence in 2006. This dissent group has published 'a manifesto on freedom and democracy' and is recruiting large amounts of Vietnamese to agitate for change (The Economist, 2008).

Secondly, the Communist Party has embarked on an anti-corruption campaign (Giang, 2018). Trong beliefs the growing discontent regarding government corruption poses serious threats to the party's legitimacy (The Economist, 2017). To understand the Vietnamese corruption problem, one

can gain insight from the country's ranking on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. Vietnam ranks 113th out of 175 countries (Transparency International, 2017). Contrarily to previous anti-corruption campaigns, highly placed officials and powerful businessmen are subjected to investigation and penal consequences too (Nguyen, 2017). Today, punishments of retired officials are not unheard of and sentences as high as capital punishment can be given (Nguyen, 2017; BBC, 2017). Although this campaign brings justice for the corruption problem, on the other hand, it has also permitted Trong to gain more power (Giang, 2018). It is remarkable that Trong initiated these anti-corruption reforms, as resemblance can be found with the anti-corruption campaign in China.

The judicial branch of government is arbitrary and not independent from party influence (Malesky & London, 2014). Having 'connections' can result in more favorable outcomes of trials and decisions by the courts (Kerkvliet, 2018). Little protection from the illegitimate use of force by the state exists for Vietnam's citizens (Freedom House, 2018).

Citizens were given the right to strike and public demonstration in 1994. Since then, they have used this right to demand better working conditions, better pay, but also to draw attention to 'their grievances against golf courses being built on their rice fields, excessive government taxes, government confiscation of land, abusive authorities, flawed elections, and other conditions' (Kerkvliet, 2018). Furthermore, the rising amount of civic and professional associations has been an encouraging development in Vietnam's civil society (Ginter, 2006).

Certain freedoms remain heavily restricted, such as the freedom of religion, press, speech and assembly (Ginter, 2016). Religious groups require supervision and permission from a party-controlled body to operate (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Furthermore, the state is allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations and penalize unregistered or illicit religious groups (Freedom House, 2018).

After years of heavy debating, Vietnam allowed the use of internet as of 1997 (Mares, 2013). Prior to making this decision, Vietnamese officials visited Singapore and China to learn about firewalls and monitoring content. The reason behind this were the fears of the Communist Party that counter-revolutionary information and propaganda would reach the public via the internet (Mares, 2013). In 2013, a new law came into effect that gives the state the power to block websites and impose fines on internet providers who violate censorship rules (Freedom House, 2018).

Additionally, all the public broadcasting and publishing agencies are controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Communist Party (Kerkvliet, 2018). Although many different titles appear, ranging from serious journals to tabloids, the authorities decide on what is published and

which contents are banned (Kerkvliet, 2018; Mares, 2013). Moreover, arrests and assaults on journalists, bloggers and activists that do not comply with the publishing rules are increasing (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Summarily, the Communist Party remains in tight control of the country. It can best be defined as mono-organizational, as there is little room for organization or activity independent from the party (Kerkvliet, 2018). A 'troika structure' allows for a higher division of power between the highest governing posts. Although elections are becoming more common, to be eligible, one must be a member of the CPV. There are no official alternatives to the CPV, but dissent political groups are recruiting members to fight for democratization. Moreover, personal freedoms and civil rights are heavily restricted by the Communist Party. There exists little protections from the government to its citizens and the judicial branch remains in control of the party.

Similarly to China, Vietnam's political regime can best be defined as neo-communist regime. The country has embarked on a mission to raise the standards of living by adopting economic modernization without meaningful and progressive political transformation (Grinter, 2006). This can be explained by the similar pre-transition conditions Vietnam and China were in and the similar goal of both Communist Parties. At last, it is not unreasonable to assume Vietnam voluntarily imitated its political transitions on its most successful neighbor.

5.2.4. Commemoration culture

The commemoration of communism in Vietnam, largely revolves around two main aspects: the Vietnam War and Ho Chi Minh. Firstly, commemorations revolve around the Vietnam War. As this war was part of a bigger dispute between international superpowers, it was, and still is, a heavily debated topic worldwide. Today, the Vietnamese government made the narrative of the Vietnam War focus on its triumph rather than the losses of the Northern Vietnamese. In school textbooks, no mention is given on the deaths of over 1 million North Vietnamese soldiers and guerrillas (Rosen, 2015).

Instead, the triumph focusses on the suffering and losses of their opponents, the American troops (Nguyen, 2016). To illustrate, detailed descriptions of victorious battles is provided, containing the exact numbers of American and South Vietnamese planes and helicopters shot down, tanks defeated and soldiers killed (Rosen, 2015). However, these textbooks do not contain any background information on the ideology motivating the Vietnam War (Rosen, 2015).

In his book 'Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War', professor and cultural critic Viet Thanh Nguyen mentions that war remembrances can be found throughout the country in cemeteries, war memories, works of fiction, film, fine art and diaspora museums (Nguyen, 2016).

Furthermore, the state organizes official commemoration ceremonies of the larger massacres. These ceremonies attract much attention from abroad, but survivors or victims remain reluctant to participate in them (Kwon, 2006). Ten of thousands soldiers, never received a traditional Vietnamese burial and in rural Vietnam, inhabitants mention ghosts and spirits still wander around in unrest (Roszko, 2010; Kwon, 2006).

Public commemorations and personal recollections of government officials have also become a means for politicians to increase their legitimacy and change certain aspects about the Vietnamese past (Nguyen, 2016). The latter serves as a tool to bring attention to national heroes and martyrs, whether those are real or have been made-up (Roszko, 2010).

Contradictory, to official high profile commemoration practices, government officials refuse requests for research visits in these areas because they wish to 'move beyond past tragedies in foreign relations' (Kwon, 2006). It can be argued this is done to prevent the truth about the War to emerge and to maintain the re-shaped narratives of it (Roszko, 2010).

One aspect about commemoration of the War that is often forgotten, revolves around the memory of the Vietnamese diaspora. Refugees and their descendants, many on exile in the United States of America, are experiencing difficulties in promoting their pains and the memory of their country that seized to exist (Nguyen, 2016).

Secondly, the image of Vietnam's late communist leader Ho Chi Minh is still used to legitimize the monopoly on power of the VCP (Quinn-Judge, 2008). On September 2nd, the Vietnamese National Holiday, the obit of President Ho Chi Minh is remembered, as well as Vietnam's independence from colonial France (Phuong, 2017). While conducting personal field research, notice was taken on the large amounts of pictures of Ho Chi Minh at schools, higher education facilities, religious altars at private homes and in stores, police stations, medical facilities and governmental institutions. It is striking to see that similar commemoration of Mao can be found in China.

Furthermore, in some cases, especially in education facilities, police stations and governmental institutions, the image of Ho Chi Minh was paired with the following slogan: '*Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam quang vinh muôn năm!*', meaning 'long live the glorious Communist Party of Vietnam'. Additionally, the portrait of Ho Chi Minh can also be found on numerous user-items such as footstalls, t-shirts and on the bills of the Vietnamese dong.

From this, it can be deducted that an iconic symbolization of Ho Chi Minh (Quinn-Judge, 2008). It can be assumed that this is done to indoctrinate the Vietnamese on the grandeur of Ho Chi Minh, which can thereafter be linked to the legitimacy of the Communist Party. This heavily resembles the creation of a cult of personality (Quinn-Judge, 2008).

One distinct commemorative practice can be observed in Vietnam. The focus on the triumph of the War and the creation of narratives that can serve as a strategical political tool, can be linked to the practice of counter-memory creation.

5.2.5. Summary

The Communist Party claimed victory in the Vietnam War. After economic stagnation, the *Doi Moi* reforms were adopted. These reforms, heavily influenced on China's economic reform, further characterized: the creation of a market-based economy, the renovation of economic structures, the stabilization of the socio-economic environment, the promotion of science and technology and the adaption of an open-door policy in relation to foreign partners. Although privatization of SOEs is becoming more important, SOEs still make up 40% of Vietnam's economic output. Foreign partners brought financial investments and the possibility to trade. Trade became especially important. Export revenue increased by 20% annually from 1992 to 2010 and amounts to 71% of Vietnam's GDP. Economic performance became a source of legitimacy for the CPV.

Vietnam remains in control of one party, the Communist Party. It is governed under a troika structure, dividing the three most important executive posts. Competitive elections for these top positions exist. However, one must be approved by the party to be eligible. Due to persistent corruption and rent-seeking, the CPV has become gradually more conservative and disciplined. The consequences of this are heavy anti-corruption campaigns and higher amounts of suppressions towards dissents and activists. The judiciary branch is not independent and thus citizens enjoy little protection from their government. The right to strike was granted, however, other freedoms remain heavily restricted. Especially high restrictions exist on the freedom of religion. No independent media exists. Similarly to China, the political system of Vietnam can best be described as post-communist authoritarianism.

The memories of the Vietnam War and Ho Chi Minh are used strategically in politics. This can be linked to nostalgia as commemoration culture.

5.3. How can the Asian model of post-communism best be characterized?

What follows is the conceptualization of the Asian model of post-communism based on the similarities and/or differences in the transitions of China and Vietnam. This model aims to identify the dynamic of the China-Vietnam relations.

With the discontinuation of Soviet Aid for Vietnam and the disapproval of the reforms proposed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Vietnam sought other solutions to ameliorate its economic situation. China had implemented the Beijing Consensus, a set of gradual economic reforms that was based on export,

state-capitalism and a dominant place for SOEs and maintaining its authoritarian political structure. Inspired by the Chinese economic successes, the Vietnamese government implemented similar reform policies that would favor economic over political transition. Although privatization and market liberalization occurred at a very slow pace, the reforms in Vietnam were more rapid. The most important difference is that the private sector can compete more freely with the SOEs in Vietnam.

China and Vietnam initially focused on light manufactory work, allowing the export sector to grow. Trade has become the most important economic success factor for the growth in GDP for both countries. Foreign investments and the private sector have also contributed to economic growth in both countries. The standards of living have dramatically improved due to the successful economic transitions. This success has served as legitimacy of the Communist Parties to rule over its country.

Little meaningful political transitions were detected in either countries, remaining under authoritarian Communist rule. Dissents face high levels of suppression and can be sentenced to extensive time in prison.

Recently, the Chinese leader Xi has cemented his political ideology and vision into the Communist Party constitution and further cemented his power in politics. Following that trend, Trong, Vietnam's most powerful political leader, is also seeking to increase his political power. Abuses of power occur in both countries. Heavy restrictions of freedoms remain, but the party legitimizes this by economic growth.

Vietnam launched an anti-corruption campaign, following China's lead. In the two countries, the campaigns serve as a means to further increase political power for its leaders and are also aimed at high government officials. In a similar manner, Vietnam also consulted with China on how to successfully implement internet firewalls prior to making internet accessible for its citizens. Both countries employ high levels of censorship and there is no independent media.

Mao and Ho Chi Minh, the great Communist leaders of both countries have a prominent place in society. Pictures and statues of them can be found in prominent places, including schools, police stations and government institutions. Iconic symbolization exists to serve as a means of raising political legitimacy on the Communist countries.

Taking this into consideration, the conceptualization of the Asian post-communist model will be based upon the similarities in the economic and political transition and the commemoration cultures of China and Vietnam. With its successful economic reforms, China has proved that there is an alternative to market liberalization and democratization to increase economic prosperity.

With the disagreement on the Soviet course of reforms, the Vietnamese government sought another way to increase economic growth while also maintain the authoritarian command structure. Taking this into account, Vietnam logically looked to its most successful neighbor for insight and direction.

Since 1989, Vietnam has reproduced many of China's reforms. China and Vietnam have become economic allies and both profit from their friendly relation. Together, they embrace their Communist thoughts in politics while also adopting more capitalist economic reforms. China has emerged as Vietnam's big brother.

Thus, the Asian model of post-communism can be characterized as the convergence of political and socio-economic conditions between China, the core, and Vietnam, the periphery. Vietnam has become increasingly influenced by China. However, in opposition to regular core-periphery relationships, both countries have profited from this rapprochement. The post-communist economic transitions have been successful and show similarities, whereas meaningful political transition is missing.

It is important to note that the Asian model of post-communism theorized above is done at the hand of only two case studies. To increase trustworthiness, similar research must be conducted to outline the relationship between the core, China, and other countries in Asia previously under communist rule. Such countries include Cambodia, North Korea and Myanmar.

Chapter 6: What are the key differences and/or similarities of the post-communist transition models in Europe and Asia?

The aim of this dissertation was to find similarities and/or differences of the post-communist transition models in Europe and Asia. Initially, it was expected that the models of post-communist transitions would show significant similarities. However, in contrast to the expectations, this research did not find significant similarities. What follows is a description and analysis of the four main findings that support the absence of similarities between the European and Asian models of post-communist transitions.

Firstly, the findings reveal that the economic transitions in the European and the Asian model opposed each other. In Europe, Shock Therapy was implemented to rapidly move away from the economic structures present under Communism. Shock Therapy was based on the neoliberal Washington Consensus and favored fast privatization of state owned enterprises and the liberalization of the market. This resulted in severe economic recessions in both Russia and Poland. However, the development of the economic reforms varied and thus the outcome differs. Whereas the Russian government continues to influence market entry, Poland has successfully made a transition to a market based economy. Findings on the economic transitions in the Asian model showed that a more gradual approach was administered. The Beijing Consensus favored state-capitalism and a dominant position of state owned enterprises. The explanation for this outcome is that the Asian states were in fear the ruling Communist Party would lose its legitimacy in case of economic collapse. An important issue emerging from these findings is that the gradual economic transitions in Asia were a means for the Communist Parties to remain in control.

The results on the differing political transitions further emphasize on the statement above. In the Asian model, no meaningful transitions were made and the Communist Parties of China and Vietnam remain in control. Their government structures can best be characterized as neo-communist. In contrast to the similar political conditions in Vietnam and China, results on the European post-communist model show two different transition paths. Whereas Poland has successfully become a democracy, Russia remains under autocratic rule. Despite this difference, a consistency can be found in the abolishment of communist rule. An explanation for this result is that Poland wanted to use its autonomy to move away from the Soviet-imposed communist control. Today, Poland maintains strong relationships with the democratic countries of the European Union instead.

Moreover, the findings on the models showed conflicting commemoration cultures. Similarly as in the two previous results, the findings on the European model show diverge remembrances of the

communist past. Whereas Russian commemorations focus on the Soviet grandeur as an international superpower and the Union's victory's during the Second World War, Poland actively seeks to disintegrate its communist history. The explanation for this result could be identical to the interpretation of the political divergence. Thus, this result can be seen as an emphasis of Poland to further accentuate its own national past and sovereignty. Nevertheless, the findings on the Asian model of post-communist transition also suggest cohesion in commemorative practices. Both China and Vietnam maintain the cults of personalities of their Communist leaders. Moreover, the cults of personalities are used as a means to maintain legitimacy on the Communist Parties.

Lastly, a comparison of the two models reveal that the countries of the European model have assertively diverged, whereas the Asian model shows the convergence of the political socio-economic conditions. The European model is based on the consistency of inconsistency in the outcomes of the post-communist transitions. The peripheral country, Poland, has detached itself from its core, Russia, resulting in opposing political and socio-economic structures today. The reason for this detachment can be found in the oppressive nature of the Soviet influence in Poland. Yet, the Asian model of post-communist transition revolves around convergence. Over time, Vietnam has modelled the successful transitions of China, resulting in similar political and socio-economic conditions. From the results can be deducted that Vietnam followed China's example voluntarily. These findings suggest that Vietnam has become a peripheral country of China. In this relationship, both countries benefit from their similarities.

In sum, the analyses of the results reveal only differences in the European and Asian models of post-communist transitions. The most important issue emerging from these finding is that the European model can best be conceptualized by the assertive separation of the periphery from its core. In contrast, the Asian model can best be conceptualized as the voluntarily convergence of the periphery to its core.

One main limitation to the conceptualization of the post-communist transition models can be found, namely that each model is only based on two countries. The credibility of the terms 'European model' and 'Asian model' would benefit from further research. Further research should similarly focus on the relationship between the periphery and its core throughout the post-communist transitions. However, new peripheral countries should be chosen to place the research perspective into a new context, location and culture.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this dissertation, answers the question, '*What are the key differences and/or similarities of the post-communist transition models of Europe and Asia?*'. As this central research question is comparative of nature, the European and Asian post-communist transitions were each conceptualized on models based on two separate case studies each. The conceptualization of these models was done to more effectively identify similarities and to impose order in the findings. It is important to note that the use of the terms 'European model' or 'Asian model' does not imply their existence in other scientific literature.

In conclusion, this dissertation has conceptualized the European model of post-communist transitions as the assertive separation of the periphery from its core, whereas the Asian model was conceptualized as the voluntarily convergence of the periphery to its core. The study has shown there are only differences in the comparison of European and Asian models of post-communist transitions. The results have contributed to this conclusion in three main aspects.

Firstly, the forms and aims of post-communism with regard to the economic and political transitions, and the commemoration culture are antagonistic. Oppositions were in particular found in the economic transitions. Whereas the European model implements Shock Therapy, the Asian model favored a more gradual approach based on the Beijing Consensus.

Secondly, an important finding to emerge from this study is that the European model is conceptualized on inconsistencies between Russia and Poland in all three aspects of post-communist transitions. While the transitions in Poland have been successful, Russia's transformations can be characterized as weak. In the European model, the previously more dominant core, has not benefitted from the post-communist transitions. Instead, Poland, the peripheral country, has separated itself completely from control imposed by the Soviet Union in the past.

Lastly, this study has shown that the Asian model is conceptualized on the convergence of the political and socio-economic dimensions of China and Vietnam. The Asian model of post-communist transitions revolves around gradual economic reforms and the maintenance of Communist rule. The results should that, throughout the years, Vietnam has successfully modeled China's successful reforms. Despite the weak nature of political transitions, the objective to increase political legitimacy through economic reform was achieved. In the Asian model, Vietnam, the periphery, has become voluntarily more influenced by the China, the core. Hence, the convergence of the political and socio-economic dimensions is explained.

The research was limited by conceptualizing the models based on only two countries. Further research should be done to investigate the validity of the European and Asian models conceptualized in this paper. It should concentrate on the dynamics between the center in relation to the peripheral countries in a similar manner as this paper. To further explore the European model, further research could include the relationship between Russia and another countries previously under the Soviet sphere of influence. For instance, another Visegrád country or one of the Baltic States. The relationship between China and other countries (previously) under communist rule could further cement the conceptualization of the Asian mode. For example, Cambodia, North Korea or Myanmar.

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