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Democracy and its Deficits:
The path towards becoming European-style democracies in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

Ghia Nodia
with the participation of Denis Cenușă and Mikhail Minakov

Abstract

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are three participating states of the European Partnership that have chosen to conclude Association Agreements with the European Union, often at the expense of relations with their most powerful neighbour, Russia. They are also rather similar in their levels of democratic development. Within a post-Soviet space, they stand out for their relatively high level of democratic freedoms and political pluralism; none of them, however, can be considered a consolidated democracy, and most analysts describe them as uncertain or hybrid political regimes that combine features of autocracy and democracy.

This paper offers a comparative analysis of the three countries' political systems and aims to interpret both the roots of their relative success, and the nature of the deficits that prevent them from consolidating their democratic institutions. Among these deficits are problems stemming from ethnic, regional and cultural conflicts; strong and weak features in their general constitutional systems; the links between democratic development and government capacity to produce public goods; state capture (including control over the most influential media organisations) by powerful oligarchs and endemic corruption; underdevelopment of political parties and party systems; insufficient trust towards institutions of electoral democracy and a resulting propensity to use extra-constitutional means of political struggle. Civil society organisations have also failed penetrate the wider public and the anti-liberal discourse of traditionally dominant churches and anti-Western media and civil society groups is often supported by Russia.

Despite these structural challenges, the commitment to European values and norms demonstrated by societies in these three countries gives hope that they can eventually consolidate their democratic institutions. It is argued that closer ties to the EU are important in explaining their relatively high level of democratic development. For this reason, the consistent and enhanced commitment of the European Union to this region is crucial to their continued success in this area.

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1.   Introduction

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine do not constitute a single geographical region, but since 2014 they have acquired a certain commonality of fate. In that year, all three countries signed Association Agreements (AA) with the European Union that came into effect in July 2016 for Georgia and Moldova and in September 2017 for Ukraine. This choice proved far more difficult, if not momentous, than what most Europeans and many citizens of these countries had initially imagined. Ukraine paid the heaviest price for the choice it made: it endured a violent government overthrow, effective loss of territory, and continuing Russia-inflicted warfare in the Donbas region. For Moldova and Georgia, however, the choice of this still modest form of European integration spells bigger problems for its relations with Russia and active resistance to its Europeanising policies from within. The choice for Europe makes these three countries stand out from their partners in the European Eastern Partnership of the EU, as well as from the post-Soviet realm in general. It is also notable that the choice was made when the tide of Euroscepticism within the EU, and Russia's openly aggressive attempts to undermine it from without, exposed Europe's vulnerability. It is therefore perhaps justified to denote Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as an 'AA region' in Europe's East: we use this term in the rest of the paper.

As seen by societies within the AA region, the AA should not be the final destination for relations with the EU. These countries insist on their European vocation and believe that it should ultimately be recognised by offering them a path to membership. There is no consensus on this issue within the EU, although the voices in favour of a European calling for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine increase in volume.[1]

However, it is also understood that both association with the EU and the hope of eventual membership is closely linked to acquiring European values, norms, institutions and practices. The values of liberal democracy are of paramount importance. How do the three AA countries score on this account? It depends on which standard we choose. If we compare them to other post-Soviet countries (excluding the Baltic states), they are by far the most democratic ones.

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[1] European Parliament, Recommendation of 15 November 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0440+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN).

But this does not make them consolidated democracies, and they are still far from meeting the demands that the EU would expect of its future members. Their political institutions are weak, unstable, susceptible to being captured by oligarchs[2] or autocratic leaders, and have low trust among their populations. Yet they also have lively political competition, periodically go through changes of power (sometimes by constitutional, sometimes by revolutionary means), have relatively vibrant independent media and civil society, and people who largely support democratic values. Nevertheless, the political systems are at risk from within and are open to external influences. But two assumptions can be made with confidence: they have genuine chances of success, and successful cooperation with the European Union may be the key factor in this success.

This paper summarises the trajectories of three countries in their development of European-style democratic institutions, and outlines the challenges ahead. It does not aspire to offer a comprehensive account of achievements and problems, but focuses on several key dimensions that have mattered most in their political development so far and exposes the most painful aspects of that process of development. Some important areas, such as the rule of law and justice systems, are not discussed here.[3] It aims to paint a broad picture and serve as a starting point for discussion.

2. Where do the three countries stand?

Despite huge differences between the domestic political scenes and development trajectories of the three AA countries, they also have features in common. This is confirmed by most widely used comparative international assessments of the levels of democracy in different countries. Freedom House in its "Freedom in the World" reports typically ascribe to these countries scores between 3 and 4 (with 1 standing for the most "free" or democratic country, and 7 for the most "unfree" or autocratic.) This means that these countries are considered as only "partly free", but that they are also rather close to being "free" – a score of 2.5 would allow for that.[4] In fact, their scores improved marginally over the last three years – the period when association with Europe was high on their political agendas (this is not to suggest that such relative progress will be sustainable in years to come).

Table 1. Freedom House: Freedom in the World scores, 1996-2016

	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
1996-2016 mean	3.52	3.26	3.26
2014-2016 mean	3	3	3

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[2], Wojciech Konończuk, Denis Cenusa and Kornely Kakachia, "Oligarchs in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as key obstacles to reforms", June 2017 (http://3dcftas.eu/publications/other/oligarchs-ukraine-moldova-and-georgia-key-obstacles-reforms).

[3] CEPS is producing a comparative study on this subject.

[4] The only exception is Ukraine between 2004-09, when it was given a score of 2.5 (or a "free" country) for five consecutive years – but this did not prove sustainable.

The *Democracy Index* of the Economist Intelligence Unit, which uses a somewhat different methodology and terminology, attributes the same countries slightly above or below 6 points[5] – this happens to be a dividing line between "hybrid regimes" and "flawed democracies". However, it assessed the differences between countries to be somewhat larger: since 2007 when Democracy Index started to collect its data, it has assessed Moldova as a "flawed democracy" (even more flawed than most others); Georgia – as a "hybrid regime" (though in the last four years it is thought to be one of the most democratic of the "hybrid regimes"); while Ukraine has descended from the "flawed democracy" category (2007-10) to that of "hybrid regime" (2011-16).

Similar numerical scores do not necessarily imply similarities in the *typology* of problems or achievements between the three countries, as the following analysis attempts to demonstrate. We start by reviewing the general development path of these unstable democracies and typical problems that stem from their starting conditions and environments.

3.   How democracy evolved: parallel trajectories

In all three countries, democracy emerged as an alternative to the discredited Soviet Communist rule. The early post-Soviet period was notable for its enthusiasm for democracy as a declared aim of reforms. However, the success of the democratic project was hampered by many structural or societal deficits: a habit of overdependence on the state; weak capacity of citizens' voluntary association in the public space (something that we know as civil society); a lack of understanding of how democratic institutions actually work (which contrasts with the high legitimacy of the general normative idea of democracy); and deep cleavages among multi-ethnic populations towards the projects of new nation states. These problems were exacerbated by the economic breakdown caused by the implosion of the Soviet-style 'command economy' and the disruption of economic ties with the rest of the former Soviet Union. These problems have hindered the democratic transition and challenged the development of democracy over the last 25 years.

On the political level, there were two main competing elites. An alternative political elite emerged out of parties and movements that challenged the existing regime on a combination of pro-democracy and strong nationalist agendas. They confronted the existing Communist *nomenklatura* that was keen to preserve its power and accompanying privileges. Both these elites had fundamental shortcomings. The post-Communist elites shed their erstwhile ideological commitments and professed allegiance to new slogans of democracy and nation state, but were structurally predisposed to resisting necessary democratic and free-market reforms. They were also well-placed to translate their pre-existing administrative power into control over the most important economic resources, thus laying the ground for the plutocratic (or oligarchic) character of the new regimes. The weaknesses of the newly emerging elites lay in their lack of political experience, insufficient organisation, and over-emphasis of the

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[5] In this case, higher ratings means more democratic and lower ratings less democratic.

nationalist agenda, which could have alienated ethnic minorities. The electorate saw the *nomenklatura* as a force for stability and moderation, while the new elites saw it as standing for change and reform. The turbulence of the early post-Communist years inclined them to give preference to the values of stability.

The outcomes of struggle between these elites were different in different countries. In Georgia, the alternative elite was initially the most successful by ousting the Communist party from power in the October-November 1990 elections. That looked like a clean break with the past, and no successor organisation to the Communist party was ever created in Georgia. However, the nationalist Round Table coalition led by the charismatic Zviad Gamsakhurdia proved divisive and incompetent and in January 1992 was ousted as a result of a popular insurgence or coup. The incoming government led by Eduard Shevardnadze, a reformed Communist, included a mixture of former *nomenklatura*, democratic reformers, and armed strongmen. Developments in Moldova and Ukraine were not so dramatic, but the new elites were never successful in defeating and delegitimising former *nomenklatura*, though were partly successful in imposing part of their agenda on it. The outcome was that, unlike more successful democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the three countries did not start their transitions with a period of more or less comprehensive democratic and free market reforms led by new non-Communist elites.

Ethno-territorial divisions were another birthmark of the three nascent democracies that continue to dog them to this day. They stemmed both from the 'objective' reasons (some ethnic minorities were not prepared to embrace new nation states); mistakes made by nationalist elites; and Moscow's willingness to manipulate the internal difficulties of the emergent states. Again, Georgian developments were the most momentous, with two protracted wars for secession in Abkhazia and South Ossetia[6] that ended in defeat for the central government and the creation of two unrecognised states. Moldova faced a similar problem and a similar outcome in Transnistria in 1992, although the scale of violence was far lower. In both countries, the Russian military was an important actor that played a prominent role in defining the outcomes of the conflicts. Ukraine was the most successful in preventing ethno-territorial problems, but as it turned out it only postponed the problem until Russia decided to use the existing cleavages for its hybrid war in 2014 in eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

For these reasons, the first half of the 1990s was a period of uncertainty, economic crisis, and – in the case of Georgia – total breakdown of statehood. The situation only stabilised in the mid-1990s by creating mixed regimes. The above-mentioned Freedom House ratings confirm that this mixed character of political systems has remained largely unchanged since then. It was also at this time that all three countries adopted new constitutions. Each constitution reflected the political balance and attitudes of the day, and were subject to periodic overhauls as the power balances changed.

While stability was welcome after a period of turbulence, in practice it was largely bought at the expense of high levels of corruption, state capture by oligarchic groups, government

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[6] The war in South Ossetia continued from January 1991 to June 1992, while that in Abkhazia lasted from August 1992 to September 1993.

inefficiency in terms of its capacity to provide public goods, and slow economic development. All countries faced a contradiction between formally declared principles of constitutional democracy, transparency, and meritocracy that were also more or less reflected in the constitutions and legislation (that could be drafted in cooperation with consultants from established Western democracies), and the reality of neo-patrimonial, informal, clan-based governance. This undermined the legitimacy of the entrenched elites (often rooted in the former *nomenklatura* but 'enriched' by new economic and political entrepreneurs), so the demands for dramatic change ripened. This expressed itself in the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004, respectively. In Moldova, the resistance to the rule of the Communists led by a chaotic coalition of pro-European political forces did not take these dramatic forms, but in 2009 they also succeeded in coming to power after the April youth riots and subsequent political turmoil in the same year.

These power changes have led to different outcomes in different countries, however. In Georgia, reforms carried out by President Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM) were largely successful in uprooting corruption, visibly improving the quality of public services and improving the investment climate. However, the fact that these reforms were carried out in a top-down fashion, at the expense of concentrating power in the presidency, and were accompanied by some human rights abuses, eventually triggered strong protests based on a heady mix of democratic and nativist discourse. In Ukraine, the 'Orange' government was more pluralistic but did not bring about any serious achievements, either in political or economic development, which led to very deep public disappointment. In Moldova, the coalition of centre- to right-leaning parties was successful in overthrowing the Communists from power, but became mired in corruption and poor governance scandals and hence lost credibility.

Another new trend in the 2000s could be termed the 'geopolitisation' of the political discourse on democracy.[7] On the one hand, a more muscular Russia emerged under Putin, clearly alarmed by the colour revolutions, interpreting them as Western conspiracies to squeeze Russia out from its position of influence in its 'near abroad'. On the other hand, the inclusion of the regional countries in the European Neighbourhood Policy (2003 for Moldova and Ukraine, 2004 for Georgia), and, especially the EaP turned the EU into a more influential actor in the region, and came to be considered as the key partner and ally of pro-reform political groups within these countries. Hence, the division between pro-democratic reforms and pro-status quo agendas began to be perceived as a clash between pro-Europe and pro-Russia forces.

This perception was shared by the Russian government, and by the different societal actors within the future AA region. The strongest expression of this was the 2013-14 Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, triggered by the outrage at President Yanukovych's last-minute refusal to initial the Association Agreement with the EU. Ukraine was both pressured and seduced by

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[7] See on this Ghia Nodia, "The Revenge of Geopolitics", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 25, No. 4, October 2014, pp. 139-150.

Putin; however, the agenda of Euromaidan developed into a general protest against the regime and corrupt oligarchic rule. The EU thus became a symbol of clean, effective and participatory democracy for which the Ukrainian people yearned. This was less the case in Moldova, where after cases bank fraud unveiled in November 2014 the EU was accused of supporting the corrupt elites, which had an adverse effect on public attitudes to the EU.

While there is a genuine popular demand in all three countries for such democracy, there is also a deep frustration with political elites, including those who claim to be harbingers of reform and fighters of corruption. In all three countries, political parties are among the least trusted institutions. While there have been several changes of power – through revolutionary or constitutional means (giving widespread hope of a genuine democratic breakthrough as well as good governance), they usually ended in frustration on the part of the citizenry. On the other hand, these countries maintained relatively dynamic and competitive political landscapes, an open space for political debate, and healthy levels of social activism.

4. Ethnic, regional, and cultural conflicts and divisions

Agreement about borders, as well as a shared sense of belonging among citizens of a given state, may be the single most important precondition for a successful democratic political system. Before people embark on the difficult task of jointly constructing institutions of democratic state, they should consider themselves as a political community or nation, which does not necessarily coincide with ethnic nation. This is why an attempt at democratic transition may be critically dangerous for the unity of nascent democratic states, especially when this period coincides with the break-up of multinational states or empires.

In general, most democratic countries have regional and/or ethnic divisions. With proper diversity management, these divisions do not necessity entail any risk to the unity of the country. Whether some divisions lead to conflicts that threaten unity and civic peace depends on many factors, including the depth of pre-existing cultural cleavages, strategic decisions made by political elites, and/or external influences.

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have considerable ethnic and regional divisions and unresolved territorial conflicts. It was in the period of the Soviet break-up that most such conflicts in the post-Soviet space emerged. Georgia had two such conflicts (Abkhazia and South Ossetia). They resulted from pre-existing ethno-cultural differences; differing collective historical and identity memories; certain minorities were apprehensive of the nationalist rhetoric of emergent elites in the new countries; and the outside influence of Russia. Moldova has a conflict in the Transnistrian region with no ethnic roots, but based rather on historical and geopolitical distinctions, mixed with a renaissance of nationalist movements following the collapse of the USSR. Overall, Russia was not interested in the consolidation of new nation states on the territories of post-Soviet countries that it considered its natural zone of influence, and sought local allies to disrupt such processes: ethnic minorities could be a natural choice. In all three cases, the outcome was similar: the separatist forces won, establishing de facto control over areas they claimed; supposedly temporary ceasefire agreements created quasi-permanent

dividing lines, and de facto states of an uncertain international status developed into quasi-polities with all the formal attributes of statehood on the seceded territories. All three of them have been in existence for more than 20 years now. At least in the perception of the so-called 'parent-states,' Russia's support was crucial to that outcome, and in maintaining the shaky status quo. Residents of de facto states became accustomed to living that way and developed into separate societies, although Transnistria, unlike the two other cases, has fairly strong economic ties with its parent state via humanitarian payments (pensions, social allowances etc.) and the gas-connected benefits to the breakaway region's industry.

While the international community tried to resolve these conflicts and achieve more permanent and mutually agreed solutions, it was Russia that was in effect the main power-broker. For a long time, the Russian government was interested either in solutions that would substantively compromise the sovereignty of the affected states (that the latter rejected), or in prolonging the status quo that would buy it influence in the area. In the wake of the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict, the situation changed with regards to Georgia, with Russia recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Only a handful of states followed Moscow's example, which meant that both territories turned into Russian protectorates with little effective sovereignty. After these changes, Georgia considered both Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be "territories occupied by Russia". In the case of Moldova, Russia tried to maintain its influence by proposing the federalisation of the country envisaged by its 2003 'Kozak Plan', the plan that the Moldovan government initially considered but eventually rejected. The latter sparked the first confrontation with the Kremlin, consisting of reviewed prices for gas supplies and embargoes on Moldovan wines.

Not all ethnic or regional divisions ended in such conflicts, however. All three countries had other ethnic and religious minorities; in some cases, their existence did not cause tensions, in others, tensions were resolved. For instance, Moldova managed to contain the problem that emerged in relations between the nascent Moldovan state and its Gagauzian minority, instituting a Gagauzian administrative autonomy. Likewise, Georgia had a regional problem with the Adjaran Autonomous Region, which claimed greater powers than the Georgian constitution provided for. But there has never been an agenda of secession, or threats of violence. After the local autocratic leader, Aslan Abashidze was ousted by the protest movement, the territorial problem appears to have disappeared. While there were some fears that part of the Georgian regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli where respectively ethnic Armenians and Azeris are concentrated on the border with their ethnic homelands, there was never any open conflict in these regions either.

Ukraine also is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country, but all its identity-based divisions are overshadowed by the cleavage between its south-eastern part that tends to be culturally closer to Russia, and the western part where Ukrainian ethnic identity, and a desire for national sovereignty, is much stronger. Yet while this cleavage was strongly pronounced in voting patterns, with the east tending to vote for candidates considered as 'pro-Russian' and the west supporting pro-independence and pro-European forces, Ukraine had long managed to avoid political confrontation along cultural identity lines. In 1991, instituting an autonomous region

in Crimea (the most Russia-oriented among Ukraine's regions) appeared to have averted the danger of a territorial conflict of the kind seen in Georgia and Moldova. However, in 2014, Russia used the pretext of the change of Ukrainian government when President Yanukovych fled the country to annex Crimea and foment separatist revolt in the south-eastern regions. This revolt ended with the creation of two non-recognised statelets in the Donbass region. After eight months of bloody war in 2014-15, the frontline stabilised and slowly turned into a quasi-border with the Russian-backed separatist region. As a result, Ukraine's situation came to resemble that of Georgia and Moldova, with Crimea being annexed by Russia and Donbass becoming an area of 'semi-frozen conflict'.

Such conflicts impede democratic consolidation in several ways: they disrupt the general functioning of the state; strengthen the political players inclined towards radical and exclusive nationalist agendas; are conducive to the creation of citizens' militias whose presence can disrupt the balance of power and hamper orderly democratic procedures; and, of course, lead to massive violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms. However, especially for Ukraine and Georgia, these conflicts, which are primarily perceived as conflicts with Russia, weakened the latter's capacity to influence national political actors and generally strengthened both countries' resolve to pursue the European integration agenda. Following the eruption of fighting in the Donbass region, the population that is generally Russian-speaking took a strong pro-Ukrainian position. In this sense, the fighting contributed to the consolidation of Ukrainian civic identity on territories other than those under separatist control.

As a result of these conflicts, all three countries have part of their territories outside their effective jurisdictions. While none of them contemplate reconciling themselves to the loss of these territories, the countries recognise that they have little chance of restoring their territorial integrity soon, and there is consensus that they have to focus on the agenda of domestic reforms and development without abandoning the reintegration efforts. This does not mean, though, that there are no remaining identity and culture-related cleavages and challenges in the parts of the countries where the control of the state is not challenged. In Moldova, the issue of Moldovan vs Romanian identity continues to be divisive. Once the European aspirations of Moldova became clearer in 2009, and especially after the signing of the Association Agreement, the movement for reunification with Romania moved closer to or even merged with pro-EU sentiments. Since Moldova started to be run by so-called pro-EU governments, and the dialogue with the EU intensified, the geopolitical division between pro-EU and pro-Russian political forces dramatically increased. In Ukraine, issues related to the formal status and practical use of the Russian vs Ukrainian language continues to be controversial. In Georgia, most in the Armenian and Azeri ethnic minorities do not have a command of the Georgian language and are weakly integrated into Georgian society, which hampers their participation in political, social and economic life. The status of religious, especially Muslim minorities is also an area of concern. In all countries, support for European integration tends to be weaker among many in the minority populations,[8] so the governments

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[8] For instance, in Georgia in June 2017, in minority settlements only 23% supported the state goal of European integration and 49% that of Eurasian option. Laura Thornton, David Sichinava, "Public attitudes in Georgia Results of a

and societies need to convince them that the path of European integration will actually improve the protection of minority rights.

5.   General constitutional systems

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine adopted their first post-Communist constitutions in the mid-1990s: Moldova in 1994, Georgia in 1995, and Ukraine in 1996. This was preceded by a lengthy process of debate between different political forces. The forces of stability usually promoted strong presidential rule, greater centralism, and majoritarian electoral systems, while reformist forces typically (but not always consistently) called for stronger parliaments, greater decentralisation, and proportionate voting systems. Moreover, the first constitutions had to take into account the actual and potential ethno-territorial conflicts that threatened the three nascent states.

The outcomes were based on some sort of compromise between different political forces, and were different in different countries. Ukraine adopted a semi-presidential system with the president having firm control of the executive branch, including the cabinet, the prime minister, and a network of the president's regional (oblast) representatives called governors, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. However, the parliament (Rada) retained a high level of independence, and shared with the president an impact on the judiciary system. There was a mixed system of political representation, including both majoritarian and proportionate components. The constitution also reaffirmed the autonomy of the region of Crimea (which it did not have in Soviet times).

In Georgia, the conflict between pro-government and opposition forces led to a compromise solution, which was a strict, American-style division between president and parliament. This allowed parliament to be a relatively independent centre of power. Due to the difficulty in reaching consensus on the territorial arrangement of the country, this topic was not included in the constitution at all, on the pretext that it would be added after the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been resolved (the Upper Chamber of Parliament also had to be created after that). In practice, however, a rather centralised system of governance was established. A new regional level of governance (not yet mentioned in the constitution) was created, based on the office of the president's personal representatives in the regions. Municipal (*rayon*) level administrators (*gamgebelis*) were also appointed by the president.

Moldova was the only country of the three (as well as in the post-Soviet area in general) that avoided the path of strong presidentialism. The parliamentary system has shaped the politics of the country since its independence in August 1991, and several later attempts to introduce a stronger presidency failed (even though it has been always a popular idea, as confirmed by the results of the referendum of 1999 that had no juridical effects).[9] According to a

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June 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia", available at
https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20poll_june%202017_ISSUES_ENG_VF.pdf

[9] According to the referendum of May 1999, out of 1.4 million citizens (58.33% of the total population) 55.3% opted for presidential form of government and conferred to the president the right to form and rule the government. However,

constitutional provision enacted in 2000, the president had to be elected by three-fifths of the parliament (rather than by direct popular vote, as before), but this created problems after 2009 when a monopoly of the Communist party ended and diverse ruling coalitions had trouble garnering enough votes to fill the president's seat. Under these circumstances, Moldova faced numerous political crises and frequent snap elections (in 2001, 2009, and 2010). In 2016, in a controversial act, the Constitutional Court restored the constitutional provisions effective prior to the modification of 2000, thus re-introducing the direct election of the president.[10] The system is not yet stabilised, however, and there are continuous calls to extend the competences of the president.

Although Moldova's constitution has been relatively stable since its adoption, in Ukraine and Georgia the changing balance of power led to several overhauls. In the case of Ukraine, the competencies of the president, and the balance of power between the president and prime minister/parliament changed several times. Despite this, however, the president was always considered to be the most important political figure in the country. In Georgia, changes of the constitutional system of power turned out to be more thorough. The 2004 package of amendments changed the system into a formally semi-presidential but in effect more presidentialist one – something that the government of the day justified by the necessity to carry out rapid reforms. Another large overhaul took place in 2010 (most of the changes came into effect in 2013), when the powers of parliament were considerably increased at the expense of the presidency, which tended to become a largely ceremonial position. A movement towards parliamentary system was completed through amendments in 2017 that removed direct elections of the president. The electoral system also became a purely proportional one. The implementation of both changes, however, was postponed until after the next presidential and parliamentary elections (due in 2018 and 2020).

No less important is how the constitutional *process* developed. Georgia has had a propensity for parliamentary supermajorities: this allowed the parties in power to change the constitution at will. The 1995 constitution was the result of a genuine compromise between the government and opposition parties; but the overhauls of 2004, 2010 and 2017 reflected the political will of a single party (UNM in the first two cases, the Georgian Dream in the latter case). It was the outside powers (represented by the Venice Commission, for instance) that played some balancing role. In the Moldovan and Ukrainian parliaments, strong majorities are almost never created, which provides for more debate and an inclusive constitutional process, even if the same factor often undermines the efficiency of governance.

Whatever the strong or weak features of the formal constitutions in the three countries, all of them face a challenge of extra-constitutional governance. The weakness of democratic traditions and institutions make them vulnerable to powerful extraconstitutional informal

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the plebiscite had no juridical effects because it included less than 61% of the electorate. See http://www.e-democracy.md/monitoring/politics/comments/constitutional-crisis-responsibilities-consequences/.

[10] Denis Cenusa, "Back to direct presidential elections in Moldova: From one political crisis to another?", 21 March 2016 (http://3dcftas.eu/publications/other/back-direct-presidential-elections-moldova-one-political-crisis-another).

influences. The entrenched business oligarchies are the most obvious example. The term, however, is more strictly applicable to the political scene in Moldova and Ukraine, where there is a group of ultra-rich players who sometimes become political players directly, or try to influence the political process by aligning themselves to different political and social players, and own the most influential media. This could lead to some kind of oligarchic pluralism based on infighting between different financial-political groups, especially in Ukraine. This checked the autocratic tendencies of any single political actor, but also makes it extremely difficult to achieve clean, transparent and efficient government.

Until recently, Georgia has not experienced 'oligarchy' in the strict sense, because there has never been a group of powerful businesses able to manipulate political players. Here, the problem was rather one of the extreme personalisation of politics, with charismatic individual leaders (Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze, Mikheil Saakashvili) often seen as standing above party systems and constitutional rules. This may have changed with the advent of Bidzina Ivanishvili, who came to power in 2012 largely thanks to his enormous, by Georgian standards, financial resources (he is widely believed to wield powerful informal influence over his ruling Georgian Dream party since his resignation from the position of prime minister in 2013). This makes Georgia's situation somewhat closer to that of Moldova, where Vladimir Plahotniuc, a rich businessmen, also calls the shots in the ruling Democratic Party and the country without occupying the position of prime minister or any other elective mandate.

To sum up, the formal constitutions of all three countries are generally conducive to a competitive political process that provides for the creation of accountable government. They also include all the major safeguards for the protection of political liberties and human rights. This does not mean that there is no place for the improvement of the formal constitutional systems (for instance, strengthening local and regional governance may be such an area), but such shortcomings do not prevent these countries from consolidating their democratic political systems. In practice, however, these systems are susceptible to the negative influence of extra-constitutional factors, such as charismatic individuals and their personality-driven parties., and powerful business players known as oligarchs.

The political systems also face a painful choice between efficiency and pluralism that is typical for countries with weak democratic traditions. The period between 2004-13 in Georgia might have been the only one in all three countries when the formal constitutional set-up clearly provided for an excessive concentration of power in the executive. However, it was in this period (especially during the first half) that Georgia carried out the most successful public policy reforms, when the level of corruption went down significantly, while the capacity of the government to produce public goods (as well as the quality of those public goods) increased substantially. The same system also created a genuine threat of the autocratic consolidation of power. On the other hand, a constitutional environment providing for greater pluralism may also weaken the government's capacity to carry out necessary public policy reforms, thereby enabling powerful plutocratic actors to manipulate the system.

All three countries have yet to find a proper balance between strong and efficacious state on the one hand, and strong democratic institutions capable of imposing genuine accountability on their rulers on the other. They also need to accept that only an inclusive, consensus-based constitutional process will lead to the adoption of legitimate, effective, formal constitutional rules rather than have extra-constitutional powers guide the behaviour of political actors.

6.   Government performance and legitimacy

Apart from observing democratic norms such as respect for human rights, accountability, and transparency, etc., democratic regimes also need to gain 'performance legitimacy' to demonstrate that they are capable of effectively serving their peoples. When making their political choices, most citizens are not motivated by ideological considerations but by the ability of the government to produce public goods that make their lives better. In post-Soviet countries, democracy has suffered from the widespread perception that democratic pluralism brings chaos, inefficiency and corruption, whereas the autocratic Soviet government delivers more orderly and affluent lives. Communist *nomenklatura* exploited this nostalgia for former times and presented themselves as more competent leaders who could ensure stability after a period of turmoil. Putin's regime in Russia is the most obvious example of such a trend, as it largely based its legitimacy on the contrast with the more democratic but unruly and poor 1990s. It is therefore crucial for democracies to prove that they can perform better than autocracies.

Government performance has been a problem for all the three countries discussed here, although the degree of the problem and the dynamics of development varied. In the 1990s, it was Georgia that suffered the most dramatic implosion of state, caused by both prolonged ethno-territorial conflicts and the crisis of legitimacy engendered by the violent change of the first democratically elected government. At this time Georgia was a textbook example of a failed state, with armed militias competing for control that the government had lost. While basic order was restored by the mid-1990s, the state was still notoriously weak and corrupt, incapable of collecting taxes, paying salaries to public servants, taking care of public infrastructure, etc. In 2003, it shared 124-128th places among 133 nations in the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International.[11] The trust towards almost all government bodies was below 20%.[12] This overall failure of the government created a background that led to the 'Rose Revolution' of November 2003.

Georgia is also the country that has achieved the most salient success in efforts to reform the government after the Rose Revolution. By 2012, it reached 51st place among 174 nations.[13] It

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[11]   Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2002* (https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_2002/0/).

[12] International Republican Institute, *Georgia National Voter Study May 2003*; Theodor Hanf and Ghia Nodia, *Lurching to Democracy. From agnostic tolerance to pious Jacobinism: Societal change and people's reactions*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000, p. 105.

[13] Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2016.*

also made considerable progress in the areas of fiscal policy, the provision of public services to citizens and the development of public infrastructure, etc.[14] While the breakthrough was achieved during the UNM's period in power, the reforms proved generally sustainable, also when power changed: for instance, by 2016, Georgia's position in the Corruption Perception Index further improved with the country occupying 44th place among 176 nations,[15] above a number of European Union countries including Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia.

This does not translate into great confidence on the part of citizens, however. Between April 2015 and June 2016, the number of Georgians who believed that the country was going in the right direction oscillated between 20-30%, reaching 33% by April 2017 (31% thought that Georgia was going in the wrong direction, and another 31% thought that it was not changing at all). When it came to the performance of institutions, between 30-55% rated the performance of public service halls, the army, and the police as good or very good, while the positive approval ratings of the Prosecutor's Office, the courts, and parliament were between 10-13%. This does not mean that people are completely dissatisfied: between 40-50% rated their performance as "average".[16]

Table 2. Performance of state institutions and the dominant church ("good or very good")

	Georgia[17]	Moldova[18]	Ukraine[19]
The Army	49	46	57
Police	37	46	41
Courts	13	24	9
Parliament	10	17	14
The Church	58	68	62
Country is going in the right direction	31	38	35

Ukraine is often used as a counter-example. It never fell as low in terms of weakness of the state as Georgia did in the 1990s, but following two Maidan revolutions its democratic breakthroughs never translated into any sizeable success in overcoming corruption or

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[14] The World Bank, *Fighting Corruption in Public Services: Chronicling Georgia's Reforms*, Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction, 2012.

[15] Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2016 (*https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/ corruption_perceptions_index_2016).

[16] Public attitudes in Georgia Results of an April 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia, available at https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_April_2017_political%20Presentation_ENG_version%20final.pdf.

[17] Laura Thornton and Koba Turmanidze, *Public attitudes in Georgia Results of a April 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia* (https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_April_2017_political%20Presentation_ENG_version% 20final.pdf).

[18] Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion,* April 2017 (www.ipp.md).

[19] "Stavlennia hromadyan Ukrainy do suspilnykh instytutiv, elektoralni orientatsii", The Razumkov Center, 11 October 2017, accessed 25 November 2017 (http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/socio/Press1017.pdf).

increasing the effectiveness of public services. After the 2004 Orange Revolution, the incoming government failed to carry out effective reforms and was soon discredited, losing power to the very candidate (Victor Yanukovych) whom Victor Yushchenko, the favourite of the 2004 movement, had defeated. The government elected in the wake of 2014 'Revolution of dignity' did carry out certain reforms, and achieved some results. In 2015-16 two new institutions were created to prosecute (National Anticorruption Bureau, NABU) and prevent corruption (National Agency for Prevention of Corruption, NAPC), with a number of high-profile investigations into people close to the president and the former prime minister.[20] This brought modest results: in 2016 the Corruption Perception Index scored 29 points, which is the highest score for the entire period of measurement, but it still stands for endemic corruption and leaves the country in the 131th place among 176 nations – hardly a satisfying position.[21] This is reflected in the very low trust towards government institutions. In a December 2016 poll, among the most trusted (over 50%) institutions are the church, volunteers and the army; while the least trustworthy (at under 10%) are the government, parliament and courts.[22] Over 70% of Ukrainians believe that Ukraine is developing in the [wrong direction](), which reflects a rather high level of public dissatisfaction that may be dangerous for the legitimacy of the political system.[23]

Table 3. The level of corruption (Transparency International CPI index)24

	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
2002	24	21	24
2009	41	33	22
2016	67	30	29

A score of 100 stands for the least corrupt, while a score of 1 for the most corrupt.

Government inefficiency and corruption are also considered to be a huge problem in Moldova affecting public procurement, the management of the companies with state participation, public assets, but also the integrity of decision-making in areas such as the financial sector, energy, and the environment etc. Generally, Moldova is considered to be a highly corrupt country in the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, although it has its ups and downs: in 2012-14 it had the best scores ever of 35-36, but they fell to 33 and 30 (123rd place among 176 nations) in 2015 and 2016. This was somewhat better than in the 2000s, in

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[20] http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-corruption-arrests/ukraine-makes-two-high-profile-detentions-in-corruption-case-idUSKBN17N1AS?il=0

[21] Ibid.

[22] Kiev International Institute of Sociology, "Trust to Social Institutions" (https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016 http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=678&page=1).

[23] IRI Poll: Social and Political Moods of Ukrainians, 8 June 2017 (http://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/poll_iri_dinamika_obschestvenno-politicheskih_vzglyadov_v_ukraine.html).

[24] The data is available at https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/. The score of 100 stands for the least corrupt, while the score of 1 – for the most corrupt countries. Until 2012, CPI used the system whereby the least corrupt country would get 10 rather than 100 points, so for instance, in 2006 Georgia's score was expressed as 4.1 rather than 41, but for better visibility we upgraded older scores to the new format both in Table 3 and later in the text.

the period of the Communist party rule, when typical scores oscillated between 24-28%.[25] The people of Moldova are deeply dissatisfied with how things are going: according to the Institute of Public Policy research, in April 2017, only 31% of those polled believed that the country was heading in the right direction, and 64% thought it was going in the wrong direction.[26]

Especially for Ukraine and Moldova, increasing government effectiveness, its responsiveness to citizens' needs, and substantively reducing the rate of corruption is an extremely high priority task. This, however, can only be achieved through confronting the key political problem of state institution 'capture' by powerful oligarchic groups or super-rich individuals in all three countries.

7.   Political parties and party systems

The considerable level of political pluralism and competitive political environment are among the most important positive features of the political systems in the three countries. This is what makes them stand out from other, more autocratic regimes in the post-Soviet realm. In these countries, elections often (if not always) constitute an area for meaningful and unpredictable competition for power rather than a mere democratic façade, and elections may be a way for the opposition to come to power (although they are still not the only way).

On the other hand, in all three countries the level of development of political parties and party systems may be one of the main (if not the main) underlying structural weaknesses of democratic institutions. Parties are weakly institutionalised and often personalised, while party systems are fragmented and unstable, and the level of popular trust towards political elites is low. Typically, the party scene may change radically from one election to the other, with once seemingly strong parties often leaving the political scene altogether and being completely marginalised.

There is a tendency to develop, on the one hand, parties of power that are hardly distinguishable from the state administration, and are used more as an instrument of power. However, this merger with the state administration may be their point of vulnerability as they are also dependent on maintaining their position in power for their very existence or organisational stability, and may have a difficult time when they lose levers of administrative control. On the other hand, the opposition may consist of a multitude of small unstable groups lacking consistent and clear policy platforms and stable constituencies, rather than competing for the protest vote and trying to take advantage of the weaknesses of incumbent authorities. People are thus cynical about political parties, considering them as machines that vie for power rather than truly representing their interests. One of the most notable expressions of this mistrust towards the political class was the insistence of Euromaidan activists during the 2014 protests on distancing themselves from all political parties and their leaders, because they were presumed to be corrupt organisations by definition. This contrasts with the 2004 'Orange

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Source: Institute for Public Policy, www.ipp.md.

Revolution', when Victor Yushchenko and his Our Ukraine party still attracted the broad enthusiasm of protesters. But this party did not survive for long, and disappeared as a political force by 2010.

Arguably, the decline of political parties, including the crisis of their public credibility, is also a problem faced by many established democracies of the West. Here, the negative trend expresses itself in the strengthening of new populist parties with extreme right or left agendas, narrowing the political space for moderate established parties. In the countries discussed, however, there have never been any 'established parties' to begin with, and the behaviour and public rhetoric of most important parties could always be described as 'populist' – at least, when they were in opposition.

In Georgia, the trend to create dominant parties of power, always inspired by their leaders' personalities. The first of such parties, the Citizen's Union of Georgia, was built around the personality of Eduard Shevardnadze after he had already established himself as the country's leader. The same is true of Georgia's Revival Union, built around Aslan Abashidze, the Adjaran regional leader. Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) and Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream (GD), on the other hand, originated as broad opposition movements. However, as parties of power, all of them acted in a similar manner, being a tool of political dominance over all branches of state governance, and often constitutional majorities in parliament. Following the 2016 elections, GD outperformed all its predecessors, gaining more than three-quarters of parliamentary seats. All of them, except for UNM, disappeared as soon as they lost power and their leaders left the political scene.

In Ukraine and Moldova, attempts to create stable parties of power were less successful. President-led parties, namely Leonid Kuchma's *For United Ukraine!* (as well as his *People's Democratic Party* and *Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (united)*), Victor Yushchenko' *Our Ukraine*, Victor Yanukovych's *Party of the Regions*, and *Petro Poroshenko's Bloc* obtained pluralities in parliament (the largest share of votes, but never majorities), so they had to create parliamentary coalitions. In Moldova, only the Communist party had stable parliamentary majorities between 2001-09.

The public personalities of major leaders might have been associated with their political records or charismatic personalities (such as Victor Yushchenko in Ukraine, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia), but there is also a growing trend of building new parties around the economic power of rich individuals or oligarchs. In Moldova, Vladimir Plahotniuc, who is often described as possibly the richest individual in the country, came to lead the Democratic Party (PDM) that since the beginning of 2016 has been in control of the Moldovan government. He is believed to effectively coordinate government activities without occupying any official or elected position. Control over the government took place during 2015-16, when Plahotniuc's party absorbed defected MPs from rival partner and opposition parties. This allowed the Democratic party, outside an electoral exercise, to increase the number of MPs from 19 to 41 in two years. In Ukraine, President Petro Poroshenko is also described as one of the oligarchs, albeit not the wealthiest one. Other oligarchs are actively involved in supporting or opposing

the regime and different political figures. It is widely believed in Ukraine that building strong political forces without at least some support from oligarchic groups is very difficult. In Georgia, the Georgian Dream party was created by Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is by far the wealthiest person in the country; although he is not formally in charge of it, he is widely believed to be its main unifying force capable of defining its direction if he so wishes.

This oligarchisation of the political process may be considered to be both an *expression* of political party weakness, and a factor that contributes to the further erosion of public trust towards this key institution of democracy. It shows that society has insufficient mobilisation, cohesion and social and economic capital to support independent political organisations, and the void may be filled by wealthy individuals that replace social groups as powers that either stay at the helm or are behind political parties. But if political parties become the instruments of rich individuals or groups, this gives citizens good reason not to trust them.

Being personalistic, oligarchic, and clientelist, the parties usually lack a clear ideological or programmatic vision. The Communist parties in Ukraine and Moldova may be partial exceptions. In these countries (but not in Georgia), Communist parties and old *nomenklatura* networks were successful at maintaining relatively strong successor organisations. They did not have the agenda of fully restoring Communist-like economic order and accepted the democratic rules of political competition, but their symbolic affiliation with a supposedly more orderly and affluent Communist past gave them a somewhat distinct ideological profile, while linkage to the networks of the former *nomenklatura* helped preserve relative organisational stability. In Ukraine, the Communist party was a strong organised parliamentary force until 2014, and in the 1990s it had the strongest factions in Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) – although other parties in cooperation with independent MPs created parliamentary majorities that excluded Communists. The Socialist party, a more centralist offspring of the CPU, was also influential in the 1990s and up to 2006. However, they never came close to obtaining power. In Moldova, the Communist party was actually in power between 2001-09 but the influence of Communist parties in both countries tended to decline over time, while in Ukraine it was outlawed for allegedly supporting Russian aggression in the east.

Most other parties do not have coherent ideological profiles. They tend to combine campaigning on issues of social justice during elections with centre-right policies when in office. In lieu of the clear programmatic distinctions that tend to characterise parties in the West, differences between parties tend to be identity-based and geopolitical. On the one hand are supporters of the European (or generally pro-Western) policies who usually tend to be stronger supporters of national independence, who are in conflict with those who are sceptical of the idea of European integration and tilt towards stronger cooperation with Russia. This is more obvious in Ukraine and Moldova. In Ukraine, traditionally, the east and the south vote differently from the west and the north, with the latter part being sovereignist and pro-European. Public opinion polls also confirm this divide: there was never majority support for NATO membership, and quite divided attitudes towards EU integration. However, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the effective control of part of Donbass by Russian-backed separatist forces – the provinces that happened to be most supportive of pro-Russian trends, as well as

popular outrage about Russia's aggressive policies, has tilted the political balance towards Europe.[27]

Despite its image, the Communist party in Moldova was balancing between policies of accommodation with Russia and coming closer to Europe, while the Socialist party (now represented in power by President Igor Dodon) takes an openly Eurosceptic and pro-Moscow line. The pro-European flank is represented by a group of parties that coalesce to create cabinets, as they have done since 2009. In recent years, the Democratic party (PDM) has become the strongest of them. At present, the pro-Moscow line in Moldova is the strongest among the three countries, which is probably caused by inefficiency and numerous corruption scandals typical of coalition cabinets that are controlled by parties supportive of EU integration. Uneasy cohabitation, and even allegedly occasional coordination, between pro-Russian President Dodon and the pro-European cabinet epitomises the shaky geopolitical balance.[28]

In Georgia, the constituency of pro-Russian forces is the smallest of the three. Since the second half of the 1990s, support for pro-Western policies, potentially also for EU and NATO policies, have become the point of national consensus that no party of any consequence challenged. For the UNM government, support for pro-Western policies became their signature issue. Public opinion polls have showed stable and solid majorities in favour of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. After the August 2008 war, the informal taboo about open support for pro-Russian positions was broken, probably due to disappointment with insufficient Western support during and after the 2008 war, a backlash against the 'westernising' reforms of Mikheil Saakashvili's government, and Russia's new policies of active support for pro-Russian political and civil society groups. So far, however, this has not led to radical changes in Georgia's political landscape. One openly pro-Russian party, the Patriot's Alliance, barely cleared the 5% barrier to enter the Georgian parliament following the 2016 elections. However, polls also show that the number of supporters for Eurasian over European integration grew to about 25%, and is especially high among Armenian and Azeri ethnic minorities.[29]

The political party scene is also influenced by electoral legislation, namely the balance between majoritarian (single-mandate constituency seats). In Ukraine, this balance has never become the point of contention between different political parties, save for the 1994 elections (when elections were based on single-mandate constituencies) and the 2006-07 elections (based on the PR principle), the 50/50 principle has been working, with half of the 450 seats elected through proportionate representation, and the other half in single-mandate constituencies). This system is still in place, despite some pressure to change to a purely proportionate system with open candidate lists. The parties of power tended to have some advantages in single-

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[27] See http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=713&page=1&y=2017.

[28] Expert-Grup, "State of the Country Report 2017" (http://expert-grup.org/en/biblioteca/item/1482-raport-de-stare-a-tarii-2017).

[29] Laura Thornton–NDI Georgia, Koba Turmanidze–CRRC Georgia, "Public attitudes in Georgia. Results of a November 2016 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia" (https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_November%202016%20poll_Issues_GEO_vf.pdf).

constituency districts and gave preference to strengthening that component of the electoral system.

In Moldova, the proportional electoral system had been in place since early the 1990s, but in 2017 it changed to a mixed system whereby 50 of 101 MPs are elected, as before, through party lists, and 51 from single-mandate constituencies. This change, adopted despite protests from the opposition and civil society, and ignoring recommendations from the Council of Europe and the EU, was supported by the Democratic party and the Socialists, the two parties that control, respectively, the cabinet and the presidency. This confirms the trend that incumbent parties hope to benefit more than opposition parties from the majoritarian or first-past-the-post elections in single-mandate constituencies.

In the case of Georgia, the mixed system had been used in all elections, except for 1992. In 1995-2004, the number of seats apportioned by the proportional system exceeded that of single-mandate constituencies, but after the number of seats was reduced to 150, the system was about 50/50. The majoritarian component strongly favoured the parties in power and was considered the main reason for the creation of parliamentary supermajorities. As a result, the opposition and pro-democracy groups advocated the introduction of a fully proportionate system, while incumbent parties supported the status quo. In 2016, the ruling GD obtained 48% of the vote according to party lists, but having carried nearly all single-mandate constituencies, won 117 out of 150 parliamentary seats. During the next overhaul of the constitutions in 2017, the GD majority agreed to switch to a purely PR system, but this change will only come into force after the next parliamentary elections expected in 2020.

The chief cause for concern is that changes within the political landscape show little sign of improvement. Parties continue to rely on personalities and most important ones increasingly rely on the political interests of plutocrats. In Moldova, the geopolitical division between pro-Russian and pro-European outweighs all other public policy considerations, and the former tends to be currently on the rise. Georgia is still prone to creating dominant parties with parliamentary supermajorities. The public is even more disillusioned with its political class. Substantive progress towards the consolidation of democracy in all three countries is hardly possible without the development of strong political parties that convince citizens of their ability and willingness to represent their interests, and distinct political agendas that allow for an improvement standard of living.

8.   Revolutionary and rule-based forms of political competition

Lack of trust in the political class and the resulting scepticism about the validity of procedural democracy that may be 'captured' by oligarchic interests results in the general weakness of representative democracy institutions on the one hand, and a greater readiness to revert to forms of direct democracy, such as mass rallies and acts of civil resistance that might oust the government. The relatively high legitimacy of such methods of political struggle is partly justified by popular mistrust about the integrity of procedures of electoral democracy and political parties, as well as the practices of incumbent governments that often question the

very legitimacy of opposition groups and use selective justice procedures to prevent their most dangerous opponents from taking part in the political process. This gives credence to claims that a mobilised public may serve as a more authentic representative of the will of the people than the latter's duly elected representatives. In practice, this expresses itself in unconstitutional changes of power, or in attempts at such changes.

This problem is much more pronounced in Georgia and Ukraine than in Moldova. In both former countries, power changed twice through unconstitutional means. In Georgia, the first democratically elected president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was ousted in a bloody popular rebellion or coup in January 1992. This was succeeded by a deep crisis of legitimacy, a break-down of statehood, and civil war, from which the country took years to recover. The second such episode occurred in November 2003, when broad popular protests caused by blatantly rigged parliamentary elections forced President Shevardnadze to resign: this came to be known as the 'Rose Revolution'. This time, the protest took the form of peaceful civil resistance, while after the president's resignation the processes swiftly resumed the constitutional mould, and the incoming UNM government carried out reforms that led to the strengthening of political institutions and much more efficient government.

While the peaceful character of the Rose Revolution conditioned its generally positive image in the collective memory, it failed to consolidate a system whereby only constitutional methods of fighting for power were considered acceptable. In 2007 and 2009 the Georgian opposition – alleging that the autocratic nature of Mikheil Saakashvili's rule made it impossible to change government through elections – tried to replicate the Rose Revolution methods by mobilising a broad peaceful protest movement, but without success. While in October 2012 the GD coalition came to power peacefully through elections, before that there were widespread expectations among both government and opposition supporters of a large post-election turmoil (with one side hypothetically refusing to accept their actual outcome). Despite the fully constitutional transfer of power, however, the winning GD government opened criminal cases against almost all leaders of the former government, including President Saakashvili) that many observers considered to be a political vendetta based on selective justice.[30] Currently, it is a popular opinion among supporters of the UNM, the strongest opposition party, that GD will not allow a peaceful transition of power, so sooner or later the mobilisation of street protests to that end may become necessary. This view is not widely shared, but neither is there consensus that only constitutional means of contesting power will be acceptable from now on.

In Ukraine, the 2004 'Orange Revolution' followed a scenario close to the then recent Georgian case: in allegedly rigged presidential elections Victor Yanukovych was declared winner in the run-off with Victor Yushchenko, which then led to protracted public protests that forced the government to declare the election results null and void and set a re-vote, won by Yushchenko. This was another example of successful peaceful resistance movement in support of

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[30] Denis Corboy, William Courtney and Kenneth Yalowitz, "Justice or Vengeance?", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 November 2012; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), The functioning of democratic institutions in Georgia, Resolution 2015 (2014).

democracy, and it did indeed bring about greater democratic pluralism and created hopes of democratic consolidation. However, as hopes generated by the Orange Revolution were frustrated due to lack of successful government reforms, by 2009 the support for pro-democracy forces dropped.[31] In 2010, Yushchenko lost elections and conceded power to Victor Yanukovych, and later his Party of the Regions also gained plurality in Parliament. The precedent of constitutional change of power was perceived by some scholars as an indicator of the consolidation of democracy, but such assessments proved premature. Yanukovych took a harder line, imprisoning his main political opponents, including Yulia Tymoshenko, his main rival in the 2010 elections. The second Maidan revolution of 2013-14 was much more dramatic: it was prompted by Yanukovych's decision to drop the plan of association with the EU in favour of joining the Russia-led Eurasian Union, led to armed clashes between the police and the protesters and ended up with President Yanukovych fleeing the country. This change of power also gave Russia a pretext to annex Crimea and instigate a separatist rebellion in the south-eastern Ukraine.

It remains to be seen whether the second Maidan revolution will after all lead to the consolidation of rules-based electoral democracy. However, there is no guarantee that political competition will remain within the limits of the law. This was indicated, for instance, by a September 2017 episode, when Mikheil Saakashvili, this time a Ukrainian opposition politician, forced his way, together with his supporters, through the Ukrainian border. He chose to do this because several weeks before President Poroshenko deprived him of his Ukrainian citizenship, allegedly on political rather than legal grounds. Several of the most popular Ukrainian opposition politicians supported Saakashvili's action and actually stood by his side, which showed that the episode may set the tone for the following political processes. The process continued by erecting a tent town in Kyiv, but at the time of writing the protesters only call for accelerating reforms rather than the resignation of the government.

The cases of Victor Yanukovych winning presidential elections in Ukraine in 2010, and of the GD defeating the UNM in Georgia in 2012 show that peaceful constitutional transitions of power from government to the opposition are possible in these countries. In both cases, these precedents were broadly welcomed as signs of imminent democratic consolidation. But the general tendency towards concentration of administrative resources by the incumbent government, the weakness of opposition parties and the weak rule of law hampers the creation of a level playing field for the government and opposition players, and undermines the trust of the citizens that governments may be voted out of power by routine procedures.

Moldova has never experienced an unconstitutional change of power. The change of power usually takes place through elections that according to ODIHR reports are considered generally free and fair, but in reality are influenced by the use of administrative, media and poorly accountable resources. The only case when Moldova was close to turmoil that could endanger the constitutional process was in 2009, when the youth riots in April reacted to the outcomes

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[31] http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=299&page=1&y=2009.

of elections of April 2009, when the Communist party gained 60 seats in the legislative.[32] The riots ended with violent persecution of the protesters by police and state security forces. This provoked public reaction that undermined the legitimacy of the Communist party and prompted political support for the so-called pro-European parties. This complicated the appointment of the country's president in the parliament that failed to obtain 61 votes and triggered early elections in July 2009, which became a departure point for all the pro-EU governing coalitions that have run the country since then.

In all three countries, the vast majority of people cherish stability and loathe any repetition of revolutionary turmoil. Currently, there are no indicators that any of the three countries may be moving towards another unconstitutional change of power. However, these societies have still not reached a stage described by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz as rule-based electoral democracy being 'the only game in town'.[33] The perception is still widespread that the incumbent government may manipulate the system in a way that does not allow the opposition a chance to meaningfully challenge their position in power. This provides legitimacy for agendas and tactics that imply a possibility of an extra-constitutional use of 'people power'. This weakens citizens' trust towards democratic political institutions, and continues a challenge to long term political stability of the country.

9.   Media, civil society, media, popular movements, social forces, religious groups

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine largely owe their image as mostly democratic countries to their vibrant and pluralistic civil society scene, which includes independent media and different popular movements. Generally, civil society actors are free to express their opinion, including harsh criticism of the governments in all three countries. Legislation does not on the whole create unnecessary hurdles for the functioning of such groups.[34] Moreover, at some point they may influence the process of political agenda-setting, or specific political decisions.

Civil society organisations frequently serve as a pool for political and civil service appointments, especially when pro-European pro-reform parties come to power. This sometimes allows them to pursue their agenda on a new level. For instance, the success of reforms after the Rose Revolution is often ascribed to the fact that most political teams pushing for reforms came from civil society organisations and brought with them fresh attitudes and bold visions. In Ukraine, NGO coalitions are active and creative in trying to push the reform agenda: "Reanimation

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[32] Resolution of the European Parliament of 300 April 2009 regarding the situation in Moldova (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B6-2009-0264+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en).

[33] J.J. Linz and A. Stepan (1996), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe*, Latin America and post-communist Europe, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

[34] However, there is a growing pressure on anticorruption NGOs in Ukraine that now must report on their income in the e-assets declaration system together with highest officials and politicians. In the case of Moldova, there were some attempts to limit the activity of the NGOs that receive funds from abroad, which were dropped as a result of civil society's opposition, supported by the donor community.

Package of Reforms" is the latest such initiative.[35] In Georgia, an NGO the *Es shen gekheba* ("This affects you") coalition was active in the last period of UNM rule and sometime afterwards, pushing for specific demands in the area of human rights with occasional success in influencing government policies. In December 2016 Ii Moldova, the joint actions of civil society prevented the adoption of the draft law allowing tax and capital amnesty, which would have legalised illegally obtained wealth while encouraging further illicit practices.[36] Signing Association Agreements with the EU boosted civic activism in each of the three countries, where civil society platforms and domestic advisory groups largely focus on advocating and monitoring reforms linked to the Europeanisation process. This contrasts sharply with most other post-Soviet countries where increasingly restrictive and repressive laws are instituted that treat NGOs and independent media as subversive forces that may also be unwelcome agents of foreign influence.

The role of civil society during the 2004 'Orange Revolution' and the 2013-14 'Revolution of Dignity' were high points that showed the power of civil society in Ukraine. The same is true of the role of Georgia's civil society during the 2003 'Rose Revolution'. Civil society played an important role by setting the agenda for the protest movements, mobilising citizens' participation, keeping the movement within the limits of peaceful civil resistance, and demonstrating a high level of organisation and resilience during the lengthy stand-off between the government and the public. In the case of the 2013-14 Ukrainian movement, especially when political parties were deliberately sidelined, the spontaneous self-organisation of civil society played a decisive role in the success of the movement.

Yet several structural weaknesses challenge civil society in these countries. Civil society organisations mostly depend on external players and communicate less effectively with local constituencies, making them insufficiently embedded in the wider society.[37] Many citizens perceive civil society organisations as elite groups with links to foreign donors, which makes it easier for governments to ignore their demand for reform. Moreover, the image of civil society as a force promoting foreign, namely European agendas is used by conservative, often Church-related and pro-Russian groups, to discredit them and resist their liberal calls for anti-discrimination legislation, for example.

While the media is generally free and pluralistic in all three countries, its ownership structure is problematic. In Ukraine, most influential media outlets belong to the big oligarchs that hold media pluralism hostage to their competing political interests. In Georgia, where there is no pluralism of oligarchs, most popular media organisations fall under government influence, which curbs public access to different sources of information and opinion. One of the most important points of criticism against Mikheil Saakashvili's rule in Georgia was that since 2008, the three top TV companies were subservient to the government view. Currently, the situation

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[35] See information on the coalition at http://rpr.org.ua/en/.

[36] Legal Resources Centre from Moldova, December 2016 (http://www.crjm.org/en/amnistia-fiscala-si-de-capital-republica-moldova/).

[37] K. Smagliy, "A Wake Up Call for Ukraine's Civil Society", Kennan Cable No. 25 (https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no25-wake-call-for-ukraines-civil-society).

is better since Rustavi-2, one of the two most popular TV companies, informally affiliated to the strongest opposition party, and is strongly critical of government policies. The authorities appear resolved to take control of the company through a proxy businessman who claims it was unlawfully deprived of ownership in the past. The legal process has signs of political bias, and only intervention by the European Court of Human Rights has suspended the process of company takeover.[38]

Though less pronounced, the trend of leading political parties trying to take control of main media outlets is also true of Moldova. The most powerful Democratic party has built a powerful media empire directly covering, or via proxies, four TV channels (Prime, Publika TV, Canal 2 and 3) with national coverage, including radio stations, online and to a lesser extent the printed press. Other parties have their own media organisations but not nationwide TV companies, which wield the greatest influence over public opinion. For the survival of independent media, the advertising market plays a decisive role, but approximately 50-60% of this market is controlled by the most powerful oligarch of the country, the Democratic party leader Vladimir Plahotniuc. Even the recent amendments to the Audiovisual Code that limit the ownership of licences to two are avoided by transferring the control of media institutions to various proxies.

In sum, while all three countries enjoy a relatively high level of media pluralism, with citizens for the most part having access to various opinions, media freedom is without solid grounds and is vulnerable to political intervention. The internet is fairly free in all three countries and is increasingly influential for young and educated people. Television remains the most powerful media, however, and control of the most popular national TV networks offer considerable advantage to specific political players. Without equal access to this most influential media, there is no level playing field for different political actors.

Religious organisations may also play a role, but the situation in all three countries is different. In Ukraine, there is a split between two major Orthodox denominations: one is led by Kiev Patriarchy, is independent from Moscow and strived to be represented an autocephalic Orthodox Church, the other is subordinate to Moscow Patriarchy (most Orthodox Ukrainians belong to this Church). The split is highly politicised: the Kiev Patriarchy is supported Victor Yushchenko and generally pro-Western political forces, earning political support in return, while Victor Yanukovych and his Party of the Regions had a similar relationship with Moscow Patriarchy-oriented groups. After Euromaidan, new ruling groups planned to adopt legislation aimed at limiting the activities of churches whose leadership was based in an "aggressor state", which implies Russia – a step that may be a blow to a Moscow-subordinated Orthodox Church in Ukraine.[39]

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[38] Luis Navarro, "Georgia's Back and Forth Freedom Marches: The Case of Rustavi-2", Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), 7 March 2017 (http://www.fpri.org/article/2017/03/georgias-back-forth-freedom-marches-case-rustavi-2/).

[39] Paul Goble, "Ukrainian Legislation about Religion Will Finalize Divorce between Kyiv and Moscow", *Euromaidan Press*, 19 May 2017 (http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/05/19/ukrainian-legislation-about-religion-will-finalize-divorce-between-kyiv-and-moscow-euromaidan-press/).

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There is similar division in Moldova, where there is the Metropolis of Moldova (Moldovan Orthodox Church), which is affiliated to the Russian Orthodox Church, and another Orthodox religious organisation subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Church. The former is much more powerful and politically active, however. The Metropolis of Moldova tacitly supported the pro-Eurasian (in effect, pro-Russian), anti-European Igor Dodon's candidacy for president,[40] and promised to revoke the anti-discrimination law adopted in May 2012. On the other hand, Dodon's Socialist party presents itself as a champion of traditional family values, claiming that European integration threatens these values and calling on Moldovans to embrace Eurasian civilisation.[41] In addition, the same Church opposed anti-discrimination legislation as it allegedly 'promoted' homosexuality, citing it as an indication of Europe promoting 'immorality' in its neighbourhood. The latest gesture of Igor Dodon is the signature of the CIS Declaration of 11 October 2017 promoting traditional family values.

In Georgia, the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) is the single dominant religious organisation. It is strongly linked to Georgia's national identity and its privileged status is legally established through a 2002 Constitutional Agreement between GOC and Georgian state. GOC's official position is that it supports Georgia's European integration. However, many members of the clergy, including those close to the top of the hierarchy, view European integration policies as a threat to public morality and indigenous Georgian culture. For instance, the Church actively opposed anti-discrimination legislation because it included clauses prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Moreover, a number of NGOs are affiliated to the Church or claim to be defending traditional religious values. Such organisations (that may fall under the category of 'uncivil society') often use violence to attack representatives of minority religious denominations or groups that promote liberal values, especially the rights of LGBT community.

10. External policies and influences

All three countries have long experienced two types of external influences – from Europe and from Russia. This implies not just general geopolitical competition, but also impacts on the trajectory of development of domestic political institutions. Very few players can compete with these two. The US is also an important actor, but its general policies towards this region, including efforts at democracy promotion, are indistinguishable from those of the European Union, and local actors often conflate them into a general vision of 'the West'. However, the EU's EaP and AA institutional frameworks make it the chief democracy-promoter in these countries.

While these two vectors were also perceived as competing and pushing the countries in opposite directions in the 1990s, this competition gradually became more confrontational in

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[40] Denis Cenușa, "Geopolitical Games Expected Ahead of Moldova's 2018 Elections", 10 October 2017 (https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/10/geopolitical-games-expected-ahead-moldovas-2018-elections/).

[41] Dionis Cenușa, "European values versus traditional values and geopolitical subtext in Moldova", IPN, 29 May 2017 (http://www.ipn.md/en/integrare-europeana/84125#).

the 2000s. The first impetus to this trend was given by the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine of 2003 and 2004. While the West generally welcomed them as legitimate expressions of people power in protest at electoral fraud and to support the domestic forces of reform, Russia's leadership perceived the same events as Western conspiracy to install anti-Russian regimes in its immediate neighbourhood, thereby creating a model and precedent for similar 'regime change' in their own countries. Thus, for Russia's political elite, the advance of democracy in its neighbourhood acquired geopolitical significance, with democracy promotion by Western actors being perceived as hostile anti-Russian acts.

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and Russia's hostile acts towards Ukraine in 2014-17 following the 'Revolution of Dignity' was the next step in which Russia punished Georgia for its attempts to join NATO and Ukraine for its choice to associate itself with Europe. Trade sanctions applied to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in response to the signature and ratification of the AA/DCFTA by these countries were also a form of punishment, albeit a milder one.

Table 4. Support for different foreign policy options, percentages

	Georgia[42]	Moldova[43]	Ukraine[44]
EU integration	62	39.4	53
Eurasian Integration	23	39.9	18

The effect of Russia's actions was that efforts aimed at democratic development in the three countries of the EaP that chose the path of European integration became "geopoliticised". While Europe is the chief democracy promoting actor in the eastern European AA region, Russian political elites consider the same countries as geopolitical battlefields, where the possible success of democratic reforms is only understood as an attempt to undermine Russia's interests in the region. Russia therefore acts as a spoiler rather than as a country providing an alternative model of development: it aims to discredit the very idea of Europe-inspired democratic reforms and the political forces associated with this policy direction.

Hence it is Russia's priority to counter European efforts by strengthening the pro-Russian actors in the three countries. On the political level, it is most successful in Moldova where president Dodon and his Socialist party openly prefer Eurasian to European integration. However, the success of this party can be explained not so much by Russia's efforts as by the collapse of public support for the notionally pro-European parties that were discredited by corruption, bank fraud and the overall poor performance of the governing coalitions controlled by these parties. In Ukraine, Russia's aggressive behaviour since 2014 undermined its influence on the

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[42] Laura Thornton and David Sichinava, "Public attitudes in Georgia, Results of a June 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia" (https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20poll_june%202017_ISSUES_ENG_VF.pdf).

[43] Institute for Public Policy, *Barometer of Public Opinion*, April 2017 (www.ipp.md).

[44] *Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Ukraine (April 21 – May 5, 2017)*, conducted by International Republican Institute, Rating Group Ukraine and the Center for Insights in Survey Research, accessed online (checked on 4 November 2017) (http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2017-may-survey-of-residents-of-ukraine_en.pdf).

Ukrainian political scene, but the government's poor performance can also be used by Russia for political purposes. In Georgia, the openly pro-Russian political forces are relatively weak, but the relative increase in support for the option of Eurasian (rather than European) integration still implies that Russia can have levers within Georgia as well.

Apart from political parties, Russia uses alliances with civil society, media and religious groups to promote its agenda. In all three countries, Orthodox Churches (in Moldova and Ukraine, those directly affiliated with Moscow Patriarchy) are considered open or tacit allies of Russia. Russia also tries to support pro-Russian media-organisations, websites, and civil society groups.

It is also notable that ethnic minority-populated areas often tend to be less supportive of the European integration path than overall population. For instance, during an unconstitutional referendum held in February 2014, approximately 98% of Gagauzian voters in Moldova supported integration with the Russian-led Customs Union.[45] Armenian and Azeri-populated areas in Georgia are also less supportive of the EU and NATO integration projects, although the difference here is less marked.[46] This is an additional reason for Russia to focus its 'soft power' policies on ethnic minorities in the pro-Western neighbours (although 2014 Russian intervention in the regions of Ukraine that were least supportive of the country's pro-Western policies went beyond 'soft power' methods).

Nevertheless, the principal success factor in all of these propaganda and disinformation efforts is the failure of democratic and good governance reforms in Association Agreement countries. While Russia has some geopolitical levers such as influencing conflicts in the east of Ukraine or 'frozen conflicts' in Georgia and Moldova, it is the success or failure of reforms that determines the influence of these competing world views.

11.   Concluding remarks

The state of democratic development in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine allows for both pessimistic and optimistic conclusions. The three countries face significant, and differing structural problems in their democratic development, but there are major similarities.

Nation-building processes in each country have been challenged by minorities disagreeing about their place and status within emerging nation states and/or the external manipulation of these disagreements, which led to violent conflicts, and the reality of 'frozen' or (in Ukraine) 'semi-frozen' conflicts and secessionist movements. None of the countries managed to create a reasonable distance between economic and political elites, such that being close to power almost becomes a necessary condition of gaining wealth, and the super-rich often succeed in converting their economic resources into political power, thus becoming 'oligarchs'.

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[45] Radio Free Europe (https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-gagauz-referendum-counting/25251251.html).

[46] In an April 2017 poll, 54 percent of respondents in minority areas supported Georgia's policy to join the EU, against 80 percent nation-wide. See Laura Thornton and Koba Turmanidze, *Public attitudes in Georgia Results of a April 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia*.

Corruption and state capture have become endemic in political regimes, although since 2004 Georgia has had more success than others in tackling that challenge. Trust in state institutions is rather low: only a fraction of people believe that they are doing good job at providing public goods, and only a minority in each country agree that their countries go in the right direction.

The institutions of electoral democracy are not fully trusted either: while there have been precedents of power change through elections in each of the three countries, such changes have not become routine, and in some cases peaceful or not so peaceful revolutions were needed to oust unpopular governments. Still, there is no consensus among the major political players (in Georgia and Ukraine) that elections are the only legitimate means to gain political power. Such scepticism about electoral democracy is caused by the absence of fair political competition, due to the incumbent authorities' propensity to monopolise political control, harass and delegitimise the opposition, apply selective justice, take control of the most influential media outlets, and other undemocratic practices.

The public is generally supportive of democratic institutions and occasionally displays an enormous capacity to mobilise for democratic causes – but has so far failed to develop a robust network of intermediate institutions, such as stable political parties or broad public associations that could articulate, represent and advocate for interests of different segments of society. As a result, the ongoing political competition is mainly between charismatic (or super-rich) personalities and broad identity-based geopolitical orientations rather than between political visions and platforms. There is no public consensus on values of diversity, pluralism and tolerance of minority cultures or lifestyles, with influential social groups such as Orthodox Churches promoting openly illiberal agendas.

There are also genuine grounds for optimism, however. Despite autocratic trends, all three countries have proved resilient in preserving relatively high levels of political and media pluralism, and more or less competitive political environments. There has been significant progress in specific areas of political reforms. Constitutions (if not necessarily constitutional processes) generally satisfy modern democratic principles, even if parties in power tend to tailor them to their political interests.

Despite active propaganda and disinformation from illiberal and anti-Western groups and organisations, liberal democracy continues to be the only normative reference for most political actors. Civil society, while insufficiently rooted in the broader public, has been active, vibrant, relatively well-organised and successful in setting agendas for reform, occasionally influencing political decisions. As a result, while the political regimes in all three countries have never reached the point of democratic consolidation, they are considered by most observers to be freer than any other successor-states of the Soviet Union (with the exception of the Baltic states), and closer to being democracies than autocracies.

The European dimension has been an extremely important factor for the continuous democratisation of all three countries. Despite competition between European and Eurasian identities, each of them ultimately considers itself to be a European country. The choice to pursue the path of association with Europe, which the countries made despite obvious political

risks (especially momentous in the case of Ukraine) is the best proof of their genuine commitment to the European path of development. This gives the EU considerable leverage in these countries, which has been used to urge them to carry out democratic reforms, or – at the very least – to limit autocratic trends.

In the future too, the EU can play a very important, if not decisive role in helping these countries consolidate their democratic systems. However, with Association Agreements having been concluded, visa-free regimes granted, and the EU reluctant to extend a membership perspective to these countries, there is a shortage of incentives that the EU can use to back up its democracy-promotion efforts. In order to keep up momentum for the process of reforms, it is vital that the EU develop a clearer forward-looking strategy towards the emerging AA-DCFTA region in its eastern neighbourhood, including convincing incentives for the further Europeanisation of these countries.

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