

THE SUCCESSION OF POWER IN AUTHORITARIAN STATES AND AUTHORITARIAN  
DURABILITY

By

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## Abstract

In authoritarian states the succession of power has historically been an unpredictable event. With most of the power belonging to only one individual, succession in these states is often difficult to control, though many leaders have tried. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, several former Soviet states have attempted to control this transfer of power, with varying degrees of success. Some countries have managed to hold on without any difficulty, others stabilized over time with periods of intense struggle, and others continue to be unstable. Some of the methods used to try and control succession have been by declaring successors and having clear lines of succession, though the penalty for failing to establish that can be severe. This study therefore will attempt to understand the processes and history of authoritarian succession in order to identify what determines the stability of a regime, and analyze how power changes hands in these authoritarian states.

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On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the nation of Belarus had a presidential election, where the previous president, Alexander Lukashenko, won by a landslide. This sparked massive protests across the country, centered on the city of Minsk, due to the belief that the election had been rigged and was undemocratic. However, the protests were mainly quelled, though they are still going on at the time this is being written. Regardless, authoritarian leaders are not always nearly as capable of holding onto their power. Over the years, many leaders have risen and fallen, which has led to some of the more capable leaders learning from the mistakes of the past, and preventing accidental transitions of power, or allowed them to safely transition power to those they choose. This paper will analyze these transitions of power, how they came about, and the ramifications that they hold, specifically looking at the former states of the Soviet Union that have authoritarian governments. This is with the intention to analyze the durability of authoritarian nations, and to answer the question of what determines the durability of a country's institutions in an authoritarian state.

An authoritarian government, then, would be a government that is undemocratic in nature where the masses have little to no representation regarding their wants and desires. Successions then are one of the most important metrics for authoritarian leaders, as their primary motive is the retention of power.

Before one can understand authoritarian successions, the definition of what is a success and a failure regarding the transition of power must be established. For the sake of this paper, a success will be defined as the movement of power to an intended individual; a named successor would be the primary example of this. A failure, on the other hand, would be when power is forcibly removed from the autocrat in power, by some form of coup or insurrection.

Different nations have had differing levels of success regarding the ability to successfully transfer power. In the next section, I will be outlining the different successions in post-Soviet countries from the fall of the Soviet Union until the present day, excluding the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, because they became democratic very shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. Additionally, I will be introducing the Freedom House Global Freedom scores and Freedom House Democracy Scores of each country to serve as a metric for how authoritarian the regime is, with lower numbers indicating higher levels of authoritarianism and less freedom. These scores are out of 100, and are calculated by looking at variables of civil liberties and political rights. To calculate it, each nation “is awarded 0 to 4 points for each of 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questions; a score of 0 represents the smallest degree of freedom and 4 the greatest degree of freedom” (Freedom House, 2020).

Kazakhstan, a country with a 23 for their Freedom score and a 5 for their democracy score, has been a relatively stable country. In Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazabayev was the president from 1990 until his resignation in 2019 following a series of protests around his country (Sharipzhen, 2019). He left the role of the presidency, yet retained his position as the head of the Security Council, effectively retaining power while placating the people. Then, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the then head of the Senate in Kazakhstan, replaced him as the President. The transition and election was without major incident, though not considered to be free, fair or open by Western standards (Pannier, 2015).

Kyrgyzstan has had a much more volatile series of successions, with 7 different presidents from 1990 to the present day, earning them a 38 for their Freedom score, and a 16 for their Democracy score. Askar Akayev served the longest period as president, partially because

he was one of the only Presidents allowed more than one term, spending 3 terms in office. However, in 2005, the Tulip Revolutions pushed him out of office due to belief that Akayev was corrupt and the 2005 election was rigged. The next president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev was president from 2005 until 2010, where the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution saw him kicked out of office. The protests started due to anger about energy prices and economics, but quickly became about corruption and authoritarianism. These protests marked the shift in Kyrgyz government away from authoritarianism towards democracy, though it did not mean that the country would be stabilized or become a true democracy.

After the revolution, Roza Otunbayeva became the new president, though she only served from 2010 – 2011, as the new constitutional laws prevented her from running for a second term. In the election, Almazbek Atambayev was elected president, and held that role for one full 6 year term, from 2011 – 2017. The 2017 election marks the first and so far only time that there was a democratic process leading to a transition of power in Kyrgyzstan, when Sooronbay Jeenbekov won the election. However, in late 2020, due to the belief that the parliamentary elections were fraudulent and that the Jeenbekov government was corrupt, protests began across the nation, which led to Jeenbekov resigning. In the following months since Jeenbekov resigned, two different people have served as the acting president. Sadyr Japarov served from October until he willfully stepped down in November of 2020 so that he could run in the 2021 election (Aueyev, 2020). Until that election, Talant Mamynov has been the acting president of Kyrgyzstan.

In Tajikistan, there was a brief period of unrest immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, but it quickly became a stable authoritarian government, earning them a 9 for their Freedom score and a 3 for their Democracy score. Qahhor Mahkamov was the first president of Tajikistan, serving from 1990 – 1991, where he was forced to resign due to his unpopularity.

Then, in a very tumultuous period, Kadridden Aslonov served as acting president for less than a month, then Rahmon Nabiyeu was president for 2 weeks, until he had to temporarily step down due to issues in the electoral process. At this point, Akbarsho Iskandrov was acting president for nearly 2 months, until Rahmon Nabiyeu returned to his role of president following the 1991 Tajik elections. However, the victory was shortlived, as the election results weren't widely accepted, and tensions built up until the Tajikistani Civil War broke out in 1992. The opposition eventually forced Nabiyeu to resign in a violent confrontation (Erlanger, 1992).

After Nabiyeu was ousted, Akbarsho Iskandrov returned to his role as acting president until the Supreme Soviet, or the Tajik parliament, elected Emmomali Rahmon (Formerly Emmomali Rahmonov) as the Chairman of the Supreme Assembly, an equivalent role to the president. While his presidency was not without conflict, even with attempted coups by his opposition, he was made president through an election in 1994 and has retained that role ever since (Hidalgo, 1998).

In Turkmenistan, one of the most authoritarian and least free nations looked at in this study, with a 2 for their Freedom score and a 0 for their Democracy score, there have only been two presidents. Saparmurat Niyazov was the leader of Turkmenistan before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, starting in 1985. However, in 1990 he officially became the President, declared himself President for Life, and removed term limits for any successors. Niyazov held the office of president until his death in 2006. Then, Gurbanguly Burdimuhamedow became the new president, as the acting president from 2006 until the 2007 election, where he officially claimed the title. Burdimuhamedow holds this position today, and is not likely to change due to the lack of term limits and intense authoritarian pressures in the nation where elections are held but have very little significance regarding who is president.

Uzbekistan, a country with a Freedom House score of 10, and a democracy score of 2, delineating a “consolidated authoritarian regime”, has been very stable regarding successions. Uzbekistan’s leader during the Soviet era, Islam Karimov, maintained his role beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union until his death in 2016. He was the first president once independence was declared, and the rigged electoral system ensured that he stayed in office. After his death, Nigmatilla Yuldashev was acting president for 6 days, until the next president was declared. While no successor was declared by Karimov, the favorite of his and most likely candidate was Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan’s prime minister (Roth, 2016). Mirziyoyev did end up taking the role of president in 2016 through the rigged electoral system, and has maintained that role until the present day.

Moving to Eastern Europe, we have the aforementioned Belarus, with a 19 on the Freedom House scale, and a 7 for their democracy score. Before 1994, Belarus did not have a president, but rather had the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. In that role, there is only one truly noteworthy figure; Stanislau Shushkevich was the Chairman who participated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, in 1993 a man named Alexander Lukashenko, who was running the anti-corruption committee of the Belarusian parliament, accused Shushkevich and the prime minister of Belarus of rampant corruption, such as stealing state funds for personal use. These allegations led to Shushkevich resigning, leaving this role open. Then, Vyacheslav Kusnetsov served as acting Chairman for only 2 days, until Myechyslaw Hryb succeeded him as the next Chairman. However, less than a year after Hryb was declared Chairman, a new office in the Belarussian government was established. In early 1994, Belarus drafted a constitution, creating the new office of the President. Belarus held an election to determine who would be president, and the previously mentioned anti-corruption official, Alexander Lukashenko, won the election



by a very large margin. Lukashenko still holds this office today, and has managed to maintain a tight grip on his country, despite protests alleging corruption within the government and opposing the rigged elections.

The next country, Ukraine, is surprisingly the most free and democratic out of all the nations in this study. Ukraine received a 62 on the Freedom House scale, with a 40 for their democracy score, which designates this as a hybrid or transitional regime. Ukraine's post-Soviet history is marked by efforts towards becoming free and democratic, but with corruption marring and slowing that progress when compared to places like the Baltic states. When the Soviet Union dissolved, Leonid Kravchuk took the role of Presidency, until he resigned in 1994, intending to run in the election and be elected democratically. However, Kravchuk lost the 1994 election to Leonid Kuchma, marking the first peaceful transition of power in Ukraine. This landmark achievement would be diminished by the electoral problems Ukraine had moving forward.

Kuchma held the role of President from 1994 until 1999, where he was reelected and continued to serve until 2005. The 1999 election is not, however, widely considered to have been free and fair, which led to protests against Kuchma in 2000 (Yekelchuk, 2015). The 2000 "Ukraine Without Kuchma" protests were an attempt at removing corruptive influences in the government. However, Kuchma stayed in office until the next election, where Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich ran against each other in 2004. Unfortunately, this election had many problems, and was not considered democratic by the Ukrainian people. This led to the Orange Revolution of 2004, where Yushchenko eventually came out on top, and was declared the President of Ukraine. Riding on the wave of the Orange Revolution, Yanukovich refused to give up, and ran again in 2010. Yushchenko failed to perform well in the 2010 election, and Yanukovich became the next president. However, despite winning a democratic election,

corruption, cronyism, and a general failure to provide for the wants of the Ukrainian people marked Yanukovich's term as president, and led to his removal from office via parliamentary vote. Due to this early removal from office, Oleksandr Turchynov served as acting president from February until June of 2014. When the election was held in 2014, Petro Poroshenko became the new president by popular vote. Poroshenko's presidency was a tumultuous one, though it began a greater transition away from authoritarianism and corruption. However, Poroshenko lost the 2019 election by a landslide to Volodymyr Zelensky, who is still President today. According to Freedom House, the 2019 election was the "first transfer of power to a new government through democratic and pluralistic elections, allowing for further stable progress in reforming the country's national governance system" (Yesmukhanova, 2020).

The next country, Moldova, is another hybrid regime, earning a 60 for their Freedom Score, and a 35 for their democracy score. Like in Belarus, the first president was the former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, who claimed the title of President during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This original president was Mircea Snegur, who served until 1997, where he left office due to losing the 1996 election. Petru Lucinschi began his term in 1997 until 2001, where he was voted out of office by parliament, due to constitutional changes making the electoral process run by parliament rather than a popular vote. Vladimir Voronin was elected president by Parliament, and served in that role until 2009, where he was required to resign due to finishing two terms. However, his political party still controlled Parliament, and refused to elect another leader. This led to a serious doubt about the validity of the Moldovan electoral system, and led to a short period of protest in April of 2009. Voronin stayed as acting president until late 2009, when he chose to step down from his role as acting President. This left Moldova without any

clear line of succession, and paved the way for a period of uncertainty regarding the Presidency, where multiple acting presidents attempted to maintain the country.

Immediately following the resignation of Voronin, the President of the Moldovan Parliament, Mihai Ghimpu, became the acting President of Moldova. He served in this role until 2010, when the power transitioned to Vladimir Filat, who served as acting President for only 2 days until a new acting President could be appointed. Marian Lupu then served as another acting president until 2012. From 2009 until 2012, Moldova failed to have an elected President, but that changed with Parliament electing Nicolae Tomofti in 2012. Tomofti served a full term until 2016, when Igor Dodon was elected and began his term as President. However, in 2019, Dodon was temporarily relieved of his duties as President due to issues arising from the 2019 Parliamentary election. He was eventually reinstated, but lost the 2020 election to Maia Sandu, the previous President of Parliament, due to her pro-European sympathies (Gotisan, 2020). Maia Sandu holds this position currently, but only time will tell if the Moldovan government will become more democratic and stable under her leadership.

Perhaps one of the most successful authoritarian nations, at least regarding international influence, is Russia. According to Freedom House, Russia has a 20 for their Global Freedom score, but a mere 7 on their Democracy score. At the end of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin served as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Russia. However, once the Soviet Union dissolved, the office of President was created, and a democratic election was held, which Boris Yeltsin won. He served as President until 1999, though by the end had lost a significant amount of approval, due to corruption and a failing economy. In late 1999, Yeltsin resigned, and Vladimir Putin became acting President of Russia. This event, while not known at the time, would radically alter the way Russia developed into the foreseeable future.

Halfway through 2000, Russia held a Presidential election, which Vladimir Putin won. He served as President until he reached the end of his two terms, as outlined in the Russian Constitution, and had to leave office for a term. At this point, in 2008, Vladimir Putin stepped down, and took on the role of Prime Minister, while Dmitry Medvedev took the role of President. Medvedev served as President until 2012, until Putin was able to run for office again. In the Russian 2012 Presidential Election, Vladimir Putin claimed the office of Presidency once again. However, from 2011 – 2013, there were protests across Russia, often referred to as the Snow Revolution. These protests were motivated by the view that the Russian elections were rigged, and that there was no fairness or democratic values being upheld. Despite nearly 50,000 protesters coalescing in Moscow, the protests were effectively suppressed by the Russian government, and Putin maintained his control over the government (Batty, 2011). At this point, Putin retained his power, and extended the term limits from 4 to 6 years before reelection. In 2018, Putin again won the election. While there was much debate over how Putin would get around the 2024 election, considering he would not be eligible to run again but would likely want to stay in power, that question was answered in early 2020. As of now, the term limits have been lifted, and it is very likely that Vladimir Putin will be President of Russia for his entire life unless something forces him out of office.

Moving to a different region of the former Soviet Union, we have Armenia, a partly free country, with a 53 from Freedom House, though one that is too authoritarian to be considered even a hybrid regime, earning a 33 on their democracy score. The first President of Armenia was a man named Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who served from 1991 – 1998. While his reelection is not widely accepted as being free and fair, it is not the reason he left office. His resignation was due to conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and the effects of those conflict are still ongoing

today. After his resignation, Robert Kocharyan took office, and served until 2008. However, at both elections, in 2003 and 2008, there were massive protests across Armenia due to alleged electoral fraud. While Kocharyan managed to hold onto power in 2003, he was ineligible to run in 2008 due to meeting his term limit. Kocharyan then endorsed a candidate named Serzh Sargsyan, whose primary opposition in the election was former President Ter-Petrosyan. Sargsyan officially won the election, but rumors of fraud spurred on by the losing opposition incited violence. Sargsyan was president until 2018, but his presidency was pockmarked by multiple acts of protest from the Armenian people, in 2011, 2013, and then eventually the 2018 Velvet Revolution, which ultimately led to Sargsyan's resignation. In the wake of the Velvet Revolution, Armen Sarkissian rose to power, claiming the presidency, which he currently holds. In the wake of this revolution, Armenia has worked to grow more democratic and fair, and their level of corruption is on the decline (Mejlumyan, 2020). However, they still have much work to be done in order to remove corruption and authoritarian behavior from their government.

In contrast to Armenia, the neighboring country of Azerbaijan has become less free and democratic as the years go on. Earning a measly 10 on their Freedom Score, and a 2 for the democracy score, Azerbaijan is one of the more authoritarian nations in the world.

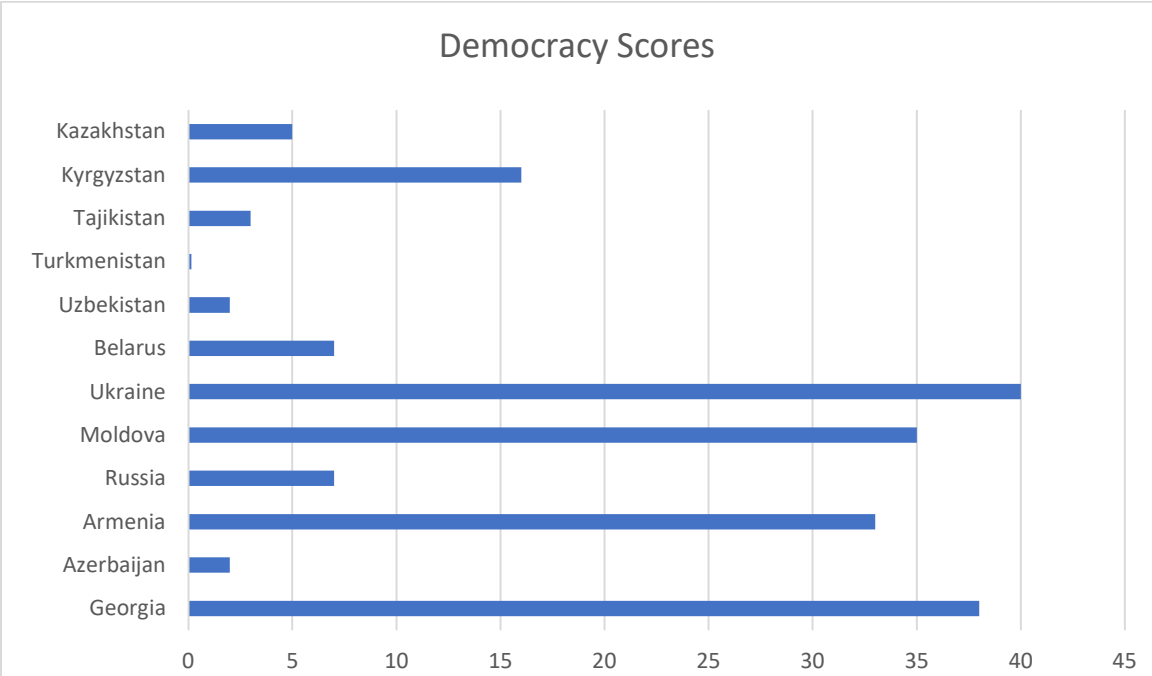
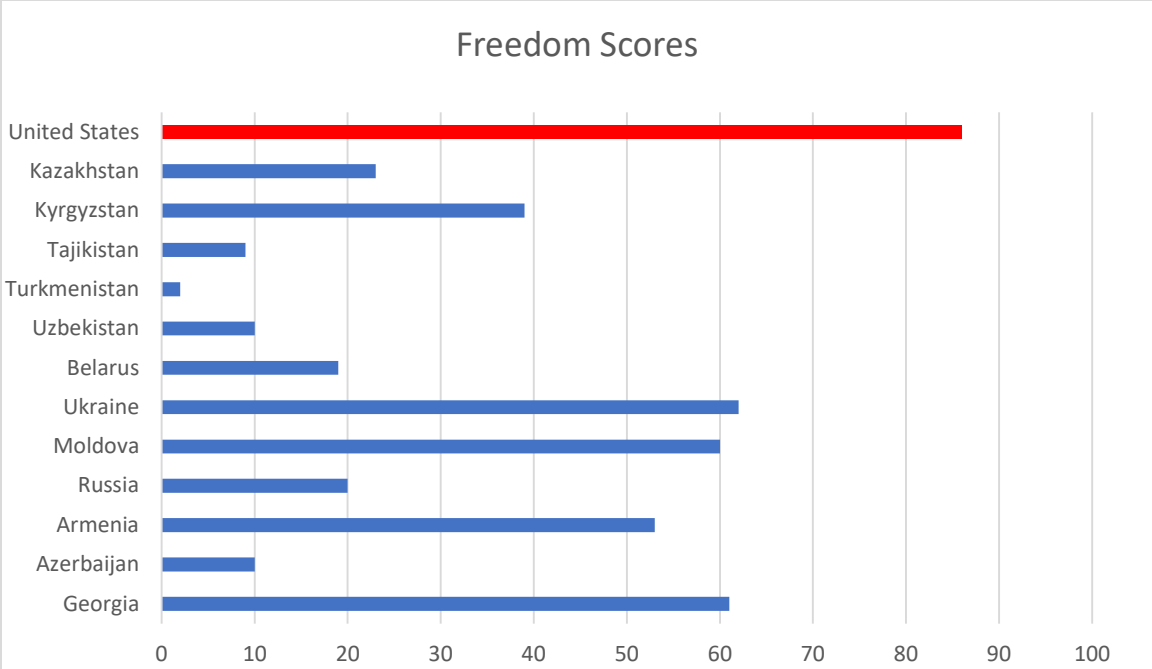
From the fall of the Soviet Union, until 1993, there were several changes of leadership. Their first leader, Ayaz Mutallibov, served from 1991 – 1992, until he was forced out of office by the Azerbaijan Popular Front. Yagub Mammadov then took over as an acting president for a few months, and was also forced out by the Popular Front, this time by an armed revolt. Mutallibov attempted to return to office after this, but in less than a week was physically removed from office by the Popular Front. At this point, the Azerbaijan Popular Front set up someone as an acting president, Isa Gambar, who stayed in until the election. In Azerbaijan's

first democratic election, Popular Front leader Abulfaz Elchibey won the office of President. However, in 1993, Elchibey was forced out of office by a vote of no confidence from Parliament, and Heydar Aliyev was elected President. While this would seem democratic, because it was an election, the U.S. Department of State wrote that “progress toward a democratic society suffered a severe setback following the June 1993 downfall of the democratically elected President, Abulfaz Elchibey” (U.S. Department of State, 1994). This is because Heydar Aliyev set himself up as a powerful authoritarian leader, and held this position for 10 years, until his death in 2003. At his death, he chose his son, Ilham Aliyev as his successor, who has served from 2003 until the present day as a very stable authoritarian leader.

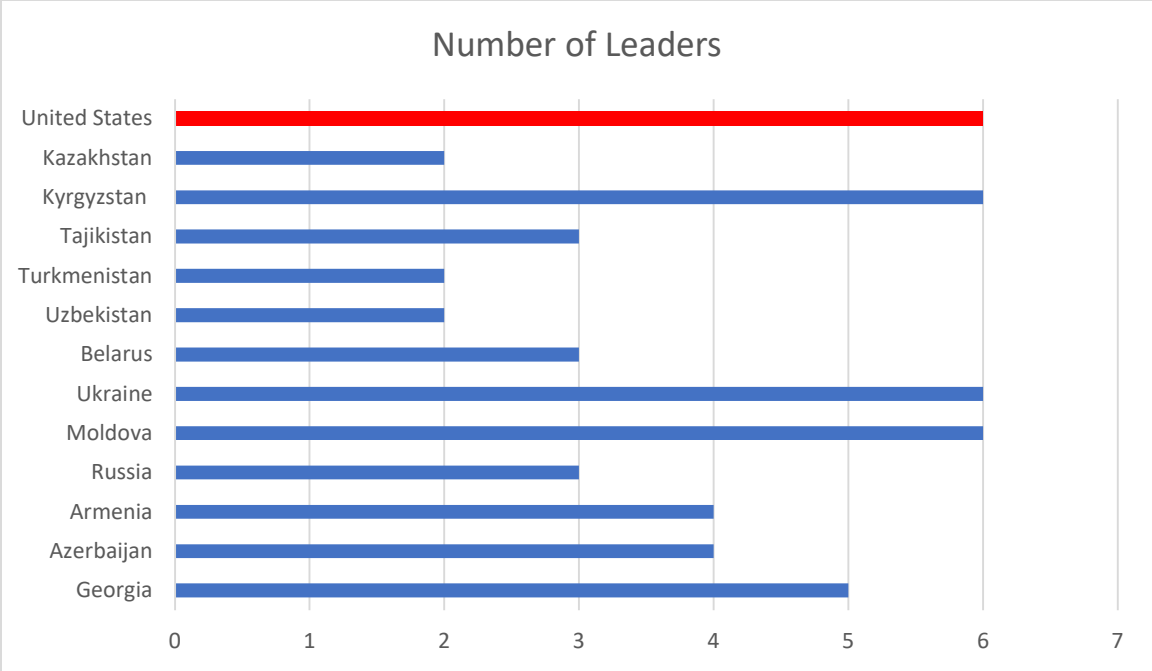
The last country that we will be looking at is Georgia, a hybrid regime, earning a 61 on their Freedom Score and a 38 on their Democracy Score. Their first president was a man named Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who technically served until 1993, but in 1992 was stripped of power and forced into exile due to events of the Tbilisi War. After he was stripped of power, Eduard Shevardnadze acted as the de facto president. Gamsakhurdia died under unclear circumstances in 1993, having been shot while in exile. Shevardnadze stayed as the de facto ruling president, until 1995, when he was officially elected president. He was re-elected in 2000, though that election is regularly considered to have been rigged in his favor. Then, in 2003, a parliamentary election that was also considered to be rigged sparked the Rose Revolution, which forced Shevardnadze to resign that year. Nino Burjanadze then, due to her position in parliament, immediately assumed the role of acting president until another election could be held. That election came in 2004, where Mikheil Saakashvili was elected by a large majority. However, in late 2007, due to public outcry over government behavior, protests again erupted across Georgia, causing Saakashvili to step down from office. Again, Burjanadze took up the reins as acting president,

until an early election could be held in the beginning of 2008. Saakashvili managed to regain his title of President in this election, but his term as president was marked by frequent demonstrations, and even a failed military coup in 2009. When the next election came around in 2013, he was barred from running, ending his presidency. In the 2013 election, Giorgi Margvelashvili took the reins as president, marking a step towards democracy and change. He served until the 2018 election, which he chose not to run in. In that election, Salome Zourabichvili won, and will likely serve in that role until the elections in 2024. However, the country still has work to do to become more democratic, and unfortunately with their reactions to public outcry in 2019, it seems that there may actually be some regression in Georgian democratic values (Freedom House, 2020).

The following charts outline the Freedom scores, Democracy scores, and number of presidents, not including acting presidents, in the countries in the study pool for ease of reference during the following analysis. Where possible, I have included the United States as a frame of reference, with the leader score being from the same period of time, from the 1990's until today. Additionally, I have provided a chart with each succession broken into three categories: elections, managed successions, and forced resignation. This is to provide a visual reference of the volume of succession types. Additionally, not all elections are considered free, fair or legitimate, and in some countries, it is a parliamentary election rather than a popular vote. These will all, however, be classified as elections, unless they were non-scheduled. Non-scheduled elections, such as by a president stepping down or being ousted, will respectively be classified as managed successions or forced resignations.







Election	Managed Succession	Forced Resignation
Kyrgyzstan, 2011	Kazakhstan, 2019	Kyrgyzstan, 2005
Kyrgyzstan, 2017	Tajikistan, 1992	Kyrgyzstan, 2010
Tajikistan*, 1991	Turkmenistan, 2006	Kyrgyzstan, 2020
Belarus*, 1994	Uzbekistan, 2016	Tajikistan, 1991
Ukraine, 1994	Russia, 1999	Tajikistan, 1992
Ukraine, 2004	Russia, 2008	Moldova, 2009
Ukraine, 2010	Russia, 2012	Armenia, 2018
Ukraine, 2019	Azerbaijan, 2003	Azerbaijan, 1992
Moldova, 1997		Georgia, 1993-1995
Moldova, 2012		Georgia, 2004
Moldova, 2016		Ukraine, 2014

Moldova, 2020		
Armenia, 1998		
Armenia, 2008		
Azerbaijan, 1992		
Azerbaijan, 1993		
Georgia, 2013		
Georgia, 2018		

*\*An Election Not Considered Free and Fair*

The general trend that should be seen by this data is that the more authoritarian nations have a more stable government system if a reliable ruler is established. Looking at countries such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, some of the most authoritarian nations in the study pool, they have the least instability in their government. On the other hand, places like Georgia, and Moldova, our hybrid regimes, have had massive amounts of instability. While looking at the leader chart may not indicate that, especially when considering how many leaders the United States has had, it should be reminded that many of these changes in power were not peaceful and didn't follow a set procedure like in the United States. Georgia, for example, was unstable until about 2008, due to the constant shifting of power and instability in establishing a system of succession. Moldova's issues ran so deep that for 3 years, from 2009 – 2012, there wasn't even an officially elected president because the system of succession through Parliament was flawed and not well established.

Additionally, countries like Ukraine, who in their early post-Soviet history were far from free and fair, had large amounts of problems and several revolutions proving that. The Ukrainian attempt at pseudo-democracy, or holding elections that are not free and fair, proved to be unstable and unreliable.

While I wouldn't suggest that authoritarianism is good, successful authoritarianism has led to great stability, though mismanaged authoritarianism is potentially the most unstable type of country one could have. A great example of this is Azerbaijan, where in their first years of autonomy went through massive upheavals trying to find a leader that could maintain the country. When they did in Aliyev, he maintained it until his death. The death of a leader could, in many cases, lead to instability. This was seen with people like Gamsakhurdia in Georgia, where the leader being forced out of office, and then subsequently dying, led to instability for many years. This is in contrast to Aliyev, who named his son as a successor and led the country to having practically no issues in that last transition.

In the end, it seems that the ability to retain power in the government is the most important factor in determining if succession will fail. When places like Moldova or Kyrgyzstan have issues within their government, it can lead to at best a period of uncertainty in government, and at worst massive revolutions where an opposing party claims power.

Countries like Turkmenistan, Russia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan are particularly useful when trying to understand the stability of successful authoritarianism because there have been multiple stable transitions of power. In Turkmenistan, we see one of the cleanest transitions of power in the former Soviet Union. When Niyazov died, Berdimuhamedow, Niyazov's vice president, took power as acting president. He then ran in the election the next year, and won without any real opposition. This is a case of the power transition being managed through

institutions and a clear line of succession, even though it was not declared by the President before his death.

In Russia, all transitions of power would be classified as managed successions. In 1999, the transfer of power was unscheduled, but with the intention to put Putin in control, at least for the time. Then, the elections in 2008 and 2012 were managed by Putin himself to retain power and influence. In these cases, it is either a president or an acting president claiming power and making it official through an election, regardless of whether that election was legitimate. Managing those who have power has been done successfully, and allowed an autocrat to maintain control over his country.

In Azerbaijan, the country's very intense period of revolution after they gained independence was stopped by Heydar Aliyev. While Elchibey before him was elected democratically, the political climate pushed him out of power, suggesting that democracy was not viable in this country at this time. Aliyev then went on to have a very successful career, until his health declined. Heydar Aliyev named his son as his successor, and passed power onto him. This instance is a primary example of a transition being seamless, proving that authoritarianism was sustainable here, as long as power can be maintained. The issues in the first few years of independence were due to an imbalance of power. Once stability had been achieved, it appears rather easy to maintain as long as another power imbalance is not created.

Uzbekistan's significant power transition was to the favorite candidate of the previous president and his Prime Minister. On the death of Karimov, the official line of succession, and the clear favorite of the now deceased President, put Mirziyoyev in power. It is interesting because Uzbekistan under Karimov never had the issues that countries like Azerbaijan did. Rather, Karimov was able to keep it under control from the very beginning. However, similar to

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, the next leader was determined by a preference from the previous leader, and a distinct line of succession.

In all of these cases, the government structure allowed for this clear transition of power without infighting, and the president himself holds enough power to control their nation and their government singlehandedly. It is surprising that there was so little infighting between political candidates after the fall of a former president, especially in cases like Uzbekistan, where the leader died suddenly. Clearly, then, proper consolidation of power, and only allowing certain individuals access to power, is the key to having a stable autocratic government. This also lends credence to elite theory, as those in power were able to hold onto it without great opposition and with support from others with limited power.

Elite theory would dictate that it is up to those in power to control the populace, and prevent them from overthrowing you. It is for this reason that in unstable hybrid regimes which give people a significant voice without adequate freedoms are so prone to revolution (D'Anieri, 2006). On the other hand, consolidated authoritarian nations with a tight grip on their government are capable of stopping revolutions, as the people have so little support and infrastructure to sustain any kind of coup to change their leader. It is this consolidated power that allows people like Lukashenko or Putin to maintain power even during times of unrest within their country. Both being able to suppress the people and keep your government in line is required.

Keeping the government in line refers to both preventing parliamentary issues that cripple a country from within, such as what happened in Moldova, as well as keeping groups like the military on the leaders' side, and opposition leaders away from any sort of significant political power. Looking at the most successful transitions of power, it is clear that the key to stable

transitions is in a governmental system that has a clear line of succession, while also allowing this new president to maintain absolute control. Lacking either one of these factors leads to either political infighting, or insurrection by the people if the country is not free and fair. These issues are most commonly seen in hybrid regimes, but are not found in consolidated authoritarian nations. The lesson here, then, is that to have a stable country, one must either be fully democratic and allow the people to choose their leaders, or give the power entirely to the elites and prevent both the masses from having the ability to fight against you, and prevent the other elites from having the power to undermine you. If control is maintained, and a clear line of succession given, then authoritarianism has proven to be very stable.

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