

The Birth of Nations:  
Understanding Variation in Political Development  
Across Post-Communist States

by

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**Abstract**

Since the collapse of communism in the early 1990s, researchers have sought to understand the variations in political development across post-communist Europe and Central Asia. However, much of the existing research focuses only on the outcomes of specific countries within the post-communist space or specific regions, such as former Soviet Union states. There are many compelling findings from these works; however, the existing research designs, which utilize small-N structures over narrow temporal ranges are ill suited to identify generalizable features of political outcomes and patterns across the entire post-communist region. In this project, I employ a large-N cross-sectional time series data structure to explore the relationship between the post-communist states and democracy. This research design allows for deriving more generalizable conclusions across the post-communist space. Future research should move in the direction of a wider temporal range and empirically testing for a broader set of factors influencing the political development of post-communist states.

## Introduction

World history has seen a plethora of empires rise and fall, states assemble and dissolve, and regimes transition between both poles of the polity spectrum. In the last century alone, the world has seen the dissolution of empires. The twentieth century began with collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Following World War II colonies gained independence from their Western European sovereigns. Most recently, the Cold War brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union, and communist rule dissolved across the Baltic States, Eastern and Central Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Today, post-communist states display a paradox of political and economic development. Some countries in the post-communist space, like Slovenia and Estonia are highly developed democracies, while others, like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are poorly developed, fully authoritarian regimes.

For example, in Estonia, citizens have long enjoyed the benefits of democracy, such as the freedoms to associate, to vote, a free press, an independent judiciary, and fair elections, to name a few (“Estonia”). Meanwhile, across the Caucasus in Central Asia, citizens experience life much differently. In Uzbekistan, the Communist Party effectively remains in control of the government, as the President is the former leader of the nation’s Communist Party, and has remained in office since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (“Uzbekistan”). The stark differences between these two countries, and the 26 in between them on the spectrum between democracy and autocracy, beg the question of why some countries were able to transition into full democracies while some remain authoritarian regimes.

Researchers taking a variety of approaches have previously addressed this question of political transitions in the post-communist sphere. This project builds off of Pop-Eleches (2007), who focuses on historical legacies as indicators of post-communist regime change, and will add

to the literature in three principal ways. The first is a broader temporal range, from 1991 to 2012. This expansion will be useful for testing the long-term effects of the three major categories of characteristics that determine regime type, and will also be useful for looking at whether or not some of the indicators Pop-Eleches tests endure over a greater period of time. The second contribution of this research is that it combines three categories of characteristics that are often examined independently of one another by scholars studying regime change across post-communist states.<sup>1</sup> The third contribution this project makes is a larger-N analysis of post-communist political development. Much of the existing literature focuses principally on former Soviet Union countries, a reduced sample of post-communist countries, or a single country within the post-communist space. Similar to Pop-Eleches (2007), this study looks at 28 ex-communist countries.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, compared to a small-N analysis, larger-N analyses yield more generalizable results given the longer temporal range and larger sample size of states.

I will begin with a discussion of the democratization literature as it applies to the post-communist states, after which I will discuss the three component categories that comprise my theoretical argument: the political climate of a state, the strategic role of geography, and economic factors. Within the discussions of these three categories, I articulate hypotheses that correspond to each category. After discussing the three categories and my hypotheses, I will address the concepts and measures used for this project. I will conclude with an analysis of the tests of my hypotheses, a summary of my findings, and suggestions for further research.

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<sup>1</sup> See Balaev (2009), Ioffe (2013), and Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012) for examples of studies that focus on a specific region or component category.

<sup>2</sup> I am excluding East Asian countries, such as China and North Korea, and Latin American countries, such as Cuba, following the logic Pop-Eleches (2007) employs, which is that the former are not yet “post-communist” states and the latter face a significantly different set of experiences. For example, Vachudova (2015) points out distinctions and preferences of Eastern and Central European citizens of political *and* economic rights versus a greater focus on economic rights in Latin America.

## **Democratization in Post-Communist States**

Post-communist states emerged in a highly integrated and institutionalized world where there was a tendency of other countries to be highly invested in the ideological trajectory of new states. Although countries have long been concerned with the political outcomes of other countries, by the 1990s the globalized world was connected by a network of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). Through interstate collaboration, these organizations produced international institutions, or “rules of the game,” that would regulate international relations. Several agencies in the new international system were, and still are, heavily involved in the political development of nations. Accession to the European Union (EU), for instance, cannot happen without domestic policy reforms, which are highly motivated by the incentives of EU membership, such as belonging to the economic community of the EU (Glencorse and Lockhart, 2010). Additionally, the EU has many programs that developing states may use as resources to facilitate democratization and meet accession criteria. Moreover, INGOs, such as Amnesty International, and their domestic counterparts have emerged as ways to spread democracy, human rights, act as watchdogs, and generally improve human welfare (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Murdie and Davis, 2011).<sup>3</sup>

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the collapse of Communism between 1989 and 1991 was the globalized world in which these states were now emerging, a world connected by commerce, trade, technology, greater ease of movement across countries and continents, and IGOs and INGOs like the EU, Amnesty International, and the United Nations. In contrast, after World War II when former Western European colonies were gaining their independence, the world was not nearly as integrated as it would be in 1990, and IGOs like the

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<sup>3</sup> The presence of IGOs and NGOs are important for understanding the political conditions and development of nation states. However, I exclude them from my theoretical argument and analysis for reasons I will address in the conclusion.

United Nations had only just been created. For perspective, between the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War, the number of UN member states had more than tripled ("Members, United Nations, Growth, History of Organization", n.d.), and the number of INGOs had more than doubled (Anheier, 2002).

The large number of institutions in the post-WWII era represented a greater availability of benefits and programs associated with these institutional memberships. The former Western European colonies were emerging when these benefits and programs were still developing and not the matured institutions they would be by the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. Furthermore, another feature of the 'new world' into which post-communist countries emerged was a far more socially, technologically, and economically developed and globalized world than the immediate post-WWII era.

These characteristics are useful to understand when considering what makes the development of post-communist states unusual from earlier post-imperial states entering the state system. However, the globalized 'new world' into which the post-communist states emerged was not enough for all of the states to have matching transitions. Vachudova (2015) articulates the distinction of what makes the post-communist transition unique by explaining that democratization was largely externally driven in this case, compared to earlier internally driven democratization efforts. According to Vachudova, this was contradictory to the expectations of democratization theory scholars of the time who posit that democratic transitions are contingent upon the ability of the middle class to push for democratic reforms, which will be motivated by income inequality. This internally driven expectation was not the case in post-communist states, because, as Vachudova claims, income inequality was not what compelled the citizens to take to the streets.

Ultimately, Vachudova asserts that the compelling goal for the post-communist states was to imitate Western prosperity. To an extent, addressing income inequality was arguably a byproduct of this goal, however the focus was reforms such as open markets, industrialization, and the political and social rights and freedoms enjoyed by Western democracies. A chief avenue by which achieving “Western prosperity” was possible for post-communist states was admission to the EU.

EU membership is just one consideration of the factors that might affect the political outcomes of post-communist states and one of several characteristics that distinguish political development in post-communist states from previous states to emerge into the international system. This new, highly institutionalized and globalized state system challenged the widespread traditional notions of democratization that domestic forces and calculations are responsible for the political outcomes of the state and outside actors have little or indirect influence over outcomes (Pevehouse, 2002).

The vast literature on democratization provides several characteristics shared by democracies. Full democracies, such as Estonia, have free and fair elections, checks on the executive, open markets and free trade, and freedoms like the freedom of press, religion, and movement etc. These freedoms and rights can only be enjoyed if the state apparatus has the means to carry out government policies, or state capacity, which Englehart (2009) defines as the “inverse of agency loss,” or the “willingness and capability of the state apparatus to carry out government policy” (167). Englehart emphasizes that state capacity does not speak to any particular government’s propensity or inclination towards democracy, nor, as he notes, does it speak to the popularity or tenure of a particular government. He finds that high state capacity leads to a greater ability to control public and private actors’ use of violence and the state will



suffer less agency loss. Therefore, on the one hand, a state with high capacity could be a very democratic state like Estonia, whose democratic features enable the government to carry out policy and provide channels through which citizens may appeal or express dissent of state policies. On the other hand, states can have high capacity, like Kazakhstan, and use their capacity to maintain an autocracy.

To summarize, understanding the development of post-communist countries is important to the literature on democratization because it is a large case that is very different from other political transitions (Vachudova, 2015). The international system into which the former communist states was very different from their counterparts in Africa and Asia who gained independence from European colonies in the aftermath of World War II. As Vachudova (2015) argues, the motivation to democratize for the ex-communist countries was markedly different from African and Asian colonies. Political change, regardless of whether it was democratic or autocratic, was more economically and externally driven. Therefore, in the following sections, I investigate the political, geographic, and economic factors that influence whether a country pursues democracy or settles with autocracy.

### **Category I: Political Conditions**

A good starting point for understanding the development of the post-communist states following the collapse of communism is the political conditions. First, different historical experiences of the post-communist states are important for indicating their present conditions. As Carl Sagan said, “You have to know the past to understand the present.” Therefore, before addressing the present political climate across the post-communist space, I will briefly discuss the historical political climate. An important distinction must first be made between what is “historical” here and what is “present.” I consider the “present” political climate to include the

transition period immediately following post-communist states in the 1990s up to the present. Meanwhile, the “historical” political climate includes the pre-communism period as well as the period during communism. This distinction is worthwhile to make because all of the post-communist states I examine experienced communist rule differently, including those within the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

The characteristics of the historical political climate as a determinate of regime type are heavily dependent upon the conceptualization and measurement “historical legacies” used by Pop-Eleches (2007) to measure the impact of historical legacies on regime change in post-communist countries. Pop-Eleches defines historical legacies as, “the structural, cultural, and institutional starting points of ex-communist countries at the outset of the transition” (910). It is important to note that the historical legacies Pop-Eleches examines do not include the *pre*-communist and communist pasts of the respective states, rather a brief snapshot during the transition from 1989 to 1991. The function of looking at historical legacies between 1989 and 1991, according to Pop-Eleches is to determine whether or not the “baggage” of emerging from a communist regime hinders the prospects of democracy for that state. Overall, Pop-Eleches finds a positive relationship in a bivariate analysis between democracy and geographic location, and democracy and modernization. However, in a multivariate regression analysis he did not find the same relationship, citing the limitations of small-N samples in cross-sectional regressions.

The limitations of small-N samples may account for Pop-Eleches’ claim that his analysis “does not provide a definitive answer to the question of which structural conditions matter most for the establishment of democracy in the region” (924), and that, “obviously, this argument does not imply that regime trajectories were predetermined by initial structural conditions” (909). This

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<sup>4</sup> See Tishkov (1997), Gleason (1991)

evaluation may be appropriate for his specific study, yet it seems to dismiss prematurely literature that *does* account for conditions most conducive to the establishment of democracy.

Artifacts of past experiences with democracy are structural conditions that affect future transition to democracy, such as the present political climate and past experiences with democracy like the findings of McFaul (2002) and Pevehouse (2002). McFaul and Pevehouse explore the significance of past experiences with democracy, and we know there are features of modern democracies that autocracies do not share. McFaul (2002) emphasizes the temporal path dependence that different historical contexts create to either accommodate or hinder democratization. Moreover, Pevehouse (2002) finds that past experiences with democracy have very significant effects on the likelihood for future transitions to democracy. The second motivation for looking at a broader time range is that countries within the communist space necessarily experienced communist rule differently. Communist states within the Soviet Union differed from those outside of the Soviet Union, and even within the Soviet Union there is evidence of variation in treatment of member states by Russia (Dagiev, 2013; Coates and Coates, 1951; Benningsen and Wimbush, 1985).

If countries across the post-communist space experienced communist rule differently, then it follows that they would also emerge from communism differently. For example, in 1940 the Red Army invaded Estonia and declared it a republic of the Soviet Union. Internationally, the occupation was treated as an illegal invasion and the annexation was not recognized (Mälksoo, 2003). During the occupation, Estonian diplomats and government executors continued to operate and carry out policy as agents of their “former” government (ibid). In contrast, countries like Tajikistan, a full autocracy, also experienced a fair degree of autonomy under communism, which is why the present political conditions within country itself are important.

The first present political condition worth considering is the system of the new state. In his comparison of different constitutional systems, Lijphart (1991) finds that parliamentary proportional representations should be given seriously considered for developing countries. His empirical findings indicate that parliamentary proportional representation systems are best for protecting minority interests, voter participation, and management of unemployment (81). By contrast, he finds that presidential systems are particularly problematic when it comes to societies with deep ethnic cleavages, which certainly characterizes large swathes of the post-communist space.

Ethnic cleavages across the post-communist space are particularly noteworthy in the case of former Soviet Union states, because of the USSR's policy of forced deportations. Conquest (1970) details the deportations of around 1.5 million ethnic minorities throughout the Soviet Union. The forced migrations were particularly problematic following the collapse of the Soviet Union when displaced persons were largely unable to return to their homes because other displaced persons were occupying them (Almond, 2014).

The forced deportations during the Soviet Union are somewhat caustic examples of social globalization, which is more commonly associated as a positive phenomenon. Cho (2013) finds empirical evidence that social globalization enhances a state's level of civil liberty, which she defines as, "the freedom of expression and civil association." Increases in civil liberty as a result of social globalization is important because the two components of her definition, freedom of expression and civil association, are commonly associated with more democratic states. Social globalization involves political, social, and cultural movement across borders so that people are exposed to perspectives and ideas that they would not otherwise encounter within their own country. The ability for citizens to move freely within their state and across their state's borders

is known as the freedom of foreign and domestic movement, one of the fundamental human rights articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Human rights are very important in looking at how democratic a state is (Demirel-Pegg and Moskowitz, 2009; Englehart, 2009; Cole, 2005). The relationship between democratization and human rights is difficult because of the problem of endogeneity: does a state's human rights practices democratize it or is the state respectful of human rights because it is a democracy? Evidence from Demirel-Pegg and Moskowitz (2009) suggests that the latter may be true. They find that the following the Cold War, less economically developed countries and transitioning regimes were subjected to lower levels of accountability regarding their human rights standards. For the states that began the process of EU accession immediately following the end of the Cold War, they were naturally held to higher standards because their human rights practices were taken into consideration as part of the political reforms necessary before becoming members.

EU membership is also an important factor to consider, as I briefly addressed earlier. The EU is not a universally accessible organization; therefore, while some states enjoy the spatial proximity necessary for consideration of EU membership, others are automatically precluded from consideration. For countries that are eligible to apply for membership, there are requisite standards that states must adopt before progressing in the membership process. Some of these standards include political criteria, such as, "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, [and] human rights," as well as economic criteria, such as a market economy and capacity to handle competitive markets ("Accession Criteria," 2012). Consequently, states that are eligible to apply for EU membership have much greater incentives to adopt these policy reforms than states that are not eligible to apply.

*Hypothesis 1a: States with parliamentary systems will be more democratic than states with presidential systems.*

*Hypothesis 1b: States with a high total international migrant stock will be more socially globalized and will therefore be more democratic.*

*Hypothesis 1c: States with higher respect for physical integrity rights will be more democratic than states with lower respect for physical integrity rights.*

*Hypothesis 1d: States that are members of the European Union will be more democratic than states that are non-EU members.*

## **Category II: Geography**

The strategic role of geography is ultimately a bridging category between categories one and two. I am considering the role of geography as the physical location of the 28 post-communist states in relation to their proximity to the capital city of one of the 28 member states of the European Union. More specifically, the strategic role of geography here does not speak to geographical *features* of a state, such as natural resources and arable land. The advantages of these geographic features will become apparent in the third category, economic development, where they will account for marketable goods and tradable resources. The only geographic *feature* that the strategic role of geographic will account for is whether or not a state is landlocked.

Whether or not a state is landlocked is important because non-landlocked states enjoy a greater flow of people, goods, and services through their ports. The benefit of ports speaks to the bridging nature of this category and represents two important aspects of development. The first is that it accommodates social globalization. Therefore, given that non-landlocked states are more likely to see a greater flow of people and goods through their ports, they are likely to experience

more social globalization than states do not experience this same kind of traffic.

There are, of course, democratic states that do not have coasts, but facilitate social and economic globalization in other ways. Both landlocked and non-landlocked democratic states influence a neighborhood effect. The neighborhood effect derives largely from the findings of Kopstein and Reilly (2000) who show that geographical proximity to the West has a positive effect on the transformation of communist states and geographic isolation in the East has prevented similar growth. They find that political and economic neighborhood effects are at work in both the economic and social development of post-communist states. Democratic neighbors and geographic proximity to the West result in the good neighbor and states outside of the West experience the neighbor effect in the inverse. Kopstein and Reilly's finding indicate that there is spatial-dependence across the entire post-communist set of states, but that spatiality exists on a continuum. States at the high end of the continuum, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, have the highest levels of political and economic development, therefore benefit the most from the good neighbor effect. In contrast, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan sit at the lowest end of the continuum and experience the inverse neighborhood effect. Furthermore, Kopstein and Reilly find statistical significance for states within these subregions.

Therefore, whereas the strategy of EU enlargement has been based on geographical contiguity and proximity, altering the context of East and Central Europe, states in Central Asia have not benefitted from this or any similar integration, and suffer from isolation and politically/economically unstable neighbors. Furthermore, post-communist states with greater geographic proximity to the West ostensibly enjoy easier access to regional trade and experience greater traffic through their borders. In contrast, Central Asian states, such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan are isolated by harsh terrain and not highly trafficked.

*Hypothesis 2a: Non-landlocked states will be more democratic.*

*Hypothesis 2b: States with a larger total area of agricultural land will be less democratic.*

*Hypothesis 2c: States with a greater geographic proximity to Western Europe will be more democratic than states closer to East Asia.*

### **Category III: Economic development**

One of the defining features of the communist economic agenda was that states behind the Iron Curtain would be economically interdependent, therefore the Soviet sphere of influence would be self-sustaining and consequently lack open markets or free trade. Trade openness allows the transnational transfer of goods and services, which invariably leads to the movement of individuals and their ideas and cultures across borders as well (Kopstein and Reilly, 2000).<sup>5</sup> Balaev (2009) emphasizes the importance of aligning international trade with globalization using the World Systems Theory (WST). The WST contends that a global capitalist system separates strong “core” states from weaker “periphery” ones and that trade is mostly, “structured for the interstate exploitation” when core states siphon resources from periphery states (339). Empirical testing of this abysmal relationship between core and periphery states in trade indicates that while there is a negative relationship between trade with core (hegemonic) states and periphery states (former Soviet Union states), the inverse is found to be true of general trade openness and periphery trade with other former Soviet states.

States or regions that do not trade openly or on free markets face several economic

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<sup>5</sup> What Kopstein and Reilly (2000) refer to as openness, I will henceforth be referring to as globalization, defined as a “historical process that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents. It involves a shift in social relations and interaction from more local to more global levels” (Goodhart, 430). Two commonly discussed types of globalization are social globalization (see Cole, 2013) and economic globalization (see Richards and Gelleny, 2002).



limitations. One such limitation is economic globalization. Richards and Gelleny (2002) define economic globalization as, “implementation of neoliberal economic policy reforms (e.g. deregulation and privatization policies) by governments and increase of worldwide flow of goods, services, labor, and capital” (56). As previously mentioned, a state’s geographic advantages, such as natural resources and arable land, will manifest in its economic development. However, if the inverse is true, and a state does not have many natural resources or much arable land, a reasonable expectation may be that the state instead invests in developing its human capital and strengthening its workforce.

Globalization is not the only avenue of economic development. Moreover, economic development does not always produce democratic outcomes. Pevehouse (2002) finds a negative relationship between economic development and democratic transitions, albeit with mixed degrees of statistical significance. Pevehouse also finds a weak relationship between GDP per capita and the probability of democratic transitions, noting that, “...authoritarian governments often come to power in the midst of economic crises,” therefore, “economic success can function to legitimate their continued existence, lessening the probability of a democratic transition” (538). Autocracies may also rely on resource wealth to generate legitimacy (Collier and Hoeffler, 2005; Ulfelder, 2007). If a state has an abundance of natural resources and relies less on trade than its less resource rich neighbors, then in addition to the legitimacy that an autocratic regime can glean from economic success, it is also able to restrict trade, and all the aforementioned attributes of trade.

***Hypothesis 3a:*** *States that are more democratic will have higher GDP per capita.*

***Hypothesis 3b:*** *States with more natural resource wealth will be less democratic.*

***Hypothesis 3c:*** *States with more agricultural land will be less democratic.*

## Concepts and Measures

Centuries of theoretical debates and decades of quantitative studies have shown that democracy is a difficult concept to measure. Pop-Eleches (2007) looks at how different components of historical legacies affect how democratic a state is. In his review of the literature on democratization, Pop-Eleches discusses the challenges of capturing a single measurement of democracy, given the variety of measures, standards, understandings of democracy. In an effort to ameliorate this dilemma, I will be using the Universal Democracy Score (UDS) for each country, formulated by Permstein et al. (2010), which produces a mean democracy score across ten different measurements of regime type.<sup>6</sup>

The variables I use to measure political conditions are: EU membership, OECD membership, whether the state has a presidential or parliamentary system, the level of respect for physical integrity rights, and the total international migrant stock as a percentage of the population. EU and OECD memberships are dichotomous variables, where 1 indicates membership and 0 indicates no membership. To measure a state's human rights score over time I use the physical integrity rights index from the Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI) human rights database. The physical integrity rights index is an additive index that combines indicators for torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment, and disappearance. Lastly, the value for the total international migrant stock comes from the World Bank's World Development Index.

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<sup>6</sup> The ten measures that Permstein et al. (2010) combine to create the UDS come from Arat (1991), Bowman, Lehoucq, and Mahoney (2005) (BLM), Bollen (2001), Freedom House (2007), Hadenius (1992), Przeworski et al. (2000) (PACL), Polity scores by Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr (2006), Polyarchy scale by Coppedge and Reinicke (1991), Gasiorowski's (1996) Political Regime Change measure (PRC), and Vanhanen (2003). See Permstein et al. (2010, 3). See Appendix 1 Figure 1 for a graph of the variation in this variable over time.

**Table 1. Summary Statistics**

| Variable                                  | Obsv. | Mean     | Std. Dev. | Min      | Max      |
|---|-------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Category I: Political Conditions</b>   |       |          |           |          |          |
| EU Member                                 | 589   | 0.167    | 0.373     | 0        | 1        |
| Political system                          | 563   | 0.557    | 0.497     | 0        | 1        |
| Physical Integrity<br>Rights Index        | 534   | 5.432    | 1.83      | 0        | 8        |
| International migrant<br>stock            | 535   | 7.401    | 5.937     | 0.315    | 22.917   |
| <b>Category II: Geography</b>             |       |          |           |          |          |
| (Non-) Landlocked                         | 589   | 0.553    | 0.498     | 0        | 1        |
| Distance to EU                            | 589   | 1930.063 | 2086.734  | 0        | 7730     |
| <b>Category III: Economic Development</b> |       |          |           |          |          |
| GDP per capita                            | 559   | 10864.41 | 7282.664  | 1040.256 | 30822.97 |
| Total natural<br>resources                | 488   | 9.081    | 15.75642  | 0.0628   | 89.329   |
| Agricultural land<br>(total area sq. km)  | 571   | 50.499   | 17.850    | 13.064   | 83.981   |

To understand the strategic role of geography I measure the physical distance between the capitals of the post-communist states to the nearest capital of an EU member state. There is not much variation on this variable, apart from when countries join the EU. For example, before 1995, Stockholm was the closest EU capital to Tallinn. When Finland joined the EU in 1995, Helsinki became the closest EU capital. Likewise, when Romania joined the EU in 2004, the closest capital to Ulaanbaatar switched from Berlin to Bucharest. I also include whether or not the state is landlocked or not in a dichotomous variable (1 if landlocked and 0 if not). Given that there is no variation in this variable, it cannot be included in the fixed effects model because it is perfectly collinear with the country dummies.

For the third category, economic factors, I use the state's GDP per capita, total natural resources as a percentage of overall GDP, and total agricultural land from the World Bank's World Development Index to measure the relationship between economic factors and

democratization. Similar to the EU distance and landlocked variables, there is not much variation in total agricultural land. However, it does vary somewhat from year to year within country, and so it does not drop from the fixed effects model.<sup>7</sup>

## Discussion and Conclusion

Table 2 illustrates the times series cross-sectional regression results for the models I used. Model one uses random effects with robust standard errors and model two uses fixed effects, with country dummies not reported in Table 2.

| <b>Category I: Democracy and Political Conditions</b>   |                               |                              |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | <b>(1)<br/>Random Effects</b> | <b>(2)<br/>Fixed Effects</b> |
| EU Member   | .028<br>(.0457)               | .043**<br>(.0457)            |
| Political system  | -.185<br>(.114)               | -.151*<br>(.106)             |
| Lagged Physical Integrity Rights Index                  | .029**<br>(.012)              | .022*<br>(.012)              |
| International migrant stock                             | -.022**<br>(.01)              | -.030*<br>(.012)             |
| <b>Category II: Democracy and Geography</b>             |                               |                              |
| (Non-) Landlocked                                       | -.067<br>(.204)               | -.029<br>(.0126)             |
| Distance to EU  | -.00007***<br>(.00004)        | -.00002***<br>(.00005)       |
| <b>Category III: Democracy and Economic Development</b> |                               |                              |
| GDP per capita  | 4.24e-06<br>(7.24e-06)        | 7.39e-07<br>(8.02e-06)       |
| Total natural resources                                 | -.0025**<br>(.00087)          | -.002**<br>(.0008)           |
| Agricultural land (total area sq. km)                   | -.013**<br>(.0037)            | -.020**<br>(.004)            |
| Constant  | 1.230***<br>(.295)            | 1.632***<br>(.382)           |
| Observations  | 408                           | 408                          |
| R <sup>2</sup>  | 0.427                         | 0.264                        |

Notes. Robust standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

The intuitive empirical results confirm that ex-communist states that are now members of

<sup>7</sup> Of all the independent variables, EU and GDP are the most highly correlated at 0.625, but the majority correlate below 0.5.

the EU are more democratic. Similarly, states with higher respect for human rights are more democratic. However, this finding runs into the problem of endogeneity in that it is unclear whether states are more democratic because they respect human rights or if they respect human rights because they are more democratic. As a means of checking against endogeneity, I lagged the physical integrity variable (*physint*) for one year. The idea here being that democracy in year B cannot affect human rights performance in year A, as it has already occurred.

The last factor in the first category is total international migrant stock as a measure of global socialization. The results for migrant stock are mixed, but mostly negative significant, meaning that the greater international migrant stock a state has the less likely it will be democratic. In the random effects model, the relationship between international migrant stock and democracy is negative and significant with 95% confidence versus the fixed effects model where it is significant with 90% confidence.

In the second category, geography, distance to the nearest EU capital was statistically significant with 99% confidence and negatively correlated with democracy. This supports my hypothesis that the further a country is from Western Europe more likely it is that it will not be democratic. There was no statistically significant result on the relationship between whether a state is coastal or landlocked in the random effects model and as stated previously it was not included in the fixed effects model.

Lastly, results in the third category support two of my three hypotheses. There were mixed results on the relationship between GDP per capita and democracy, confirming that the wealth of a state alone cannot drive democratization (Pevehouse, 2002). The total natural resource rents and agricultural land area were negative and statistically significant with 95% confidence, suggesting states that have more natural resource rents and agricultural land are less

democratic than states without as many natural resource rents and agricultural land area.

In conclusion, I have proposed three main categories of factors that have affected political development across former communist countries. The first category highlights the importance political conditions in democratization. I looked at the relationship between democracy and the constitutional system of a state, the state's level of respect for physical integrity rights, and the degree of social globalization in a state. Geography, the second category was a bridge between political conditions and economic factors. The first geographic feature was a measure of the distance from the states to their nearest EU capital as well as whether or not the state was landlocked or not.

Future research should focus on studying a broader temporal range that includes pre-communist political and economic conditions as well as conditions during communist rule. Expanding this timeframe will not only drastically increase the sample size, which is valuable for generating more generalizable results, but it will also provide a fairly large missing piece of the puzzle of political outcomes across the post-communist space, considering that these states did not just become post-communist overnight. An obstacle to broadening the temporal range is data availability. Data would need to be hand collected from records prior to World War I at least. Furthermore, future projects should also look towards incorporating more variables that can account for democratization across post-communist states, as the three small sets used in this study are just samples of dozens of other factors that may also drive obstruct democratization, such as trade patterns and partners and instances of political conflict

This project largely stemmed from Pop-Eleches' (2007) study of historical legacies and democratization, and is only a first cut at analyzing a combination of factors that many scholars in the field have looked at independently to understand political transitions following

Communism. There is still much to be done moving forward. However, the distinctiveness of the transitions that post-communist countries made compared to countries that transitioned from imperial rule offers the opportunity to further the literature on democratization overall in addition to the literature on post-communist politics.

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## Appendix 1. Tables & Figures

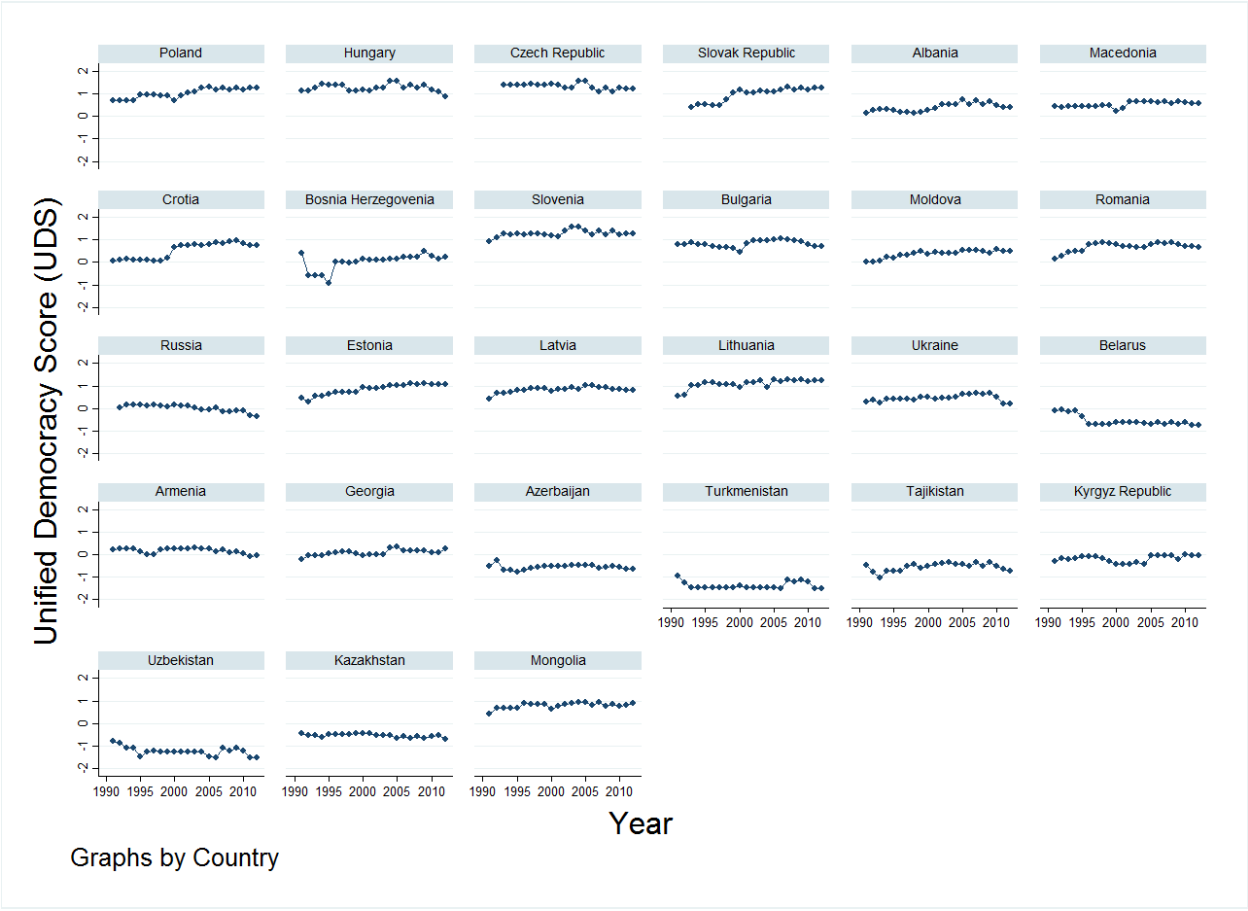
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### Table 3. Variance Inflation Factor Data

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is a STATA command ran after regression to check for multicollinearity. VIF values greater than 10 generally indicate the possibility of multicollinearity. Variables with VIF values greater than 10 are designated with an asterisk.

| <b>Category I: Democracy and Political Conditions</b>   |            |              |
|---|------------|--------------|
|   | <b>VIF</b> | <b>1/VIF</b> |
| EU Member   | 2.19       | 0.456        |
| Political system  | 3.70       | 0.269        |
| Lagged Physical Integrity Rights Index                  | 17.23*     | 0.058        |
| International migrant stock                             | 3.09       | 0.323        |
| <b>Category II: Democracy and Geography</b>             |            |              |
| (Non-) Landlocked                                       | 4.75       | 0.211        |
| Distance to EU  | 4.43       | 0.226        |
| <b>Category III: Democracy and Economic Development</b> |            |              |
| GDP per capita  | 10.45*     | 0.0957       |
| Total natural resources                                 | 2.52       | 0.397        |
| Agricultural land (total area sq. km)                   | 12.58*     | 0.0795       |
| Mean VIF  | 6.34       |              |

Figure 1. UDS Variation Across Post-Communist States 1991-2012



## Appendix 2. Variable Guide & Coding Scheme

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### Country name

- Correlates of War (COW) Country Code
- Unified Democracy Score (UDS) mean. *Variable name: uds\_mean*
- Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Dataset (CIRI). Physical integrity rights score. *Variable name: physint*. The physical integrity rights index is an additive index that combines indicators for torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment, and disappearances. See the CIRI Human Rights Data Project Coding Manual for more on the individual variables that comprise the physical integrity rights index.
- Database of Political Institutions. Political system of the country. *Variable name: system*
- European Union. *Variable name: eu*.
  - Dichotomous measure of membership
  - 1=member; 0=non-member
- Distance to nearest EU capital (km). *Variable name: eucap*. This is a manual measurement of a country's distance within the post-communist space to the nearest EU capital. In cases of post-communist countries that join the EU, their capital becomes the closest EU capital. I also account for the accession of states outside of the post-communist space and how that affects the distance of the nearest EU capital. See example on page 19.
- Distance to European Parliament in Strasbourg (km). *Variable name: eupar*. Strasbourg, France is the seat of the European Parliament. This is a fixed variable that I use to complement to the EU capital variable.
- Coastal or landlocked states. *Variable name: coastland*. This is a manually calculated, fixed variable.

- 1=landlocked; 0=non-landlocked (coastal)
- GDP per capita. *Variable name: gdp\_pc*
- Total natural resources rents as a percentage of GDP. *Variable name: totnatres*
- Agricultural land a percentage of total land area. *Variable name: agland*
- International migrant stock as a percentage of population. *Variable name: migstock*