SUPRANATIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE SHARED NEIGHBORHOOD: DEMOCRATIZATION AND REGIME CHOICE IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE CAUCASUS

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ABSTRACT

Emmett Michael Strickland: Supranational Integration in the Shared Neighborhood:
Democratization and Regime Choice in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus
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In post-communist Central Europe, the European Union effectively used democratic conditionality to generate political reform in candidate states. With the Eurasian Economic Union, Russia now offers the former Soviet countries an alternative to EU integration, without the strings of democratic reform attached. Are less democratic regimes therefore more likely to side with Russia's organization in order to avoid committing to the stringent political reforms needed for EU association? This thesis applies theory on democratic change to four post-Soviet states to evaluate the nature of their political systems and their trajectories towards EU association or EEU membership. A correlation between democratic competitiveness and EU integration can be found in this region, but the lack of a causal link suggests that other factors may be at play.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Armenian National Movement
AA	Association Agreement
EU	European Union
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECE	East-Central Europe
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
UNM	United National Movement

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2004, the European Union enlarged its borders into the former Soviet republics of Northeastern Europe. Countries like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which were little over a decade prior governed by single-party communist regimes were officially given membership to the world's largest union of democratic, free-market economies. In addition to marking the symbolic spread of democratic ideals into the former Soviet bloc, this enlargement also expanded the EU's frontiers directly to the borders of other former Soviet states. The enlargement brought with it a new range of literature on the European Union's ability to leverage democratic reform in post-communist regimes using the carrot of EU membership. With many of the newly independent Soviet republics now located along the eastern periphery of the European Union, current literature on EU leverage now calls into question the EU's ability to push democratization in the former USSR through the promise of greater political and economic integration (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011).

However, Russia now sponsors its own Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a supranational economic and political entity comprised of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia. Unlike the European Union, which strictly demands strong democratic institutions from states wishing to join, the Eurasian Economic Union makes few demands of its members in the way of democratic reform. The expansion of the EU into the former communist bloc and the establishment of a Russian-backed counterpart in Eurasia raises some interesting questions about the effects that this increasingly bipolar arrangement might have on the European ex-Soviet countries which are geographically favorable to join both. With the Russian-backed EEU seeing

itself as a potential economic superpower in the former communist world, how do countries lying in the two organizations' shared neighborhood choose between two supranational models of political and economic integration? In the last decade, the EU has proven itself as a substantial driver of economic growth in its eastern member states. Why, then, is the nascent EEU, despite having a relatively weak economy comprised of poor ex-Soviet states, able to attract members in Europe? Is it the EEU's lack of democratic conditionality which is able to attract unconsolidated democracies towards Eurasian integration, even when EU integration would offer far more substantial economic benefits?

In this thesis, I will explore these questions by applying existing frameworks on EU expansion into East-Central Europe to four ex-Soviet states of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Initially, I hoped to establish a causal relationship between the nature of a country's democracy and its choice between EU Association and EEU membership. To do so, I used each country's current political alignment to predict the nature of that country's political system. However, because I did not give due attention to the internal processes and politics of supranational integration, it has been impossible to demonstrate a truly causal relationship. As a result, my final product serves mostly as a historical analysis on the emergence of various regime types in the former Soviet Union.

In the first portion of my paper, I go into greater detail on the structure and objectives of the Eurasian Economic Union. Then, I discuss existing literature on EU conditionality and democratization, and discuss how I apply these concepts to the ex-Soviet regimes. In the following section, I go into greater detail on the methodology and reasoning behind my case selections. Then, I will study the political developments that occurred in each case study prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and explore how these developments line up to existing

models of democratization. In the following section, I discuss the trajectories of democratization in each of the case studies in the period following 1991 and explore parallels with existing literature on patterns of regime change in the ex-communist states of East-Central Europe. Then, I conclude with a summary of my results before discussing the limitations of my thesis in establishing a causal relationship between a country's regime type and its choice of supranational integration. I also use this conclusion as an opportunity to discuss possible directions for future research.

Section 1.1: The Eurasian Economic Union

The Eurasian Economic Union was launched on January 1, 2015. The new institution largely marks a continuation of Russia's efforts to reintegrate the former Soviet Union into a more cohesive economic and political space (Popescu 2014:9-13). The EEU is divided into a four-tiered system of governance that is in many ways modeled after the institutions of the European Union, including a Eurasian Economic Commission which functions as an executive branch and is comprised of an equal number of appointed ministers from each member member state (Popescu 2014:9). This institution is roughly analogous to the European Commission (Popescu 2014:9). The deputy prime ministers of each EEU member state form a Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission which oversees the executive. This body features a rotating presidency and is roughly equivalent to the European Council (Popescu 2014:9). Meanwhile, member state presidents and prime ministers form the two High Eurasian Economic Councils (Popescu 2014:9).

The Eurasian Economic Union is not an entirely unprecedented development in the post-Soviet Space. Institutional re-integration of the region has long been a foreign policy goal of

Russia, and the foundations of the EEU were laid by the Eurasian Customs Union of 2010, which quickly evolved into a Common Economic Space between its members in 2012 (Popescu 2014:9). While the EEU is largely an extension of this integration process, the project also contains a number of innovations that distinguish it from its predecessors. In the days of the Customs Union, Russia formally held the majority of decision-making power. The EEU on the other hand has adopted an intergovernmental framework that requires unanimity among its member states in decision-making processes (Popescu 2014:11). This policy has proven popular among the smaller member states of the EEU that would otherwise be marginalized by the political hegemony of the Russian Federation (Popescu 2014:11).

Vladimir Putin has been a champion of Eurasian integration, and argues that the project will encourage the free movement of labor and capital (Putin 2011). In addition to abolishing tariffs between member states, the project seeks to improve the business environment by harmonizing technical regulations. Putin (2011) argues that the project will benefit Eurasian enterprises by allowing them to register their businesses in any EEU state. Market liberals are hopeful that this freedom will encourage competition among member states, which will be forced to improve their business environments in order to prevent their enterprises from moving to other Eurasian member states (Popescu 2014:15).

The Eurasian integration process has already succeeded in implementing several major economic policies, including placing caps on national deficits and inflation (Gidadhubli 2013:38). The visa regimes between member states have also been done away with, encouraging the migration of laborers and allowing companies to hire skilled workers from abroad more easily (Gidadhubli 2013:38). Others, however, have called into question the EEU's ability to bring major economic growth to its member states. From Belarus to Armenia, the destabilization

of the Russian Ruble has greatly impacted trade within the EEU (Dobbs 2015:2-4). Despite the EEU's lofty ambitions, customs disputes have persisted among member states, showing that the creation of a unified economic space may prove more difficult than originally hoped (Michel 2015). This more pessimistic outlook on the future of the Eurasian Economic Union calls into question the organization's ability to provide its members with meaningful benefits in the long-term. This position is in stark contrast with the European Union, whose economic benefits and make it an extremely attractive goal to outside states (Vachudova 2005:65).

Section 1.2: The Association Agreement: Europe's Alternative

While Moscow is working to attract the former Soviet Republics into a common Eurasian economic space, the European Union is also offering its own form of integration. Although the EU is for the time being uncommitted to enlargement into Eastern Europe or the Caucasus, it nevertheless offers a robust package of economic integration in the form of the Association Agreement. As part of a political initiative known as the Eastern Partnership, the EU seeks to promote democratization in the former Soviet Republics by offering greater political integration with Europe in exchange (Park 2014). By signing an Association Agreement, a state benefits from a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU, which offers access to EU markets much like that enjoyed by member states. While these Association Agreements do not provide the political benefits of participation in EU decision-making institutions, the economic aspect should provide substantial long-term benefits to participants (Pugsley 2014).

The offer of an Association Agreement through the Eastern Partnership has so far been extended Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Of these, only Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova have signed an Association Agreement with the EU (Pugsley

2014, Pifer 2014). Meanwhile, Belarus and Armenia have joined the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia is greatly concerned by the European Union's growing involvement in the former Soviet Union, seeing the Eastern Partnership as a direct threat to its own sphere of influence (Pugsley 2014).

Section 1.3: European Conditionality and Emergent Democracies

Much like EU membership, the possibility of signing an Association Agreement is dependent on fulfilling liberalizing economic and political reforms (Park 2014). Vachudova's (2005) framework on the democratization and Europeanization of post-communist regimes has emphasized the importance of consolidated democracy as a driving force for European integration. Since attaining certain standards of democracy is critical for a state's eligibility for EU integration, states with well-functioning democracies are able to fulfill EU requirements much more easily than more authoritarian regimes.

The question over EU enlargement into the former communist bloc arose as early as 1989, when the ECE countries began emerging from single-party communist governance (Vachudova 2005:83). By 1993, the EU had become outwardly committed to admitting new members from the former communist sphere following the European Council's Copenhagen summit (Vachudova 2005:95). The EU decided to impose a set of political conditions on potential member states. These "Copenhagen Criteria" require all potential EU members to implement a functioning democratic political system and a competitive free-market economy, in addition to all previous EU legislation included in the *acquis communautaire* (Vachudova 2005:96).

This concept of political conditionality is a critical part of EU enlargement studies because a given state's ability to integrate into the EU depends chiefly on its ability to fulfill these three fundamental criteria. For a state emerging from authoritarianism, fulfilling these criteria requires drastic reforms to the economy and political system. The European Union was able to encourage these reforms among the ECE states through the benefits associated with EU membership. Joining the EU allowed these countries greater access to European markets and decision-making institutions. Meanwhile, a decision not to join the European Union becomes extremely costly for a state when its neighbors go forward with European integration, effectively leaving that country in a state of economic isolation from the rest of Europe (Vachudova 2005:65).

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) outline several models of EU leverage which account for why the EU is able to attract outside states even when implementing the demands of conditionality can be extremely costly for local elites. The External Incentives Model helps to explain this phenomenon. According to this model, the EU offers outside states tangible rewards for adopting pro-European reforms. Two major rewards include the possibility of an Association Agreement and even full EU membership. If countries are able to achieve the conditions set by the EU, they will be rewarded with these external incentives. If not, the countries will be denied membership or association. The possibility of stronger EU integration creates a powerful incentive to enact difficult reforms (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:671).

However, this is not to assume that all states will invariably pursue EU membership to reap the rewards of reform. On the contrary, the decision to enact reform is driven by a cost-benefit assessment on the part of local elites who seek first and foremost to maximize their own domestic influence (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:671). Because of the stringent

political prerequisites for these rewards, European integration can carry high costs for elites who rely on illiberal tactics to maintain power. According to this model, states will only pursue European integration when the rewards of membership outweigh the domestic costs of the reform process (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:672). In democratic states run by reform-minded parties, the adoption costs of EU reforms are relatively small because these countries' political systems already enshrine many of the EU's political ideals (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:677). Such countries can fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria with relative ease in order to gain access to the vast benefits of EU integration.

In authoritarian states, however, the adoption costs of reform are extremely high. For despots and ultranationalists who rely on media censorship and ethnic scapegoating to maintain power, adopting democratic reform carries the enormous cost of doing away with the tactics that keep them in power (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:678). Rationally, leaders who face high adoption costs will be less inclined to pursue EU integration (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:678). Fear of the high adoption costs has prevented a number of leaders from orienting their countries towards the European Union, including Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia, and Franjo Tuđman in Croatia (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:668). However, this is not to say that an authoritarian elite will necessarily prevent EU membership indefinitely, as continued isolation from the EU can mobilize voters to elect opposition parties to overthrow illiberal elites that they see as a hindrance to reform (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:678).

However, there are also other explanations for the EU's ability to attract outside states. One major alternative is the Social Learning Model, which assumes that actors can just as much be driven by values, identities, and norms. This model argues that integration with the EU is not

driven so much by rational cost-benefit analysis as by leaders' own identities and values (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004:675).

These conceptualizations of EU attraction towards outside states were written at a time when potential member states were forced to choose between the difficult reforms process associated with EU integration and the vulnerability of economic isolation from neighboring states. The founding of the Eurasian Economic Union may change this dynamic by giving emerging democracies a third way: modest economic gains without having to adopt rigid democratic reform. By joining the EEU, states can enjoy the economic and political benefits of free movement and trade with a neighboring sphere without putting themselves through the rigorous reform process demanded by the EU.

This is not to say that the EU has lost its attractiveness because of the EEU's more lax enlargement policies. The EU still boasts the world's largest market economy and is a growing player in global affairs. Membership remains an effective instrument for promoting economic growth and increasing political influence *vis-à-vis* other member states. The difficulty of fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria also varies significantly from regime to regime. In already-consolidated democracies, reform does not fundamentally alter the political climate that has placed existing elites in power. In unconsolidated democracies, however, fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria means eliminating the ethnic scapegoating, media manipulation, and economic control that elected elites depend upon (Vachudova 2005:64). For these leaders, pursuing EU membership is a significantly less attractive option. With the relative difficulty of implementing reform within less democratic regimes, will these states be inclined to seek economic integration with the EEU in order to avoid the stringent economic and political reforms

required for EU membership? At the same time, will more liberal, competitive democracies be more likely to go forward with EU integration to reap the greater economic benefits?

Section 1.4: Regime Typology

In order to go forward with this question of whether or not regime types impact a country's path of supranational integration, it is important to understand how Vachudova (2005) differentiates between the various models of regime change in the former communist countries of East-Central Europe (ECE). Her work serves as a useful model that demonstrates how a nascent democracy's ability to fulfill economic and political preconditions can either be facilitated or hindered by internal factors that impact the quality of that country's democratic process. This model can in turn be used to test my thesis that a former Soviet state's regime type has a direct influence on whether the country gravitates towards EU association or EEU membership.

Vachudova's (2005) study applies a framework for regime change to six post-communist regimes in East-Central Europe: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia. With the exception of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which were part of a unified state until 1992, all of these states existed as independent entities throughout the communist period. These countries share a number of important similarities, including a similar history of single-party communist rule, similar geographic proximity to the EU, and a common adoption of multiparty democracy after 1989. Despite their fundamental similarities, however, these states followed radically different trajectories during their transition to pluralism, with some countries successfully fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria soon after 1989 while others transitioned towards a more unconsolidated form of democracy characterized by incomplete privatizations and

manipulation of the media by the political elite. The base similarities between these countries make it possible to identify the factors which account for their varying trajectories following the end of communism.

Vachudova's (2005) model groups these countries into two basic patterns of regime change. The first pattern is characterized by the rapid transition from authoritarian communism to liberal, consolidated democracy. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic constitute this liberal democratic pattern. In these cases, there are a number of factors which pave the way for a smooth transition towards post-communist democracy. In the prototypical liberal democracy, there exists a well-organized opposition movement during the communist period. The opposition is strong enough to win the first democratic elections and begins implementing the liberalizing reforms which necessarily establish an open, competitive democracy and fulfill the EU's Copenhagen Criteria (Vachudova 2005:18). After this step, the most rapid path towards consolidating the new democracy is for the old rulers of the Communist era to reform their platforms and adopt a more pro-EU stance in order to remain politically relevant.

Under this new platform, the former Communists were successful enough to win future elections, providing the political landscape with greater diversity and competitiveness. With several major parties in place, these rival groups could also act as watchdogs towards one another, threatening to dethrone the other party if they did not go forward with democratic reforms. This electoral competitiveness helped to consolidate democracy by generating electoral turnover between several well-organized parties, thus preventing the political landscape from becoming a non-competitive system in which one party has command over the reform process. These cases show the overwhelming importance of having a mobilized opposition movement at the time of democratization.

For a country to follow such a pattern, there must be a strong, well-organized opposition movement during the communist period. There are a number of factors which determine the opposition's strength at the point of transition, including the relative tolerance of dissidence during the Communist era. It is no coincidence that the communist governments of Poland and Hungary were historically much more tolerant of opposition movements than the illiberal pattern states like Romania and Bulgaria. However, the case of Czechoslovakia shows that organized opposition can come about even in countries where dissidents were brutally repressed during the Communist period. In this case, memories of the violent suppression of dissidents in 1968 helped to make way for a population that was sympathetic to the democratic cause (Vachudova 2005:28). While a tolerant communist government can certainly make way for a well-organized opposition during the introduction of democracy, the Czech case shows that other historical factors can play a role as well.

A reforming Communist Party during the communist period is also an important factor which can facilitate the transition to liberal democracy. The Czech experience shows that even when a democratic opposition wins the first multiparty elections, the lack of a reformed Communist Party can threaten to derail the process of democratization. In this country, the hardline conservatives in the unreformed Communist Party were unable to provide a moderate left alternative in post-communist elections. Once the Czech Civic Democratic Party came to power after the first democratic elections of 1990, this lack of another moderate alternative gave them a near monopoly on the political system (Vachudova 2005:36). While another party might have been able to step in to provide an alternative, other nascent parties were simply too weak to fill that roll directly after democratization. The result was an un-checked post-opposition party that began engaging in the corrupt economic policies characteristic of the illiberal regimes

(Vachudova 2005:36). This illiberal turn was not resolved until an opposition gained enough traction to make the political system more competitive in the late 1990s (Vachudova 2005:195). This case shows that even if opposition movements do win the first democratic elections, a strong alternative must exist for democracy to remain competitive. As the Hungarian or Polish cases show, this alternative can come from a reformed Communist Party. Otherwise, competition can come from another strong political party, such as the organized opposition that appeared in the Czech Republic in the late 1990s.

Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, however, fall into a cluster that Vachudova (2005) refers to as the illiberal democracies. Like the liberal democracies, these states hosted relatively free and fair elections following the end of communism after 1989. However, the nature of the opposition and the Communist Parties differed significantly from those in the liberal pattern regimes. The Communist Parties in these countries did not undergo the extensive internal reform needed to become moderate democratic parties. Opposition movements, meanwhile, were generally fragmented and disorganized, sometimes due to extreme suppression from the communist government. Consequently, the first democratic elections were not won by a strong opposition that was ideologically opposed to communism. In Romania and Bulgaria, the weak nature of the opposition allowed the unreformed communist-era elite to win the first elections without any major competition. Meanwhile, In Slovakia, nationalists driven more by secession from Czechoslovakia than by the pursuit of democratic reform managed to win the first elections (Vachudova 2005:38). In all of these cases, the opposition groups were simply too weak, disorganized, or inexperienced to run a successful electoral campaign against the communist-era rulers and nationalist demagogues that dominated the first multiparty elections.

With no credible democratic alternative to keep their policies in check in the post-communist era, these elites began adopting platforms of ethnic scapegoating and economic fear mongering to convince their populations that extensive economic reform would result in poverty and instability. The leaders pursued only partial economic reform, often utilizing corrupt practices of rent seeking[1] to privatize areas of the economy which directly benefitted themselves and their political allies. Meanwhile, these groups retained a significant amount of control over the media, preventing widespread exposure to opposition parties and helping to skew public opinion in favor of their political allies. Through these practices, the illiberal elites were able to dominate early multiparty elections, essentially granting them free reign over the process of political and economic liberalization. With the weak opposition parties posing no significant threat to their rule, these parties faced little pressure to reform.

The illiberal rule that continued past 1989 essentially prevented these countries from fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria early in the post-communist period. The weakness of the opposition parties in these countries could often be traced back to the policies of the communist governments in the 1980s. During the communist periods, countries falling into this illiberal regime pattern were among the most repressive in Europe in regard to their treatment of political dissidents. In these cases, widespread crackdown on the political opposition prevented dissidents from gaining the valuable experience, leadership, and organization that would have been critical during the first multiparty elections. Instead, opposition groups which were so brutally

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[1] During the transition from a communism, reforming only certain areas of the command economy produces large price differentials between the liberalized and unliberalized sectors. Well-placed elites can benefit from these differentials at the expense of society at large, giving them a disincentive to implement comprehensive economic reform. Rent seeking refers to this corrupt practice of economic manipulation for monetary gain (Vachidova 2005:14).

suppressed during the communist period were suddenly forced to fend for their own in the first democratic elections with little experience or publicity of which to speak.

The victors of the first elections were given the freedom to write the rules of the new democratic game with little oversight from an organized opposition. In these countries, the simple attraction of EU membership was not enough to encourage these elites to implement meaningful reform, as doing so would undermine the ethnic scapegoating, media manipulation, and superficial economic liberalization upon which they relied to stay in power. While these countries would eventually join the European Union, extensive democratization only occurred because of the EU's influence over the nature of the opposition and the information environment. Because illiberal elites in these states actively used their influence over the media to give them the upper hand in elections, international organizations like the EU had to tip the balance in favor of the democratic opposition by disseminating information about alternative parties and the way in which entrenched elites' authoritarian tactics were impeding European aspirations (Vachudova 2005:142). The role of international organizations helped to close the informational gap between the ruling elites and the opposition groups that did not enjoy the advantages of media support (Vachudova 2005:142). Perhaps more importantly, the European Union provided a common goal for otherwise fragmented opposition parties. The failure of corrupt elites to reform their political systems created an incentive for rival parties to cooperate and form coalitions in order to overthrow their illiberal governments.

The fundamental logic of Vachudova's (2005) analysis underlines several key factors which account for a post-communist state's ability to democratize and subsequently fulfill the political requirements needed to join the European Union. From this analysis, one can identify a basic series of characteristics which define each pattern. The ideal pattern of democratization

involves an organized opposition party that is present at the moment of democratization, is ideologically opposed to communism, and is strong enough to win the first democratic elections. This path can be the result either of a relatively tolerant policy towards dissident groups during the communist period, or of other country-specific historical factors which shape opposition groups such as a deeply-engrained memory of injustices committed by the Communist Party.

Ideally, the victory of the democratic opposition is followed by pro-democratic reform within the former Communist Party, or the rise of some other democratic party which is able to act as a competitive opposition. The presence of multiple competitive parties leads to a consolidated democracy with turnover between the major parties. The prototypical illiberal regime change, meanwhile, is characterized by a relatively weak democratic opposition which is unable to win the first elections, sometimes due to the suppression of opposition groups during the communist period. The lack of a strong opposition causes the first elections to be dominated either by communist-era elites or nationalistic parties. The result is a relatively uncompetitive political system in which undemocratic elites are given them a free hand over the process of transition, and manage to hold power through manipulation of the media and incomplete reform of the economy.

The liberal and illiberal patterns of change can be summed up in the following table.

Figure 1: Characteristics of Liberal and Illiberal Patterns of Transition			
Period	Factors	Liberal Pattern	Illiberal Pattern
Communist	Nature of Opposition	Unified, well-organized	Weak, fragmented
	Nature of Communist Party	Reforming	Unreforming
	First multiparty election results	Democratic opposition wins	Communists or ultranationalists win

Post-Communist	Nature of government	Enacts comprehensive economic and political liberalization	Economic rent-seeking, incomplete reform. Ethnic scapegoating, media manipulation to stay in power.
	Nature of political competition	Competitive politics with frequent turnover	Uncompetitive politics with little turnover.

This paper aims to apply this logic to the former Soviet states of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the model in a setting where states are faced with a choice between strengthening their relations with the European Union and joining the Eurasian Economic Union of former Soviet countries. I will discuss not only the process of democratization in these ex-communist regimes, but will also explore whether or not there is any causal link between a country's pattern of democratization and its choice between association with the EU or the EEU.

Because studies of EU enlargement focus so heavily on the concept of conditionality vis-à-vis the post-communist regimes, it is interesting to look at the cases where states are offered a choice between two competing models of supranational integration: an economically prosperous European Union which employs a strict policy of democratic conditionality for economic integration, and a less prosperous Eurasian Economic Union which does not require democratic reform as a prerequisite for membership. While the vast economic benefits of EU association would appear to make European integration an obvious choice for leaders interested in economic development, Vachudova (2005) demonstrates that elites in unconsolidated democracies are more hesitant to pursue reform because doing so would undermine the illiberal and undemocratic tactics that they depend on to keep themselves in power. For these elites, I hypothesize that the less democratic focus of the EEU might offer an appealing alternative to the EU that promises to provide economic growth without the strings of extensive political reform. Due to these

different enlargement policies, I hypothesize that the more liberal democratic post-Soviet democracies pursue EU integration, while the more illiberal states pursue integration with the Eurasian Economic Union.

Section 1.5: Case Selection and Methodology

This paper will offer an analysis of the post-communist trajectories of four former Soviet states which are geographically favorable for both EU and EEU integration. My focus on the shared neighborhood rules out the non-European states of Central Asia, as well as the Baltic states which are already EU members. As a result, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are the geographic focus of my paper. Within each region, I compare the democratization processes of two states: one that has signed an EU Association Agreement and another which is pursuing EEU integration. The final selection of case studies is as follows.

Figure 2: Case Studies		
Orientation	Eastern Europe	The Caucasus
EU Integration	Moldova	Georgia
EEU Integration	Belarus	Armenia

In each regional pairing, I will evaluate each country based on the history of its democratization process. I will study the nature and strength of opposition movements and communist parties in the Soviet Union, as well as the reform processes that occurred in the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. These evaluations will be based on the characteristics of the liberal and illiberal patterns of change described by Vachudova (2005), such as the strengths of opposition groups under communism and the amount of turnover that has occurred in each state since the beginning of multiparty democracy. I hypothesize that the countries which have signed Association Agreements with the European Union line up more

closely with Vachudova's (2005) prototypical liberal democracies than do the states which have decided to join the Eurasian Union.

I divide the paper chronologically into two sections exploring the communist and post-communist periods of each regional pair. In the communist periods, I focus on the nature of opposition movements in each republic, the characteristics of each of the republic-level Communist Parties, and the outcomes of the first multiparty elections. Then, in the post-communist sections, I discuss successes and failures of the new governments in implementing democratizing reform. I also evaluate the development of competitive pluralism in each case.

CHAPTER 2: DEMOCRATIZATION UNDER PERESTROIKA

For the majority of Soviet history, popular elections acted little more than as a rubber stamp for the Communist Party's appointees. Under the Soviet constitution, the Communist Party had nearly complete control over which candidates were nominated for office, leaving voters with little freedom to choose their representatives or their platforms (White 1990:59). Realistically, the only major influence voters could have had in Soviet elections was to reject a given candidate, but even this was unheard of at the Union level (White 1990:59).

Greater democratic freedom took root under the leadership of the reformist Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, who ruled the Soviet Union from 1985 until its dissolution in 1991. During his reformist period of *Perestroika*, Gorbachev argued that introducing democratic elements into Soviet elections would make deputies more accountable to Soviet citizens (White 1990:60). By 1988, Gorbachev passed a new electoral law that extended the power to nominate political candidates to voters' meetings with 500 or more participants (White 1990:61). The reform effectively broke the Communist Party's monopoly over the political system and made way for candidates who were not officially nominated by the Communist Party.

Perhaps more significantly, the new electoral law also introduced a new democratically elected institution known as the Congress of People's Deputies, an assembly of representatives who would in turn elect members of the USSR's parliament, or Supreme Soviet (White 1990:60). The introduction of this elected body in conjunction with the freedom to nominate candidates not directly sponsored by the Communist Party was significant because it gave Soviet

voters a direct outlet to participate in the election of the Supreme Soviet, the USSR's highest legislative body.

The Union-wide election to the Congress of People's Deputies proved to be one of two watershed moments for the formation of participatory democracy in the Soviet republics. Opposition groups throughout the USSR seized the opportunity to support independent candidates and challenge the Communist monopoly on the political system (Montgomery and Remington 1994:62). Opposition leaders in the various republics frequently organized under "Popular Fronts," which acted as broad umbrella organizations for liberal dissidents (Montgomery and Remington 1994). Even when opposition candidates failed to win a sizeable majority in the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, their campaign experience proved invaluable for opposition leaders adjusting to competition in multicandidate democracy (Montgomery and Remington 1994:63).

The second watershed moment came in 1990, when the various republics held elections to their own Supreme Soviets. Unlike the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, these republic-level Soviets were directly elected by popular vote rather than by the elected Congress of People's Deputies. These elections were particularly significant because these republic-level Soviets would become the first national parliaments following the dissolution of the USSR. The outcomes of these elections would determine what groups held power in each republic immediately following independence, and who was able to set the terms of the democratic transition.

In theory, Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms provided dissidents with unprecedented freedom to mobilize and participate in elections (Montgomery and Remington 1994:56). In reality, however, the various republic-level governments responded differently to Gorbachev's

reforms, with some tolerating dissidents much more than others. Movements that recruited openly in some republics were effectively forced underground in others. These differences created a great deal of variation in the election results in each republic, representing one of the first major divergences between the countries in their road to democratization (Montgomery and Remington 1994:62). These variations play a key role in determining which parties win the first democratic elections, and how well multiparty democracy develops in the years following independence.

In the following section, I begin to test the hypothesis that patterns of regime change are related to choice between EU and EEU integration by examining the nature of the various political actors during the communist period in each republic. In states which have signed an Association Agreement, I expect to find a strong opposition with a commitment to democratic reform, as well as a reforming Communist Party. In the EEU member states, I expect a weaker or less democratically-oriented opposition, as well as an unreforming Communist Party.

Section 2.1: Belarus

Belarus, along with Russia and Kazakhstan, stands as one of the founding members of the Eurasian Economic Union. The country's modern-day political climate has been described as "Europe's Last Dictatorship," with Aleksander Lukashenko acting as an authoritarian head of state for over twenty years (Dynko 2012). The repressive authoritarianism in Belarus is in part rooted in the repressive practices of the Byelorussia Soviet Socialist Republic during *Perestroika*. Although *Perestroika* was used in many Soviet republics as a means to liberalize the political scene during the 1980s, the Belarusian Communist Party remained largely unreformed and actively suppressed dissidents during this period.

The Popular Front: A Suppressed Opposition

Opposition to the Communist Party in Belarus was rooted largely in the Soviet government's poor handling of the environmental disaster that occurred in neighboring Ukraine's Chernobyl. When the Chernobyl nuclear incident occurred in 1986, the majority of the fallout landed in Belarus. For political reasons, the Soviet government put off evacuating affected populations for as long as possible (Mihalisko 1997:238). The full extent of the disaster was unknown to the majority of Belarusians until 1988, when Gorbachev's reforms began allowing newspapers to cover the incident in detail. The Soviet government's cover-up of the disaster, coupled with the recent excavation of a Stalinist-era mass grave outside of Minsk, sparked a wave of anti-Soviet opposition (Mihalisko 1997:238).

The opposition organized under the Belarusian Popular Front, which was founded in October 1988 with an ambitious platform of ensuring greater respect for human rights, reform of the government, and compensation for victims of the radiation emanating from Chernobyl. At first the Popular Front enjoyed a strong leadership comprised of writers and other prominent intellectuals (Mihalisko 1997:238). However, the Belarusian Communist Party managed to decapitate the Popular Front leadership by threatening to revoke Communist Party membership from intellectuals involved in the organization (Mihalisko 1997:238). Because these intellectuals relied on Party membership for material support for their work, the majority of these high-profile members chose to abandon the organization, leaving the popular front to be led by students and other inexperienced activists without government connections (Mihalisko 1997:238). By 1989, the communist government of Belarus had become so repressive towards the Popular Front that

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the organization was forced to hold its very first congress in Lithuania, which had a more open political climate (Mihalisko 1997:238, Beichelt 2004:118)

The leadership of the Belarusian SSR also actively tried to limit the extent to which the USSR's liberalizing reforms allowed opposition groups to gain influence within the Belarusian government. During the first multiparty elections to the Belarusian Supreme Soviet in 1990, the Belarusian Communist Party took a unique approach to limiting the amount of seats that could be won by the Popular Front. Unlike the other republics which hosted relatively free elections, Belarus engaged in the exceptional practice of reserving fifty out of 360 seats to the war veterans' and handicapped associations, two highly conservative groups sympathetic to the Communist Party cause (Mihalisko 1997:239). Communist Party members also ran unopposed in key rural districts, allowing them to win regional mandates with little competition from the Popular Front (Mihalisko 1997:239). The unfree nature of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet election made way for a relatively weak opposition movement which was unable to mobilize effectively during the first multiparty elections, a common trait among the illiberal pattern regimes.

Backlash Against Gorbachev: An Unreformed Communist Party

Another striking parallel with the illiberal regime pattern is the very nature of the Belarusian Communist Party, which was significantly more conservative than its reforming counterparts in other republics (Hill 2005:3). In addition to actively suppressing the opposition, the Belarusian Communist Party's leadership remained adamantly opposed to Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms throughout the 1980s (Hill 2005:3). Tens of thousands of liberal and moderate members of the Belarusian Communist Party abandoned the organization, inspired in

large part by Boris Yeltsin's decision to leave the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Mihalisko 1997:240). This mass defection effectively left the Belarusian Communist Party under the leadership of an unusually conservative group of Communist hardliners and removed any chance that the Communists would become a moderate democratic left in the years to come (Mihalisko 1997:240). Once again, the lack of a reformed Communist Party reflects the illiberal regimes outlined in Vachudova (2005).

Communist Victory in the Multiparty Era

The combination of a suppressed opposition and an unreformed Communist Party impeded the development of democracy in Belarus. The Communist Party's manipulation of the political system against an already suppressed opposition caused the Popular Front to win a small minority of seats in the Supreme Soviet. The Communist Party won an overwhelming 86 percent of seats, while the Popular Front alone won only 7.5 percent (Beichelt 2007:118, Mihalisko 1997:239). The victory of the unreformed Communists against a weak democratic opposition directly parallels the illiberal regimes.

Table 1: Outcome of 1990 Belarus Supreme Soviet Elections		
Party	Number of Mandates	Percent of Mandates
Communist Party	309-10[2]	86
Popular Front	26	7.5
Others	34-35	6.5
	Sources: Mihalisko 1997:239, Beichelt 2007:118	

Given the number of Popular Front candidates elected to the Supreme Soviet, the Front's performance appears almost insignificant. However, the organization's influence seems

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[2] Sources did not provide numbers of mandates won for the Communist Party or Others. These figures were obtained mathematically based percentages provided in the sources. This method was not precise enough to yield an exact number.

somewhat greater if we consider the number of deputies who were supported by the Front. Estimates by Slider (1990) suggest that the number of candidates backed by the opposition may have made up as much as thirty percent of the new Parliament (Slider 1990, Montgomery and Remington 1994:63). Going by this more generous picture, the moderate opposition did not win nearly enough seats to secure victory against the largely unreforming Communist Party, but they still managed to have a substantial influence on the makeup of the Supreme Soviet. Even so, the Supreme Soviet election of 1990 left Belarus largely under the control mostly unreformed Soviet-era hardliners. Like in the illiberal democracies of East-Central Europe, these developments greatly diminished the amount of electoral competition and consensus on the need for liberalization in the formative years of Belarusian democracy (Mihalisko 1997:242). With a relatively weak opposition, an unreformed Communist Party, and election results that primarily favored the Communists, Belarus' transition follows an almost ideal model of illiberal regime change.

Section 2.2: Moldova

With EEU member Belarus so clearly reflecting the illiberal pattern, does the Association Agreement signatory state of Moldova follow a more liberal pattern during its Soviet period? Despite inheriting a common Soviet-era legacy of widespread spying, corruption, and strict restrictions on media freedom, Moldova is paradoxically recognized as one of the most successful pluralistic democracies in the former Soviet world, barring the Baltic countries (Way 2003:454). Evidence from the communist era contains elements of both the liberal and the illiberal transition patterns regime change with a reforming Communist Party and a relatively

well-organized opposition. However, this opposition was driven largely by ethnic nationalism rather than the pursuit of liberal democracy.

Between Democracy and Nationalism: The Rise of a Fragmented Popular Front

The development of a strong Moldovan opposition in the 1980s is rooted largely in ethnolinguistic identity. Moldova is home to a particularly complex linguistic geography which includes sizeable populations of Slavic russophones and Turkic-speaking speaking Gagauz (Chinn and Kaiser 1996:163). However, most Moldovans speak an Eastern Romance language often considered to be a dialect of Romanian (Popescu 2014:46). Moldova's large Slavic population can be linked to the early days of Soviet Moldova, when an influx of Russian-speaking immigrants came to form the bulk of the workforce in urban and industrial centers (Crowther 1997:286). Slavic immigration left other ethnic groups to take on the less prestigious agricultural jobs in rural areas (Crowther 1997:286). The Russians' privileged socioeconomic status triggered resentment among the poorer Moldovan population, who perceived a pro-Russian discrimination on the part of the Soviet government (Crowther 1997:286).

Part of this resentment was also rooted in the Soviet government's aggressive sociolinguistic policies, which many Moldovans perceived as a government attempt to undermine Romanian national identity. Most Moldovans consider their language a variety of Romanian, though a sizeable minority considers the Moldovan ethnolinguistic identity to be distinct from that of Romania (Popescu 2014:46). This cleavage was greatly exacerbated during communist times, with the government actively promoting the idea of a unique Moldovan culture in order to isolate Moldovans' linguistic identity from independent Romania (Crowther 1997:286). For example, the Soviet government imposed the Cyrillic alphabet as the official

writing system in Moldova even though the Latin alphabet was used in Romania, marking a superficial and somewhat artificial means of distancing the language from Romanian (Way 2003:471, Chinn and Kaiser 1996:167).

By 1987, anti-Soviet activists began organizing under two major dissident groups, each with a different set of goals. The first organization, the Democratic Movement in Support of Restructuring, was committed primarily to democratic and economic reform (Crowther 1997:288). The second group, the Aleksey Mateevich Literary-Musical Circle, was significantly more nationalist in nature (Crowther 1997:288). The lack of pro-democratic consensus among the opposition is at odds with the ideal pattern of liberal change. By the time the Popular Front was founded as an umbrella group in 1989, the nationalist ambitions of the opposition seemed to dominate the political discourse (Chinn and Kaiser 1996:167, Way 2003:471).

The combination of perceived anti-Romanian discrimination and pro-Russian policies from the Soviet government caused the Front to rally around a new language bill. The proposed law would make Romanian the Moldovan SSR's only official language and encourage its use in schools and workplaces which were historically dominated by the Russian language (Way 2003:471). The law also sought to the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin alphabet as the language's official writing system, a symbolic attempt to adopt the orthography used in neighboring Romania and distance Moldova from Russia's sphere of cultural influence (Way 2003:471). Despite the moderate democrats within the organization, the presence of a sizeable number of ethnonationalist extremists in the Popular Front was particularly concerning for Moldova's Slavic and Turkic minorities in Transnistria and Gagauzia (Crowther 1997:293, Chinn and Kaiser 1996:167). These nationalistic characteristics of the opposition share some characteristics with the illiberal transition pattern.

Despite conflicting priorities within the movement, the Moldovan Popular Front managed to attract a significant degree of support in the period leading up to the election to the Moldovan Supreme Soviet. At first, the movement had trouble gaining traction. For example, in the 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, the Communist Party's control over nomination meetings caused the vast majority of candidates to be Communist Party members (Crowther 1997:289). Nevertheless, voting patterns during the election seemed to favor independent candidates over Communist Party members in districts where candidates from multiple backgrounds were available (Crowther 1997:289). These trends show that the Communist Party's electoral manipulation was successful enough to secure electoral victory even against popular will.

The 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies also gave the opposition forces much-needed publicity, while the placement of several opposition candidates into the Congress allowed them to gain important links to segments of the Communist Party (Crowther 1997:291). Following the election, the Communist Party gave full recognition to the Popular Front opposition (Crowther 1997:291, Way 2003:471). This recognition allowed the Front to hold public meetings with Communist representatives about the need for a new language reform that would favor Moldovan (Crowther 1997:291). The Front also organized massive protests in Chişinaŭ to exert even greater pressure on the Communist government to enact language reform (Crowther 1997:291). When the reform was finally signed into law on August 31, 1991, the Popular Front's active role in the process greatly contributed to their public image (Crowther 1997:291). The language laws passed during *Perestroika* marked Moldova's path towards political and cultural independence from Moscow. The laws harmonized Moldovan orthography

with that of Romanian, reflecting an increasingly pro-Romanian sentiment in the country (Ciscel 2006:576).

While the group's protest movements led to open clashes with Soviet police, the movement managed to become a major opposition group during the partially free elections to the Moldovan Supreme Soviet in 1990 (Way 2003:471). This election allowed independent candidates to run in the majority of the Republic's electoral districts (Crowther 1997:293). Here, Popular Front candidates ran on a platform of democratization, national sovereignty, and a transition to free market capitalism (Crowther 1997:292). In addition to enjoying relative freedom to run in the majority of electoral districts, Popular Front candidates were able to campaign openly and were allowed advertising space in newspapers published by the republican Central Committee (Crowther 1997:292).

The nature of the opposition seems to lie somewhere in between the liberal and illiberal patterns of regime change. Like the opposition in the ideal liberal patterns of Vachudova (2005), the Moldovan popular front managed to organize openly and became an influential force in the political scene. However, while the Front campaigned on democratic reform during the Supreme Soviet elections, their focus on nationalistic issues like language reform over democratic reform shows that liberalization may not have been the organization's biggest priority.

A Partially Reforming Communist Party

The nature of the Moldovan Communist Party also differed greatly from that of Belarus. Whereas the mass exodus of reformists from the Belarusian Communist Party left the organization in the hands of hardline conservatives, the Moldovan Communist Party was home to a sizeable reformist faction. Some of these reformers were openly endorsed by the Popular

Front during the 1990 Supreme Soviet election, which reflected a certain degree of consensus on the need for democratic reform between both the opposition and segments of the Communist Party (Crowther 1997:293). One notable personality was Mircea Snegur, a reformist member of the Communist Party who in the mid-1980s acted as a Central Committee Secretary and was appointed as the president of the Moldovan Supreme Soviet in 1989 (Crowther 1997:292). By the 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet, Snegur adopted many of the pro-democratic positions of the Popular Front moderates, even though he remained a member of the Communist Party (Crowther 1997:293). Vachudova (2005) demonstrates that a reforming Communist Party can be an important ingredient in the development of a liberal democracy, making this aspect of the Moldovan transition much more liberal in nature than the unreforming Communist Party in Belarus.

The Triumph of the Moderates: A Partial Victory for the Popular Front

During the 1990 election, the Popular Front opposition won roughly one fourth of seats in the Supreme Soviet, nearly four times that of the Belarusian Popular Front (Way 2003:471). Like in Belarus, this result was not nearly enough to establish a majority in the Supreme Soviet, but still enough to radically alter the internal composition of the elected institution (Montgomery and Remington 1994:64). Where Moldova's 1990 Supreme Soviet election differs from that of Belarus is in the fact that the Popular Front was able to form a majority in combination with the large reformist segment of the Communist Party which they had officially endorsed during the election. The rise of these moderate factions represents a much larger transfer of power away from unreforming hardliners than what was seen in Belarus (Crowther 1997:293).

Table 2: Outcome of 1990 Moldova Supreme Soviet Elections		
Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
Communist Party	305	75
Popular Front	101	25
		Source: Crowther 1997:294

All things considered, Moldova proves to be somewhat of a mixed case when it comes to its pattern of democratic reform in the Soviet era. The presence of a reforming Communist Party and a well-organized opposition are compatible with liberal transitions, though the ethnonationalist leanings of certain opposition members is a decidedly more illiberal trait. Unlike the liberal regimes, the democratic opposition alone did not win an outright majority in the first democratic elections. However, the fact that the elections were nevertheless dominated by a combination of opposition candidates and moderate Communists makes the early period of Moldova's transition much more liberal than that of Belarus, which was dominated almost entirely by hardline Communists desperate to reverse the liberalizing reforms of Gorbachev. For these reasons, Moldova's communist period follows the liberal pattern much more closely than does Soviet Belarus.

Section 2.3: Armenia

The Armenian Opposition: Nationalist Roots and Irredentist Ambition

The Armenian opposition movement that arose in the 1980s was predominantly ethnonationalist in nature. In order to understand the characteristics of the Armenian opposition, it is important to recognize Armenia's long history of Ottoman occupation. Prior to Armenia's integration into the Soviet Union in the early 20th century, the country was occupied by the Ottoman Turks (Dudwick 1997:72). During this pre-Soviet, the majority of Armenians lived as

an ethnoreligious minority within the Ottoman Empire. Although many Armenians enjoyed substantial influence within the Empire, a rising nationalist movement throughout the 18th and 19th centuries sought to restore Armenia's national autonomy (Dudwick 1997:72). The Armenian Genocide[3] which occurred during the breakup of the Ottoman Empire only strengthened the calls for statehood and the growing anti-Turkish sentiment among ethnic Armenians (Dudwick 1997:72).

Armenia was quickly annexed into the Soviet Union, first as part of the short-lived Transcaucasian SFSR and then as an independent republic from 1936 onward (Tsutsiev 2014:201). Many Armenians tolerated the Soviet regime because it offered protection from Turkish aggression as well as nominal self-rule as a Soviet republic (Dudwick 1997:76). The rapid industrialization and cultural revival that occurred under the Armenian SSR helped legitimize Soviet rule to Armenian nationalists, who viewed these developments as a national renaissance after the dark ages of Turkish oppression (Dudwick 1997:73-76). Nevertheless, nationalist opposition groups gained traction as early as the 1960s. The irredentist National Unification Party, founded in 1966, called for the independence of Armenia as well as the annexation of Armenian-majority regions in Turkey and Nagorno-Karabakh, then an autonomous oblast of the Azerbaijan SSR (Dudwick 1997:76).

Until the 1980s, the Soviet government identified the nationalist movement as a threat and worked to crush nationalist opposition, but the liberalized political climate of *Perestroika* made way for a resurgence of nationalism. While many Armenians still viewed Moscow as a protector from Turkish aggression, protestors saw *Perestroika* and *Glastnost'* as an opportunity

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[3] Between 1915 and 1917, ethnic Armenians were rounded up and massacred by Turkish forces during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. As many as 1.5 million Armenians are believed to have been killed during the ethnic cleansing campaign (Kifner).

to exert greater pressure on the government to reform or to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian SSR (Dudwick 1997:78). Other issues like environmental protection and political reform were politically salient among certain segments of the opposition, but the ethnonationalist aspect of the movement seemed to be the only unifying force for Armenian dissidents (Dudwick 1997:77). The reformist and nationalist segments of the opposition often found themselves at odds with one another during this period of renewed civil activism, with the nationalists seeing the anti-corruption movements of the liberal reformists as a threat to Armenia's leadership (Dudwick 1997:78).

The various opposition groups organized themselves under the name of the Armenian National Movement (ANM). Under this umbrella organization, one of the most influential groups was the irredentist Karabakh Committee, showing that the nature of opposition in Armenia was still dominated more by ethnic irredentism than other issues such as democratic reform and environmental protection (Dudwick 1997:79). The largely nationalist nature of the opposition is at odds with the liberal pattern of regime change.

The growing opposition movement was exceedingly well organized, and successfully used a combination of public protest and electoral campaigning to exert influence in the face of government crackdown. In order to pressure the Armenian communist government to push for annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh, voters began writing in candidates who were members of the Karabakh Committee during a 1988 parliamentary election meant to fill in vacant seats in the Supreme Soviet (Dudwick 1997:79). When two opposition candidates won, the government responded by rejecting the results, causing mass demonstrations that successfully pressured the government to accept the results (Dudwick 1997:79). Despite the eventual acceptance of

Committee candidates, the government continued to suppress the opposition until democratization.

In December 1988, the Soviet government arrested the Karabakh Committee (Dudwick 1997:80). The release of the political prisoners became a key issue during the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies that year. Because the election featured only candidates sponsored by the Communist Party, voters responded by boycotting the elections, forcing the government to hold runoff elections in four districts. Voters then mobilized to place candidates associated with the ANM into office via these repeat elections, reflecting the beginnings of a transfer of power from the Communist Party to the opposition (Dudwick 1997:80). These developments show that while the Armenian government took a relatively firm stance against the opposition, the movement remained organized enough to maintain a sizeable influence.

The Communist Party: Co-Opting Nationalism

In the leadup to the 1990 elections to the Armenian Supreme Soviet, the Communist Party of Armenia became increasingly willing to cooperate with the opposition on certain issues. While one might argue that this changing platform exemplified a reforming Communist Party, it is important to note that the majority of consensus between the Communists and opposition was around the national question. In the early stages of the Karabakh dispute, the Communist Party of Armenia drew criticism from nationalists for its willingness to cooperate with the central Soviet government, which was unwilling to redraw the internal borders of the Soviet Union for the sake of Armenian nationalism (Rutland 1994:846-848). Following the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, however, the Armenian government decided to release the Karabakh Committee leadership from prison and began talks with opposition (Rutland

1994:848). Communist Party members began supporting the ANM's call for the annexation of Nagorno Karabakh, a fact which attracted nationalists to the Communist Party (Dudwick 1997:81). When the ANM ran for the Moldovan Supreme Soviet in 1990, the majority of its candidates were in fact Communist Party members (Dudwick 1997:81). This overlap demonstrates a changing dynamic within the Communist Party, which adopted elements of the nationalist opposition in order to remain politically relevant. By the elections of 1990, the Communist Party and the ANM agreed on the vast majority of issues on the table (Rutland 1994:852). While a reforming Communist Party is an important component of a liberal transition towards democracy, the nationalist nature of this reform deviates from the ideal liberal pattern.

The Victory of Nationalism

The opposition proved enormously successful in the election to the Supreme Soviet in 1990. Once the members of the Karabakh Committee were released from prison, they quickly ran for office in the Supreme Soviet in 1990 (Dudwick 1997:80). In these multiparty elections, the Communist Party emerged as the dominant political force, winning 136 seats compared to the ANM's 59 seats (Grotz and Rodriguez McKey 2001:335).

Table 3: Results of the 1990 Armenia Supreme Soviet Elections		
Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
Communist Party	136	69.7
ANM	59	30.3
Sources: Grotz and Rodriguez-McKey 2001:335, Rutland 1994:852		

On the surface, Armenia's communist-era history appears to mirror the liberal regime changes of Vachudova (2005) in several key ways. The well-organized opposition and a

reforming Communist Party are all common to the liberal regime pattern. However, the majority of the opposition was predominantly irredentist in nature, while the new platforms adopted by the Communist Party were similarly nationalistic   While the ANM did win a significant minority of the vote, it is also important to note that nearly half of the ANM deputies were associated with the Communist Party, a fact that many voters tolerated because of their support for the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh (Rutland 1994:852, Dudwick 1997:81). By co-opting the nationalist cause, the old communist leadership was able to maintain a sizeable amount of influence both within and outside the ANM. In Armenia's case, it was ethnic irredentism—not democratization—that was the motivating force for both the opposition and the "reforming" Communists. The lack of commitment to democratic reform makes Armenia's case fundamentally different from the liberal regime pattern.

Section 2.4: Georgia

An Anti-Russian Opposition

Like in neighboring Azerbaijan, the opposition movement that developed in Soviet Georgia was largely nationalist in nature, though the pursuit of democracy played a large role in the drive for independence (Allison et al. 1996:519). During the mid- to late-1980s, Georgians largely idealized the concept of Western democracy. Georgian language articles often discussed the advantages and disadvantages of democratic systems, as well as the nuances of proportional and simple majority systems (Allison et al. 1996:519). There was an overwhelming sentiment that declaring independence from the Soviet Union would allow for a simple transition towards multiparty democracy (Allison et al. 1996:519). Whereas the Armenian National Movement

support for secession from the USSR was driven primarily by ambitions of annexing Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia's opposition was more directly anti-Russian in nature.

The largely pro-democratic nature of the Georgian opposition movement might appear more compatible with a liberal pattern of regime change. However, the developments that occurred in 1989 served to strengthen the anti-Russian aspects of the cause, and helped to empower radical nationalists rather than liberal democrats. During a public demonstration on 9 April 1989, Soviet troops were deployed used to break up a political protest. Sixteen died and many more injured at the hands of the Soviet forces (Allison et al. 1996:519). This "April Tragedy" resulted in a strengthened opposition movement in favor separation from the Soviet Union, and caused many to support ultranationalists who shared the same cause (Slider 1997:161, Allison et al. 1996:519). Following the tragedy, the Communist government arrested opposition leaders, further radicalizing Georgians frustrated with Moscow's repressive policies (Slider 1997:161). Georgian intellectuals convened and founded the Democratic Choice for Georgia (Slider 1997:160). This period following the April Tragedy was characterized by an explosion of opposition groups. Over one hundred movements were founded, ranging from nationalist parties to social democratic parties to groups intending to establish the old Georgian monarchy (Slider 1997:161-62). While these groups were organized into multiple parties, they managed to unite into an umbrella organization known as the Round Table, headed by dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia (Montgomery and Remington 1994:86).

Frustration with the Soviet government following the April Tragedy meant that much of the opposition's strength came from commitment to ending government suppression, but the more radical anti-Russian leanings of some members do not perfectly reflect the liberal pattern of

regime change. While democracy was given greater emphasis than in Armenia, the influence of radical nationalists means that the opposition was not entirely liberal in nature.

An Increasingly Repressive Communist Government

The nature of the communist government of Georgia also changed significantly over the course of the 1980s. A government which initially tolerated a certain degree of political opposition became more oppressive as time went on. During the early 1980s, Communist Party First Secretary Eduard Shevardnadze was moderately tolerant of opposition (Slider 1997:159). Although certain dissidents were monitored during his administration, Shevardnadze was also known to meet with dissident leaders to discuss their viewpoints and draft policies which were a compromise between Communist and opposition positions (Slider 1997:157). At the same time, however, Shevardnadze did authorize arrests of two founders of the Georgian branch of the Helsinki Group, showing that despite his reformist demeanor, Shevardnadze was still wary of his political opponents (Slider 1997:157). While it appeared that opposition leaders had some influence during Sheverdnadze's rule, his successor, Jumber Patiashvili was much more active in the suppression of dissidents. He openly considered nationalists as a dangerous force within Georgia, and worked to prevent the Georgian Popular Front from being founded, forcing its leaders to organize underground (Slider 1997:160).

Despite the liberal leanings of his predecessor, Patiashvili's rule appeared to disempower the strong opposition movements needed for reform. This trend continued during the 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, where the Communist Party prevented opposition leaders from being nominated in most regions (Slider 1997:160). These elections were much less democratic than elections in other European Soviet Republics, though organized protests in

some regions did succeed in pressuring local communists to put competitors on the ballot (Slider 1997:160). The oppressive nature of the communist party in this case aligns well with the illiberal pattern of change.

Opposition Victory in the Supreme Soviet

While the hardline communist government succeeded in minimizing the opposition's influence during the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, the elections to the Supreme Soviet nevertheless proved to be an overwhelming success for the opposition. In 1990, Gamsakhurdia's Round Table was able to win the first democratic elections to the Georgian Parliament, the republic's equivalent to the Supreme Soviet. (Slider 1997:163). The organization won 54 percent of the vote, compared to the Communist Party's 29.6 percent (Slider 1997:176). Their success can be considered surprising considering the history of repression and the opposition's negligible impact on the election to the Council of People's Deputies. However, the April Tragedy which galvanized opposition leaders against the Communist Party government proved to be a watershed moment in the formation of an opposition movement (Montgomery and Remington 1994:86).

Table 4: Results of the 1990 Georgia Parliamentary Elections		
Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
Round Table – Free Georgia	155	63
Communist Party	64	26
Others	27	11
	Sources: Slider 1997:176, Kuchina-Lančava and Grotz 2001:399	

With a successful yet partly nationalistic opposition movement, Georgia's pre-independence history proves to be somewhat of a middle ground between liberal and illiberal

regimes. While Shevardnadze's partly reformist government in the early 1980s might have made way for a healthy opposition and a reforming communist party, the policies of his successor, Jumber Patiashvili, returned the republic to authoritarianism. Against these odds, a democratic opposition managed to win the first democratic elections. However, the hardline Communist Party's tarnished reputation after the April Tragedy prevented the formation of an immediately viable democratic left. With an unreforming Communist government and an organized pro-democratic yet largely nationalistic opposition which emerged victorious during the first democratic elections, Georgia's political landscape can be described as a hybrid case between the liberal and illiberal patterns of regime change.

CHAPTER 3: THE POST-COMMUNIST ERA

While the developments that occurred during the communist period give us an important background to understand the post-Communist trajectories of each case study, it is equally important to analyze the developments that occurred after the Communist period. Using Vachudova's (2005) model as an example, a liberal regime is characterized by political pluralism, electoral turnover between the major parties, and a general consensus on the need for democratic reforms. Illiberal regimes, meanwhile, will be characterized by little competition to the leading party, which leads to unconsolidated democracy and illiberal efforts to keep opposition groups from gaining influence.

Analyzing the developments that occurred in each republic during *Perestroika* gives a necessary context for the trajectories of each state following democratization and secession from the USSR. Trends from the *Perestroika* era determined which groups were strong enough to emerge victorious during the first multiparty elections, and consequently which groups guided the transition from Communism in the 1990s and beyond. Theses historical differences can have a direct impact on how successfully a country moves towards democracy in the post-Communist era. With these differences from the Soviet period established, it is possible to analyze the post-communist histories of each state to determine where they lie on the liberal-illiberal regime spectrum.

Section 3.1: Post-Communist Belarus

Following the overwhelming victory of the unreformed Belarusian Communist Party in the 1990 election to the Supreme Soviet, the vast majority of Belarusians supported continued membership within the USSR (Mihalisko 1997:241-242). However, the Communist Party of Belarus was forced to shed all ties with its union-wide counterpart in order to avoid the Soviet Union ban on the Communist Party after the August 1991 coup attempt (Mihalisko 1997:241-242). In order to ensure the possibility of future communist governance, the Belarusian Communist Party chose to support the Popular Front initiative for independence and vote for secession in a last-ditch effort to perpetuate communism in Belarus. Considering the hardline Communist Party's uncompromising platform, this grand bargain with the opposition may appear surprising. However, the vote for independence was necessary for the survival of the communist ideology. In exchange for their support of the Popular Front initiative, the Belarusian Communist Party demanded that the Front only push for "political and economic" independence as opposed to national independence, a largely semantic distinction that reflected the Communists' pro-Russian cultural identity (Mihalisko 1997:242). In a self-sacrificial move, the Communist Party agreed to a country-wide ban on their activities in return (Mihalisko 1997:242).

Despite this ban, the communist-dominated Supreme Soviet remained in power until 1994, leaving the weak Popular Front with the status of the opposition. The Communists also managed to regroup within an unofficial successor organization by 1992 with foundation of the Party of Communists of Belarus (Mihalisko 1997:245, Korosteleva 2005:41). The Popular Front, despite its failing to win the first elections, campaigned diligently for democratic reform. One major proposal put forth by the organization was to hold a new election in 1992 in order to

replace the Soviet-era parliament with a proper Belarusian parliament (Mihalisko 1997:247). Their proposal also included a new election code that would implement single-member districts and voting based on party lists in order to ensure a more representative parliament. The Popular Front managed to gather over 400,000 signatures during a public petition for the reforms, the threshold needed for the reforms to be considered by government (Mihalisko 1997:247). The Front's ability to attract public support for its initiative would have been a positive development in the democratization of post-communist Belarus, with the establishment of a more representative electoral code that would favor the opposition and hasten the dissolution the hardline communist government. However, the Communist majority within the Supreme Soviet worked to block this reform by rejecting the proposal completely, and instead decided that elections be held in 1994 (Mihalisko 1997:247). The stillborn reform failed to bring a new election to the table, allowing the hardline Soviet-era elites to set the terms of the new political system and dominate the political system for several more years.

Halted Reform in the Post-Communist Era

The early post-independence era marked the beginning of an illiberal post-communist environment characterized by little political reform. At first, the post-Soviet government would have in some ways appeared surprisingly compatible with democratization and European integration. Interethnic relations in the country were peaceful and stable, which effectively prevented the kind of ethnic scapegoating seen in the illiberal regimes of Vachudova (2005) (Mihalisko 1997:243). However, despite these advantages, other factors made the prospect of Belarusian democracy much more grim.

The new government seized the opportunity to offset reform and erode democracy soon after independence from the Soviet Union. Because the Popular Front opposition failed to organize into a competitive force in the 1990 Supreme Soviet elections, the communists in power faced little need to adopt any of the democratizing positions of the opposition to stay relevant. On the contrary, the Belarusian government actively worked to prevent reformist leaders from getting any sort of media publicity. The old communist hardliners took advantage of the Soviet-era censorship apparatus, and prevented any images of the Russian reformist Boris Yeltsin from being aired for fear that he might inspire anti-communist movements in Belarus (Mihalisko 1997:241). The leader of this government was Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich, a hardline Communist. (Mihalisko 1997:242; Hill 2005:5). Speaking out against the dangers of free-market capitalism, Kebich engaged in a form of economic fear mongering to convince his electorate that rapid reform would unavoidably lead to instability. Instead, Kebich espoused a much slower process of transition, an argument that gave him the justification to maintain government authority in most sectors of Belarus's economy (Mihalisko 1997:250-251).

While many other former communist states were beginning to emerge from the initial instability of the early 1990s with burgeoning economies, Belarus remained one of the most economically stagnant nations in the former Soviet Union. In order to compensate for the lack of economic development, Kebich sought economic reunification with Russia as a means of generating growth without reform (Mihalisko 1997:251). As in other illiberal democracies, Kebich also engaged in extensive rent seeking, and blocked any attempts at investigating the corruption that occurred while he was in office (Mihalisko 1997:252). The poor quality of reform during Kebich's administration is highly typical of the illiberal regime pattern.

The unreforming nature of the government continued long after Kebich's mandate. In 1994, a Belarusian presidency was established. The Communist leader Kebich himself was thought of as the most likely candidate for the new office, though other prominent candidates included Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislav Shushkevich as well as the Popular Front Opposition Candidate, Zyanon Pozniak (Ash 1994:6). All three candidates were defeated in a landslide by Alexander Lukashenko, a Communist Party deputy in the Supreme Soviet who ran for the presidency in March 1994 as an independent on a populist anti-corruption platform (Ash 1994:6). The independent managed to attract overwhelming popular support for unapologetically condemning high-ranking government figures for corruption (Mihalisko 1997:253). Lukashenko also played upon the weakness of the Popular Front by encouraging oppositionist media outlets to support his campaign instead, arguing that Front candidate Pozniak had little chance of winning against Kebich (Mihalisko 1997:253).

Despite Lukashenko's independent candidacy, the new President nevertheless had deep-running links to the Communist Party. Like many other Soviet-era politicians in Belarus, Lukashenko did not find it politically advantageous to openly associate himself with the Communist Party after it was re-legalized. Instead, his disassociation with the Communist Party represents a more superficial attempt to re-brand his political image, rather than a genuine commitment to economic liberalization (Mihalisko 1997:256). Lukashenko's rule has marked a continuation of the authoritarian practices of the Soviet-era government.

The new Belarusian President continued to impede reform in the country. Lukashenko has kept a firm grip over the media, with the majority of television channels and radio stations remaining state-owned (Mihalisko 1997:255). Meanwhile, private channels have been shut down entirely in cases where government officials felt threatened by their broadcasts (Mihalisko

1997:255). The majority of newspapers remained under the control of the Belarusian government, with the largest paper, *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*, being used as a mouthpiece for Lukashenko's administration (Mihalisko 1997:255). A number of independent newspapers, meanwhile, had their printing facility contracts revoked by the government, effectively ending their rights to publish (Mihalisko 1997:256). Media freedom in Belarus quickly found itself in a worse state than it did even during the *Glastnost'* period of the Soviet Union, as Freedom House's press freedom survey demoted Belarus from "Partly Free" to "Not Free" during the first year into Lukashenko's presidency (Mihalisko 1997:256). The economic front also reflects a highly illiberal situation. Belarus remains largely a command economy (Nuti 2005:97). Private enterprises account for only one fourth of the country's GDP, the lowest ratio among the post-Soviet countries (Nuti 2005:99). This indicates that privatization has been incomplete during the transition era, a common trait among the illiberal regime types.

Lukashenko's illiberal tendencies only increased as time went on. As the first person to take on the office of President, Lukashenko acted quickly to limit the powers of the elected parliament. When the Parliament's term came to an end in 1995, Lukashenko's primary objective became to sabotage and de-legitimize the next election (Mihalisko 1997:263). The President imposed a strict media blackout on all of the candidates in order to limit voter awareness of party nominees and their platforms (Mihalisko 1997:263). Meanwhile, using the state-owned newspapers, Lukashenko began printing editorials extolling the virtues of a strong presidency while highlighting the weaknesses of western-style parliaments (Mihalisko 1997:263). Campaign funding to candidates was also limited to a paltry fifty dollars (Mihalisko 1997:263). Lukashenko even led a televised propaganda campaign against the opposition in which the Popular Front was linked to Nazi collaborators during World War II (Mihalisko

1997:262). The President went as far as to appear on television voiding his own ballot for the parliamentary elections, telling audiences that he thought that there was nobody on the ballot worthy of voting for (Mihalisko 1997:262).

While Lukashenko worked to delegitimize the parliamentary elections, he also began pushing forward his own agenda by supporting his own popular referendum in 1995. The referendum aimed to implement Lukashenko's pro-Russian policies by replacing the Belarusian national flag with its Soviet-era counterpart, re-establishing Russian as an official language, and making way for economic integration with the Russian Federation (Korosteleva 2005:46). Meanwhile, the referendum also granted Lukashenko's presidency greater powers over Parliament by establishing the right to dissolve the body in the event of a national crisis (Korosteleva 2005:46, Mihalisko 1997:262).

Lukashenko's illiberal tactics proved to be an overwhelming success. Due in part to lack of public awareness in the elections, many districts failed to meet the 50 percent threshold of voter turnout needed to select a candidate (Mihalisko 1997:264). The election was particularly disastrous for the Popular Front, which failed to win any seats (Mihalisko 1997:264). Even after two repeats, the election failed to attract enough voters to meet the 50 percent minimum turnout (Mihalisko 1997:264).   While another runoff succeeded in attracting enough votes to form a functioning parliament, the National Front failed to win any seats, effectively eliminating the democratic-leaning opposition (Mihalisko 1997:267). In subsequent elections, Lukashenko has used media manipulation and even arrests of opposition leaders to ensure victory in future elections (Ash 1994).

Numerous indicators of political and economic freedom reflect the Lukashenko regime's illiberal policies. On a scale of 1.0 (free) to 7.0 (not free), Freedom House has consistently given

ratings of nearly 7.0 to Belarus in evaluations of both press freedom and overall democracy in the country. Meanwhile, foreign direct investment has generally been an extremely low portion of the country's overall GDP, indicating a closed, non-liberalized economy. These indices provide clear evidence that political and economic liberalization have not taken place in Belarus in the post-communist era.

Table 5: Indicators of Political Freedom in Belarus Since 2002			
Year	Press Freedom *1 (free)-7 (not free)*	FDI as percent of GDP	Democracy Score *1 (free)-7 (not free)*
2002	--	1.69	6.38
2003	6.75	0.96	6.46
2004	6.75	0.71	6.54
2005	6.75	1.01	6.64
2006	6.75	0.97	6.71
2007	6.75	3.99	6.68
2008	6.75	3.60	6.71
2009	6.75	3.81	6.57
2010	6.50	2.52	6.5
2011	6.75	7.26	6.57
2012	6.75	2.46	6.68
2013	6.75	-	6.71
2014	6.75	-	6.71
		Sources: Freedom House, World Bank	

Thwarting Competition

In addition to stunting reform in the country, Lukashenko's practices have stunted the emergence of political competition in the country. Ever since Belarus's independence, opposition movements have had trouble gaining ground in elections. After Belarus declared independence, a wide diversity of opposition parties emerged, including a National Democratic Party, a Social-Democratic Union, a Peasant Party, and even a Green Party which attracted

support in areas which were heavily affected by the Chernobyl disaster (Mihalisko 1997:243-244). More importantly, there was a general agreement among the opposition groups that it was in Belarus's best interests to adopt a market-based economy and integrate itself with the West (Mihalisko 1997:243). In theory, this consensus should have helped to reduce the extreme fragmentation of opposition groups which is common in illiberal democracies. However, this clustering of democratic parties failed to challenge Lukashenko's demagogical campaign in 1994.

Since his 1994 election, Lukashenko has won every single Presidential race, preventing the kind of turnover needed to facilitate the transition to a consolidated, multiparty democracy (Ash 1994). Parliamentary elections are equally uncompetitive. After Lukashenko's emergence in the mid-1990s, elections have been consistently dominated by pro-Lukashenko independents. The primary opposition groups in Belarus are the United Civic Party and the Belarusian Popular Front, which have been reduced to near irrelevance and have now resorted to boycotting elections completely (Balmforth and Makhovsky 2012).

Table 6: Select Belarusian Parliamentary Elections Since 1990

Year	Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
1990	Communist Party	309-10	86
	Popular Front	26	7.5
	Others	34-35	6.5
1995[4]	Independents	Round 1: 9 Round 2: 44 Round 3: 10 Round 4: 32	Round 1: 50 Round 2: 43 Round 3: 50 Round 4: 54.2
	Agrarian Party	Round 1: 5 Round 2: 25 Round 3: 3 Round 4: 0	Round 1: 27.8 Round 2: 24.8 Round 3: 15.0 Round 4: 0

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[4] Extremely low turnout necessitated multiple rounds in order to elect a functioning parliament.

	Communist Party	Round 1: 3 Round 2: 24 Round 3: 6 Round 4: 10	Round 1: 16.7 Round 2: 23.8 Round 3: 30 Round 4: 16.9
	Others	Round 1: 1 Round 2: 8 Round 3: 1 Round 4: 17	Round 1: 5.6 Round 2: 8.0 Round 3: 5.0 Round 4: 28.8
2000	Independents	81	83.51
	Communist Party	6	6.19
	Agrarian Party	5	5.15
	Others	5	5.15
2008	Independents	103	93.63
	Communist Party	6	5.45
	Agrarian Party	1	0.91

Sources: PARLINE, Sahm 2010:258

In fact, the only real power transition that has taken place in Belarus' post-Soviet history is the transition from an illiberal, communist-led Supreme Soviet to a dictatorial presidency under Lukashenko. This authoritarian presidency is well beyond the bounds of even an illiberal democracy. Rather, his rule has been likened to a one-man dictatorship (Di Quirico 2011:434). The consolidation of an authoritarian regime has blocked the privatization needed to form a competitive democracy and a reformed market economy (Di Quirico 2011:436). This extremely illiberal political situation is in line with my hypothesis that illiberal regimes are more likely to pursue integration with the Eurasian Economic Union.

The capture of the Belarusian state under Lukashenko has also allowed the pro-Russian president to pursue his ambitions of integration with Russia. Much like Kebich, Lukashenko might see EEU integration as a means of generating economic growth without the drastic political reforms demanded by the European Union to the west. An overwhelmingly pro-Russian population is another factor which might account for Belarus's trajectory towards the Eurasian

Economic Union. The lack of a European or anti-Russian identity might give the leader little incentive to pursue integration with the European Union.

Section 2.2: Moldova

Following the 1990 Supreme Soviet election, Communist Party leader Mircea Snegur was named President of the Moldovan Supreme Soviet (Popescu 2014:37). Meanwhile, only a third of deputies elected were members of the Popular Front (Crowther 1997:293). While this may have technically marked a continuation of Communist leadership in the democratic era, it is nevertheless important to consider that the Communist Party itself was home to a large number of moderate reformists, many of whom were willing to cooperate and compromise with the Popular Front in the new political system. Snegur's victory, after all, was endorsed by the Popular Front (Crowther 1997:293). While the Communists technically remained in power, it was only through their willingness to cooperate with an extremely influential opposition movement that gained footing during *Perestroika* (Crowther 1997:293).

Nationalist Illiberalism in the post-Soviet Era

However, the Popular Front's activities during the 1990s also showed some aspects of illiberalism. One problematic aspect of Moldova's new political landscape was the poor representation of ethnic minorities in the new parliament (Crowther 1997:293). Russian-speaking deputies, frustrated by the perceived tyranny of the Romanian-speaking majority resigned from their posts (Crowther 1997:294). Meanwhile, minority regions began setting up their own parallel institutions, as they felt that the new republican government was no longer representative of their needs. These tensions caused Turkic and Russian minorities to declare

their own republics in Gagauzia and Transnistria in 1991, the latter of which would become the site of a violent civil war (Crowther 1997:294). While the Popular Front's support of popular issues like language reform earned the organization a great deal of public support in the 1990 elections, their subsequent push for more extreme anti-Russian policies alienated their public constituents and mark the opposition group's downfall (Way 2003:471). Other illiberal tactics have been extremely common among the ruling elite, who have regularly used blackmail and media censorship as a means to thwart their competitors (Way 2003:458). Since independence, Moldova has been characterized by relatively fluid turnover between parties through democratic elections (Popescu 2014:37). Remnants of Moldova's Soviet-era security apparatus have left ruling elites with access to personal records and surveillance techniques that can be used against political competitors (Way 2003:458). These examples of media manipulation and minority scapegoating are hallmarks of illiberal transitions, showing that the nationalist leanings of Moldova's opposition may have impeded the development of liberal democracy.

Indicators of political and economic freedom reflect a relatively illiberal transition from authoritarianism. The most recent Freedom House rankings give media freedom and overall democracy in the country scores falling around 5.0, indicating a relatively illiberal political situation. However, It is important to note that these scores are significantly lower than those of Belarus, which generally fall near 7.0, denoting a completely authoritarian situation. Also note that the Democracy Score and Independent Media scores have been gradually improving since 2010. Likewise, the amount of foreign direct investment as a percentage of Moldova's GDP is typically higher than that of Belarus year-by-year, indicating a more open economy. These scores show that while Moldova is by no means a liberal democracy, it is still significantly more politically and economically liberal than the EEU member, Belarus.

Year	Independent Media 1 (free)-7 (not free)	FDI as Percent of GDP	Democracy Score 1 (free)-7 (not free)
2002	-	5.06	-
2003	4.75	3.72	4.71
2004	5.00	3.19	4.88
2005	5.00	6.38	5.07
2006	5.00	7.58	4.96
2007	5.25	12.30	4.96
2008	5.50	11.75	5.00
2009	5.75	2.67	5.07
2010	5.75	3.40	5.14
2011	5.50	4.01	4.96
2012	5.00	2.17	4.89
2013	5.00	-	4.82
2014	5.00	-	4.86
			Sources: Freedom House, World Bank

Table 7: Indicators of Political and Economic Freedom in Moldova Since 2002

Competition and Turnover

Moldova's path towards democracy also appears significantly more liberal when one looks at the quality of competition and political turnover in the electoral system. Since independence, Moldova's has been characterized by relatively fluid turnover between parties through democratic elections (Popescu 2014:37). While the Popular Front opposition failed to win a majority in the 1990 election, rival parties were able to beat the re-organized Communist Party by a landslide in 1994. Even so, the Communists remained an important opposition political force in the following cycle, winning re-election in 1998 and becoming the dominant force in the following decade. During this long span of Communist rule, democracy did come under threat when elected Communist leaders failed to deliver on the promises to strengthen the

independence of the media and the judiciary (Popescu 2014:37). However, the relatively fluid nature of the political system was restored when a coalition of pro-European opposition parties won the 2009 election. The Communist Party, meanwhile, has now adopted a pro-EU platform, demonstrating a developing consensus between the government and opposition on the need for European integration (Popescu 2012:49).

Table 8: Select Moldovan Parliamentary Elections Since 1990

Year	Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
1990	Communist Party	305	75
	Popular Front	101	25
1994	Agrarian Democratic Party	56	53.9
	Socialist Bloc	28	26.9
	Peasants and Intellectuals	11	10.6
	Christian Democrats	9	8.7
1998	Communist Party	56	48.3
	Democratic Moldova	34	29.3
	Liberal Democrats	15	12.9
	Moldova Noastra	11	9.5
2009	Alliance for European Integration	53	52.5
	Liberal Democrats	18	17.8
	Liberal Party	15	14.9
	Democratic Party	13	12.9
	Moldova Noastra	7	6.9
	Communist Party	48	47.5

Sources: PARLINE, Crowther 1997:294

Despite the illiberal tactics of these ruling elites, pluralistic democracy has persevered. Way (2003) attributes this paradox to other factors, including the highly polarized national identity of the Moldovan population and the relatively weak rule of law in the country's largely agricultural society (Way 2003:470). In addition to the sharp ethnic division between Slavic, Turkic, and Romance-speaking groups, even the Romanian-speaking majority has not reached a consensus on its national goals and aspirations. While a sizeable minority of Romanian speakers

favor union with Romania, others embrace their Romanian ethnic identity while arguing that Moldova should nevertheless remain an independent state. Others still argue that romance-speaking Moldovans have an entirely distinct ethnolinguistic heritage from Romanians (Popescu 2014:46).

These sharp cleavages have resulted in a highly divided political landscape with a large number of independent interest groups. While elites have sought to maintain power through illiberal methods like media manipulation, the fact that no one group represents an outright majority has prevented any single party from gaining a monopoly over institutions like the media or state security apparatuses (Way 2003:264). Unlike the liberal democracies examined by Vachudova (2005), Moldova did not have a strong, unified opposition as a driver of reform. Instead, Moldova inherited a diverse range of fragmented, illiberal actors that failed to win the majorities needed to implement their largely undemocratic agendas. In the words of Way (2003), this is not so much a triumph of democracy as an instance of "failed authoritarianism."

This somewhat paradoxical arrangement has resulted a political landscape with many characteristics of more liberal democracies, including regular political turnover in Parliament (Popescu 2014:38). However, the continued reliance on media manipulation and nationalist rhetoric is nevertheless indicative of a partly illiberal regime. Once again, Moldova's post-communist history seems to fall between the ideal liberal and illiberal models.

The pro-European leadership that came into power in 2009 has taken great strides towards EU integration, signing an Association Agreement with the EU, negotiating a visa-free regime, as well as a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (Popescu 2014:44). The consensus that developed when the Party of Communists adopted eventual European integration as a major foreign policy goal may also strength the European drive in the long term. Despite

Moldova's fragmented and in many ways illiberal political landscape, consensus on the European question can be seen as a significant development that mirrors the pro-European consensus found among the major political parties in Vachudova's (2005) liberal democracies.

Section 3.3: Georgia

Following the October 1990 elections to the Georgian Parliament, opposition-backed candidates managed to win an outright majority with 62 percent of seats (Montgomery and Remington 1994:63). Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the victorious Round Table bloc, was quickly approved as chairman of the Georgian Supreme Soviet in 1990 (Slider 1997:185). While the Round Table opposition's victory over the Communists in the first multiparty election aligns well with the liberal regime types of Vachudova (2005), the political tactics used by post-communist elites took an increasingly illiberal turn over time, scapegoating ethnic minorities for political gain and its dominance over the political system to limit competition.

A Nationalist Government

Illiberal governance began soon into Gamsakhurdia's term. Acting as the figurehead for a politically inexperienced Round Table majority in the Supreme Soviet, the leader found himself in the position to sway the Parliament's decisions (Slider 1997:185). In his newfound position of unchecked power, he began to erode democracy in the country (De Waal 2010:134). Gamsakhurdia's executive powers were increased with the creation of a Presidency, for which the nationalist leader ran in May 1991. His campaign was remarkably successful, with Gamsakhurdia winning an overwhelming majority of popular support (Slider 1997:186). The

new President used this victory to legitimize his own powers, such as the ability to dissolve Parliament and to place Georgia under martial law (Slider 1997:186). To rally support from nationalists, Gamsakhurdia blamed ethnic minorities for the country's problems. Instead of championing the rights of Ossets and Abkhazians, Gamsakhurdia blamed these minority regions for persecuting ethnic Georgians in their respective regions (Slider 1997:163). By pointing fingers at these minority populations, Gamsakhurdia was able to attract support from ethnic nationalist segments of the population (Slider 1997:163).

These political tactics are hallmarks of an illiberal democracy. Because of the lack of competition in the Round Table-dominated political landscape, Gamsakhurdia was able to consolidate a largely authoritarian presidency. In the period directly following the Communist period, Georgia resembled the illiberal regime types in many ways. However, Gamsakhurdia's authoritarian style would soon become his downfall. Georgian opposition parties disillusioned by the nationalist President began organizing paramilitary wings which later collaborated with segments of the Georgian Army to forcefully oust Gamsakhurdia from power in 1992, and he was forced to flee into neighboring Chechnya (Filetti 2012:75, Filetti 2012:75).

Gamsakhurdia was succeeded by Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Communist who ruled Georgia during the early 1980s. The Parliament elected following Gamsakhurdia's ouster in 1992 was significantly more fragmented than the 1990 Supreme Soviet (Slider 1997:188). Shevardnadze, who enjoyed overwhelming popular support in the early to mid 1990s, had an enormous influence over the fragmented parliament, which was unable to organize a viable opposition (Slider 1997:188). Shevardnadze's political dominance continued after the 1995 parliamentary elections, which also overwhelmingly elected candidates in favor of the leader (Slider 1997:189). In some ways, Shevardnadze's policies were nevertheless significantly more

liberalizing than those of Gamsakhurdia. In addition to his greater tolerance of Georgia's ethnic minorities, Shevardnadze introduced reforms to the judicial system, helping to free Georgia from the legacies of the Soviet-era political system (Filetti 2012:77).

However, the lack of a major opposition gave Shevardnadze the opportunity to resort to certain illiberal policies to cement his grip on power. The President actively tried to control the media, albeit with limited success (Slider 1997:189). Shevardnadze also opposed extensive market liberalization, a characteristic of many illiberal regimes (Slider 1997:191). While Shevardnadze's return to the political arena did mark political turnover, the lack of a successful opposition once again allowed him to resort to illiberal tactics during his presidency.

Shevardnadze remained in power until the Parliamentary elections of 2003, when accusations of electoral fraud caused opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili to organize massive protests across Georgia (Filetti 2012:79). Shevardnadze agreed to resign the following year and host a new set of elections, which made way for a Saakashvili victory (Filetti 2012:79). Saakashvili presented himself as a reformist in many ways, though the new President would adopt increasingly authoritarian practices as time went on. Saakashvili's regime made great strides in the fight against corruption and organized crime, which declined significantly over the course of his administration (Filetti 2012:81). Like his predecessors, however, Saakashvili had little tolerance for opposition, and reduced the quality of press freedom significantly during his rule (Filetti 2012:82).

Indicators of political and economic freedom reflect the mixed nature of Georgia's transition. Freedom House rankings show that Georgia is in many ways a hybrid regime falling between the entirely free and the entirely unfree regime types. Notice the worsening of Press Freedom and Democracy scores since the start of Saakashvili's presidency in 2003. Despite the

slow dismantling of these freedoms, Georgia's rankings are significantly higher than Belarus, aligning more closely with Moldova. These rankings indicate a relatively liberal situation comparison to the other case studies. Foreign Direct Investment as a percentage of Georgia's GDP has also been relatively high, suggesting an open, liberalized economy.

Year	Press Freedom 1 (free)-7 (not free)	FDI as Percent of GDP	Democracy Score 1 (free)-7 (not free)
2000	3.75	4.29	4.17
2001	3.50	3.41	4.33
2002	3.75	4.71	4.58
2003	4.00	8.38	4.83
2004	4.00	9.60	4.83
2005	4.25	7.06	4.96
2006	4.25	15.10	4.86
2007	4.00	17.20	4.68
2008	4.25	12.22	4.79
2009	4.25	6.11	4.93
2010	4.25	6.99	4.93
2011	4.25	7.30	4.86
2012	4.25	5.48	4.82
2013	4.25	-	4.75
2014	4.00	-	4.68

Table 9: Indicators of Political and Economic Freedom in Georgia Since 2002

Sources: Freedom House, World Bank

Competition in Georgia

Much of the corruption that has plagued the Georgian government since independence has been rooted in the relatively poor level of political competition. During Gamsakhurdia's term as Georgia's first President, the leader had a relatively free hand in setting the terms of the new political system. The Communist Party, which had failed to undergo major reform during the late 1980s, had little appeal to voters who vividly remembered their brutal crackdown against

protesters during the April tragedy (Slider 1997:163). This left Gamsakhurdia's Round Table with little competition. If the Communist Party undergone reform during the communist era, it might very well have provided some much-needed competitiveness to the political scene, acting as a watchdog against the new government's authoritarian politics. However, the Communists in their unreformed state had little influence outside of minority regions concerned by Gamsakhurdia's nationalist rhetoric (Slider 1997:163). The problem was exacerbated when Gamsakhurdia banned the Communist Party outright in 1991 (Slider 1997:163).

The nature of political turnover in Georgia has improved somewhat despite a rocky start after independence. A major alternation of power came in 1992 with the transfer of the presidency from Gamsakhurdia to Shevardnadze, though this occurred primarily through a coup rather than through peaceful, democratic election (Filetti 2012:75). The transfer of power from Shevardnadze to Saakashvili only occurred when popular mobilization culminated in a repeat election (Filetti 2012:79). The need for protest in order to ensure transfers of power points to a relatively uncompetitive political arena, a common trait of illiberal regimes.

Parliamentary elections also show a great deal of political flux. The Round Table's dominance in 1990 was directly followed in 1992 with a much more fragmented parliament in which no single group was able to win a large number of seats, allowing Shevardnadze a great deal of influence (Slider 1997:188). The Communist Party, meanwhile, was disbanded entirely, removing any chance of becoming Georgia's democratic left ("Georgia: Elections Held in 1992"). The elimination of the Communist Party has not impeded the rise of pluralism, in the long term, however. The 1995 election brought Shevardnadze's Citizen's Union to Power, with the National Democratic Party and the All-Georgian Union of Revival acting as the primary opposition ("Georgia: Elections Held in 1995"). The periods following the 1992 and 1995

elections marked major changes in the structure of the parliament, but both the fragmented nature of the 1992 parliament and the pro-Shevardnadze composition of the 1995 parliament were beneficial to the president. Following the Rose Revolution, Mikheil Saakashvili's pro-European National Movement remained in power for an uninterrupted period until 2012, when it became the primary opposition party under the new Georgian Dream government.

Table 10: Select Georgian Parliamentary Elections Since 1990			
Year	Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
1990	Round Table – Free Georgia	155	63.0
	Communist Party	64	26.0
	Others	27	11.0
1992[5]	Peace Bloc	29	19.3
	11th of October Bloc	18	12.0
	Unity Bloc	14	9.3
	National-Democratic Party	12	8.0
	Party of Greens	11	7.3
	Democratic Party	10	6.6
	Others	56	37.7
1995	Union of Georgian Citizens	111	48
	National-Democratic Party	36	16
	All Georgian Revival Union	32	14
	Other	53	22
2004	National Movement	135	90
	Right Opposition	15	10
	Others	0	0
2008	United National Movement	119	79.3
	The Joint Opposition	17	11.3
	Others	14	9.3
2012	Georgian Dream	85	56.7
	United National Movement	65	43.3
			Sources: PARLINE, Slider 1997:176

While Saakashvili's intolerance of the various opposition groups might have been a threat to democracy during his ten-year rule, the nature of political competition improved substantially in 2012, when Saakashvili's United National Movement lost the Parliamentary elections to a new

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[5] The internal composition of the parliament changed significantly, but no one group was able to dominate. This gave Shevardnadze enormous influence over decisions.

opposition coalition known as Georgian Dream (Aprasidze 2014:66). This victory was significant because it marked the first peaceful power transition in Georgia's post-Soviet history (Aprasidze 2014:66). The victory of Georgian Dream could mark the beginnings of an increasingly competitive political system. However, The UNM no longer poses a serious threat to Georgian Dream, leaving the new government with a relatively free hand (Aprasidze 2014:67). Only time will tell if this situation will create a new Georgian Dream monopoly, or if the UNM will be able to rebrand itself into a credible opposition group to act as a watchdog for the new government. Nevertheless, the peaceful power transition is a positive step towards the consolidation of democracy.

Georgian Dream has since taken numerous steps to orient Georgia towards the European Union. The new government has signed an Association Agreement with the European Union, and has even worked towards normalizing its relations with neighboring Russia (Aprasidze 2014:67). However, it is difficult to tell so early into the new government's term if the more competitive democratic system is a major factor in Georgia's signing of the Association Agreement. Georgia remains highly dependent western military assistance, which is particularly important when Russia backs the separatist state of South Ossetia, an ethnic enclave that broke away from Georgia after the fall of the Soviet Union' (Lebanidze 2014:201). This security dependence could create an incentive to align the country with Western institutions and make the country more liable to give in to Western conditionality (Lebanidze 2014:209). Anti-Russian sentiment which has been pervasive since Georgia's independence could also explain resistance to joining the Eurasian Economic Union ("NDI Poll," 2014).

With rampant ethnic nationalism and ethnic scapegoating, Georgia's post-communist history resembles an illiberal regime in some ways. However, the country has also exhibited

multiple examples of political turnover in Parliament. Despite a worsened situation under Saakashvili, indicators show that democratic and economic freedom are somewhat better than those in Moldova. Georgia is an example of a mixed regime, lying between the liberal and illiberal models.

Section 3.4: Post-Communist Armenia

Not long after the Armenian National Movement victory in the Supreme Soviet elections of 1990, Armenia voted for independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991 (Dudwick 1997:82). The nationalist opposition to the communist government suddenly found itself with a strong plurality in the new democratic system, while the once-dominant Communist Party was brought to second place. The overwhelming support for an independent Armenia stemmed primarily from the Soviet government's failure to prevent the interethnic violence that erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnic Armenian enclave located in neighboring Azerbaijan (Dudwick 1997:82). Unlike in Georgia, however, the movement for secession was driven by more geopolitical and security interests than by deeply-engrained anti-Russian sentiment. Armenia maintained a stable relationship with Russia soon after independence, and was one of the first countries to join the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty, showing a willingness to re-integrate in Russia-backed institutions (Dudwick 1997:82).

Illiberalism and Ethnonationalism

Following independence, the ANM-dominated Supreme Soviet formed the new Armenian government. In October 1991, ANM leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan was elected President. While a degree of political pluralism existed with a successful ANM and a politically relevant Communist Party, patron-client networks developed within the political system, with loyalties based more on favors, relationships, and connections than on party platforms (Dudwick 1997:89). Political rent seeking was also commonplace, with elites using privatization to buy and sell assets to their advantage (Dudwick 1997:90). Immediately following independence, Armenia's political landscape took aspects of illiberalism despite the victory of the ANM opposition at the moment of democratization.

The government's illiberal political tactics were best represented by the 1995 constitutional referendum, which strengthened the presidency, weakened the power of local governments, and weakened the independence of the judiciary (Dudwick 1997:92). While the opposition criticized the initiative as an attempt to weaken the influence of smaller parties, the government was able to use its control over the media to spin the issue as a referendum over whether or not to have a constitution, rather than as a choice between two constitutions. Using this manipulation over the media, elites were able to push an illiberal agenda while muting the criticisms of opposition parties (Dudwick 1997:92). Due to this government manipulation, the new constitution passed by a wide margin of 68 percent in favor to 27 percent opposed (Dudwick 1997:93). By using their political capital to weaken the influence of opposition party and determine the rules of the new political system, Petrosyan was able to consolidate power through illiberal means.

The ANM government also used its control over Armenian institutions to manipulate the 1995 Parliamentary elections. Using connections to personalities within the Central Election Commission which presided over the election, the ANM was able to restrict opportunities for opposition candidates. The CEC was able to control which parties and candidates were able to register for elections. Using this position of power, ANM supporters within the CEC frequently rejected candidates from opposition parties (Dudwick 1997:94). The ANM was able to win a comfortable majority in the new parliament, cementing their grip on power (Dudwick 1997:96). The early years of Armenian independence exhibit many of the hallmarks of illiberalism, including manipulation of government institutions for political gain, reliance on ultranationalism as a rallying call for the electorate, and a marked lack of political turnover in government offices.

In 1996, the presidential elections once again gave the increasingly authoritarian Ter-Petrosyan another term in power. While certain areas like election transparency have since improved slightly, the electoral process remains plagued by biased media coverage of candidates and uneven allocation of public funds to parties (Freire and Simão 2007:7). The continuation of authoritarian practices by the ruling elite appears to have succeeded in limiting the strength of opposition parties.

Press Freedom and Democracy scores from Freedom House demonstrate an increasingly authoritarian political climate. The freedom of the media has increasingly been stripped away, while the overall quality of democracy has diminished significantly. These scores show a significantly graver political situation than in Georgia. FDI as a percentage of GDP is similar to albeit slightly lower than that of Georgia, suggesting a slightly less open economy.

Table 11: Indicators of Political and Economic Freedom in Armenia Since 2000			
Year	Press Freedom 1 (free)-7 (Not Free)	FDI as Percent of GDP	Democracy Score 1 (free)-7 (not free)
2000	4.75	5.45	4.79
2001	4.75	3.30	4.83
2002	4.75	4.66	4.83
2003	5.00	4.31	4.92
2004	5.25	6.93	5.00
2005	5.50	4.88	5.18
2006	5.50	7.10	5.14
2007	5.75	7.59	5.21
2008	5.75	8.02	5.21
2009	6.00	8.99	5.39
2010	6.00	6.15	5.39
2011	6.00	5.18	5.43
2012	6.00	4.94	5.39
2013	5.75	-	5.36
2014	5.75	-	5.36
			Sources: Freedom House, World Bank

Poor Political Turnover

Like in Georgia, Armenia has gone through several nominal transitions in power via national elections, though these power changes were somewhat more superficial in nature. The first major transition occurred in 1998, when Ter-Petrosyan's controversial plan to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict caused him to be ousted from power by one of his own ministers (Lebanidze 2014:206). In a follow-up election for the presidency, the Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan ran for the position and secured a victory. These elections were condemned by the OSCE as undemocratic, demonstrating a continuation of illiberal tendencies even during an event which was nominally an example of regime change. Kocharyan remained in power until the elections of 2008, when Kocharyan successfully passed his presidency to Prime Minister

Serzh Sargsyan, a political favorite of his (Lebanidze 2014:206).   Once again, the democratic

legitimacy of this election has once again been called into question by international observers

(Lebanidze 2014:206). Unlike in Georgia, these power shifts occurred between allied elites, and

not through regular democratic processes.

At the Parliamentary level, political turnover is rare.   Following the ANM victory in

1990, the Nationalist Movement remained dominant until the 1999 election marked the rise of

the Republican-led Unity Bloc.   Though the Petrosyan's ANM participated in this election, low

performance has since caused the party to fade into relative insignificance, preventing it from

becoming an effective opposition ("Armenia: Elections Held in 1999").   Republicans have

remained the dominant political force since then, showing little turnover in the political system.

Table 12: Select Armenian Parliamentary Elections Since 1990			
Year	Party	Number of mandates	Percent of mandates
1990	Communist Party	136	69.7
	ANM	59	30.3
1995	ANM-Led Republican Bloc	119	63.3
	Independents	45	23.56
	Women's Party	8	4.14
	Communist Party	7	3.6
	National Democratic Union	5	2.6
	National Self-Determination Union	4	2.09
	Others	3	1.5
1999	Unity[6]	62	47.3
	Communist Party	10	7.6
	Right and Unity Bloc	7	5.3
	Armenian Revolutionary Federation	8	6.1
	Country of Law	6	4.6
	National Democratic	6	4.6

[6] Bloc containing People's Party and Republican Party.

	Union		
	Others	32	24.2
2007	Republican Party	65	49.6
	Prosperous Armenia	25	19.1
	Armenian Revolutionary Federation	16	12.2
	Rule of Law Party	9	6.9
	Independents	8	6.1
	Heritage Party	7	5.3
	Dashink Party	1	0.8
2012	Republican Party	69	53.9
	Prosperous Armenia	37	28.9
	Armenian National Congress[7]	7	5.47
	Rule of Law	5	3.91
	Armenian Revolutionary Federation	5	3.91
	Heritage Party	5	3.91
	Sources: Grotz and Rodriguez-McKey 2001:335, Rutland 1994:852, PARLINE		

With little turnover and largely autocratic practices on the part of the government, Armenia can be seen as an illiberal democracy. Political turnover, though present, happens rarely and often occurs between elites who are already well-placed in the political system. While neighboring Georgia also displays many characteristics of illiberal democracy, the lack of turnover in Armenia makes that country arguably less democratic. Freedom House's 2013 rankings confirm this, with Georgia being classified as a "Hybrid" or "Transitional Regime," while Armenia has been labeled a semi-authoritarian regime. While the two South Caucasian regimes lie much closer on the democratic spectrum than do the authoritarian Belarus and the relatively pluralistic Moldova, there nevertheless appears to be a marked gap between the countries in terms of both political turnover and published indicators of economic and political freedom.

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[7] Petrosyan's successor to ANM.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In both Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the states which patterned most closely with the liberal regime types of Vachudova (2005) have signed an Association Agreement with the EU. Meanwhile, more illiberal regimes have opted for integration with the Eurasian Economic Union. While I have succeeded in establishing a correlation between a country's choice of supranational integration and the nature of its democratic system, it is important to note that this correlation does not necessarily demonstrate causation.

In Eastern Europe, EU-oriented Moldova's transition from communism has been significantly more liberal in nature than that of EEU member Belarus. In Moldova, a strong opposition existed during the late 1980s alongside a largely moderate Communist Party. Consequently, the first democratic elections were dominated by a combination of Popular Front members and Communist moderates. While Moldovan elites have since resorted to illiberal means in an attempt hold power, a highly competitive political environment has prevented the consolidation of a fully illiberal democracy. This transition can be contrasted with that of Belarus, whose communist history was characterized by an ultraconservative Communist Party and a weak opposition. The overwhelming Communist victory marked the beginning of a highly uncompetitive post-Communist era in which the former Communist deputy, Alexander Lukashenko, established an authoritarian presidency characterized by little political competition and halted political and economic reform.

The Caucasus shows a similar situation. In EU-aligned Georgia, there existed a strong though partly nationalist opposition during the communist period that managed to mobilize

effectively and attract public support. While the Georgian Communist Party became increasingly repressive in the leadup to the 1990 Supreme Soviet elections, the opposition managed to win the race. Ethnic scapegoating has since been prevalent among Georgian elites, but a competitive political system has ensured frequent turnover. In Armenia, there also existed a well organized, but extremely nationalist opposition. However, the Communists managed to win the first multiparty elections by adopting irredentist positions that resonated with ultranationalist voters. Since then, there has been very little competition in the Armenian political scene. While these results mirror my initial predictions, none of my research has managed to establish a truly causal relationship between the nature of democracy in a country and the choice between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union.

There are a number of other possible explanations for each country's choice that were not given sufficient attention in my thesis, including security considerations and domestic pressures from pro-Russian or pro-European voters. The security question is particularly salient in most of my cases. With the exception of Belarus, all of the countries discussed in my study are directly impacted by frozen conflicts on or bordering their territories. Georgia's territorial integrity is threatened by separatism in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moldova, meanwhile, has lost control of Transnistria, a separatist republic that broke away over concerns that Moldova's post-communist government threatened the rights of Slavic minorities. Armenia, meanwhile, sponsors Nagorno-Karabakh, the secessionist Armenian enclave in neighboring Azerbaijan. While the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not directly threaten Armenia's territorial integrity, it does significantly impact the country's relations with Azerbaijan. All of these cases represent grave security problems to the countries concerned, and threaten to embroil each state in bloody civil and international conflicts.

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At the international level, these conflicts may greatly influence these countries' relationships with actors like Russia and the EU. The case of Armenia in particular shows that in some cases it may be more pressing security interests—not the nature of democracy—which ultimately determine which path of integration a country seeks. Despite Armenia's relatively illiberal regime, the country's leadership has historically been very strongly in favor of European integration. Armenia's decision to join Russia's organization was widely regarded as a surprise by EU officials, who expected Armenia to go forward with an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU (Giragosian 2014:1).

The decision to join Russia's economic sphere did not occur until September 2013, when President Sargsyan announced that Armenia would join the Russian-led Customs Union (Giragosian 2014:1). Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt described the decision as a "policy U-turn" that surprised leaders of both the EU and Armenia (Giragosian 2014:1). Directly preceding the announcement, Sargsyan was summoned by Vladimir Putin for impromptu meetings, which may reflect increasing Russian efforts to convince Armenia to integrate with the EEU.

Although Sargsyan historically held an extremely pro-European position, Giragosian (2014) argues that his decision to join the Russian Customs Union was a calculated decision meant to fulfill more pressing domestic and foreign policy goals. Perhaps the most important factor leading up to the decision is Armenia's close relationship with Russia. Armenia remains highly dependent on Russia to ensure its national security, with Russian troops deployed to secure Armenian borders (Dudwick 1997:101). These troops have been stationed both at Armenia's Turkish and Iranian borders, indicating a large dependence on Russia for even basic national security functions (Friere and Simão 2007:10). Russia also provides a great deal of military equipment to Armenia, making Russia a critical partner for the South Caucasian state

(Friere and Simão 2007:10). Russia also proved to be a crucial partner during Armenia's war with neighboring Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh during the late 1980s and early 1990s (De Waal 2010:117). As Armenia's secession from the Soviet Union was driven largely by the Soviet government's refusal to transfer the ethnic Armenian enclave from Azerbaijan to Armenia, the new state took matters into its own hands with a bloody conflict against Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Armenia managed to win the conflict thanks in part to Russian military assistance (De Waal 2010:117). While Armenian troops are no longer actively engaged in combat, the territorial dispute has yet to be resolved, meaning that there remains a risk that the situation could escalate into another armed conflict with Azerbaijan (Nigmatulina 2015). Endangering Armenia's relationship with Russia could put the country at risk of losing its closest military partner in the case of a conflict with Azerbaijan. This evidence suggests that security interests carry an enormous amount of weight in a country's decision.

Armenia's case also shows that the decision to integrate with the EEU may also be driven by public opinion and domestic aspirations. Interestingly, the implications of this factor may directly contradict my hypothesis that more competitive political systems can push a country towards EU membership. Giragosian (2014) argues that Sargsyan's decision to integrate with Russia might equally have been a means of appeasing the primary opposition party, which is decidedly more pro-Russian than his supporters. Because the opposition firmly argued that signing an Association Agreement with the EU would have endangered Armenia's close ties with Russia, Sargsyan was effectively able to eliminate one of their most compelling rallying points, increasing his party's chances of re-election in the future (Giragosian 2014:2). Contrary to my argument, it seems that the existence of party competition directly contributed to Armenia's choice. If Sargsyan did not feel threatened by the opposition party, he may very well

have signed the Association Agreement without fear of political repercussions at home. Domestic pressures to satisfy pro-Russian segments of the population may have therefore been a major motivation for joining the EEU.

Can these factors account for the other states discussed in this paper? In the case of Georgia and Moldova, both the security situation and public opinion could explain the countries' determination to integrate with Western institutions like the EU. Georgia currently faces an enormous security threat in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are directly supported by the Russian Federation. In 2008, violence in South Ossetia resulted in a deadly war between Georgian troops and Russian forces. Russia has since maintained military bases in these breakaway territories, worsening Georgia's security situation vis-à-vis Russia (Kucera 2011). Much the inverse of the security situation in Armenia, Russia poses a direct threat to Georgia's territorial integrity. This insecurity could put pressure on Georgia to pursue integration with Western institutions like NATO and the European Union in order to ensure protection from Russia in the case of a similar conflict in the future.

Public opinion could also play a large role in Georgia's European alignment. The largely anti-Russian nature of the Georgian nationalist movement in the 1980s holds today, with only sixteen percent of Georgian citizens believing that Georgia should join the Eurasian Economic Union ("NDI Poll," 2014). Roughly half of Georgians consider Russia a significant threat to Georgia, and a majority believe that Georgia should pursue EU membership ("NDI Poll," 2014). These facts could also sway public opinion towards the EU and discourage elites from pursuing reintegration with Russia's sphere of influence. The highly competitive nature of Georgian politics could reinforce this factor, as public opinion is particularly important for ensuring reelection in competitive democracies.

The same logic holds for the Republic of Moldova, which also faces an internal security threat from Russia-backed Transnistria. In addition to being pro-Russian in nature, this breakaway region currently houses a sizeable Russian military presence (Malling 2014). Once again, the a renewed conflict in this region could lead to a devastating civil war or an even deadlier international war with the Russian Federation. The Association Agreement with the EU could be seen by local elites as a means of quickening Moldova's path towards joining western institutions, ensuring a more stable security situation in the long term. The overwhelming majority of the Moldovan populace is also supportive of European integration (Popescu 2014:49). Ethnolinguistic ties to EU member state Romania could also drive public opinion towards closer integration with Romania in the EU. This ethnic factor could also act as an incentive for Moldova's competing political parties to follow a pro-European platform.

Moldova's historic relationship with Russia could also push popular opinion towards favoring European integration. As discussed in my section on Moldova's Soviet history, the country's independence movement was driven by in large part by anti-Russian sentiment among the Romance-speaking majority. After decades of institutional favoritism towards the Russian-speaking minority, Moldova's majority population has worked diligently to distance themselves from the Russia via language reform. For many Moldovans, the pursuit of EU integration may be yet another way to distance their country from Russia's sphere of influence. Russia has been outwardly hostile towards Moldova's decision to sign the Association Agreement. In 2013, Russia famously banned the import of Moldovan wine, which some analysts see as an attempt to pressure Moldova not to pursue integration with the EU (Gillet 2014). This strained relationship might become an even greater motivation for Moldovans to seek economic security in Europe and escape Russia's sphere of influence by electing parties in favor of EU integration.

Belarus represents my one case study that does not have any major external or internal security threat. For this reason, the pressing need for external assistance from Russia or the EU may not factor into Belarus' decision. Consequently, Belarus may represent a default case in which internal factors are the primary motivators. During Kebich's rule following independence, the Prime Minister sought integration with Russia as a means of ensuring economic growth without enacting comprehensive economic reform. Considering the European Union's demands of free market capitalism, one could make the argument that my initial theory applies in cases where there is no existential security threat.

However, this argument may be downplaying the role of the predominantly pro-Russian public opinion in Belarus (Barushka 2014). While Lukashenko might see the Eurasian Economic Union as a means of providing growth to a largely controlled economy, integration with the EEU may just as easily reflect this culturally pro-Russian political climate. Historically, the overwhelming majority of Belarusians have favored close ties with Russia (Barushka 2014). The majority of Belarusians frequently view and trust Russian media diffused in their country, which has shaped their views of international affairs (Barushka 2014). For example, Belarusians generally are opposed to the pro-EU government in Ukraine, and the country's population has historically supported a complete union with Russia (Barushka 2014). While Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula has made Belarus' population more wary of merging with Russia, the strong pro-Russian identity in the country could be a motivating factor in Lukashenko's decision to join the EEU (Barushka 2014).

Future studies on supranational integration in the Former Soviet Union should examine the interplay between these factors, and how they might impact a given country's choice between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Popular opinion could be a particularly

interesting area of research, as domestic pressure from voters could create an incentive for elites to pursue integration with the public's preferred organization in order to ensure re-election. It would also be interesting to explore whether or not factors of public opinion are most salient in more liberal regimes, where going against public will mean losing the next election. Most importantly, however, future research should pay greater attention to how these factors connect to the process of integration into supranational organizations, which this thesis has treated only with passing mention. Research that pays greater attention to the process by which a country goes about joining a given supranational organization as well as its reasons for doing so might succeed in establishing a causal relationship between internal political factors and a country's path of integration, rather than simply a correlative one.

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