

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017



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ON THE COVER

A migrant stands inside an abandoned train wagon used as a makeshift shelter near the main rail station in Belgrade, Serbia.
Andrej Isakovic, AFP/Getty Images

Nations in Transit 2017:

The False Promise of Populism

by Nate Schenkkan

Populists' stunning electoral victories in Europe and the United States have shaken the post-Cold War order in Europe and Eurasia, but they could ultimately reinvigorate liberal democracy.

In 2016, populist successes at the polls in Western Europe and the United States rocked the world, not least the countries of postcommunist Europe and Eurasia covered by *Nations in Transit*. The April 2016 referendum in the Netherlands against recognizing Ukraine's Association Agreement with the European Union, the United Kingdom's vote to withdraw from the EU, and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States all raised fresh doubts about the fragile post-Cold War order.

These external shocks came after a long period of stagnation and decline in democratic governance across the 29 countries of *Nations in Transit*. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, years of populism and corruption have eroded once-promising democratic institutions. In Eurasia, personalist authoritarianism has gone from a burgeoning trend to an entrenched norm. This year, 18 of the 29 countries in the survey suffered declines in their overall Democracy Scores, the most since 2008, when the global financial crisis fueled instability and stalled political reforms. There have been more declines than

improvements in each year of the survey since 2005, following the first big wave of EU expansion to the east. For the first time in the report's history, there are now more Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes than Consolidated Democracies.

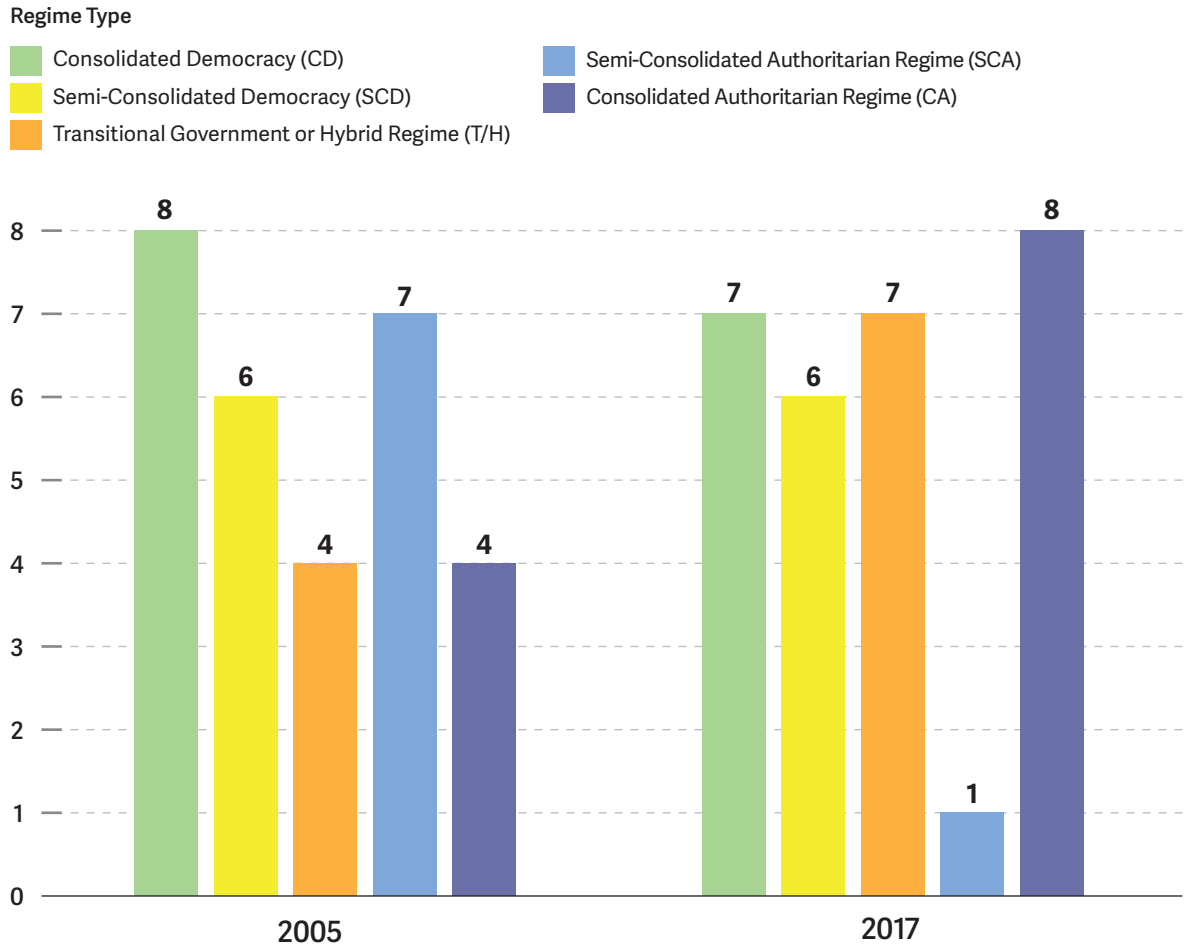
The populist victories of 2016 have added a new dimension of uncertainty to this picture. Across the *Nations in Transit* region, U.S. and EU commitments to democratization and a stable, rules-based order have been necessary if not sufficient for maintaining peace and strengthening the rule of law. Democratic deterioration and authoritarian consolidation were already well under way before this year. But with Britain now focused on its withdrawal from the EU, and governments in the region unsure of the Trump administration's positions, the pillars of the post-Cold War order in Europe suddenly seem less sturdy. In fact, American ambivalence about NATO has increased fears of instability or even war.

The Roots of Populism's Revival in Europe

The populist tide has been rising in Central Europe

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN EACH REGIME CATEGORY

There are now more Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes than Consolidated Democracies for the first time in the report's history.



since 2010, when Viktor Orbán led the Fidesz party back to power in Hungary and then eviscerated the country's checks and balances, changing the constitution and electoral code to ensure his party's dominance while ignoring the EU's reprimands. It gathered strength over the last six years as leaders in the

over migration across Europe and the parliamentary victory of the Law and Justice (PiS) party in Poland, which immediately sought to emulate Orbán's example in Hungary by paralyzing the constitutional court and turning the public broadcaster into a party mouthpiece.

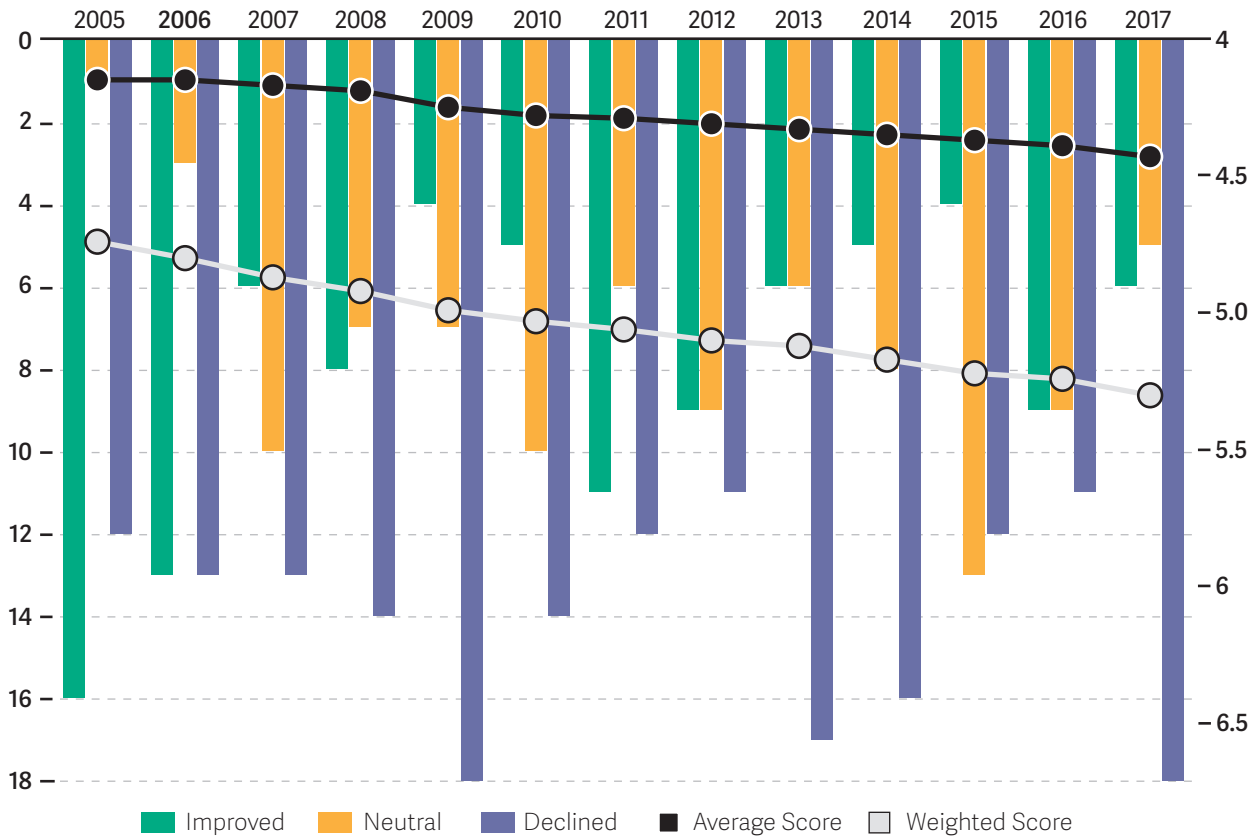
What is this populism? At its core, it pits a mystically unified "nation" against corrupt "elites" and external enemies, and claims for a charismatic leader the power to voice the will of the nation.

Balkans rallied their bases with attacks on civil society and the press, hollowing out independent institutions even as they moved ahead with EU accession. And it surged forward in 2015, with nativist fear-mongering

What is this populism? At its core, it pits a mystically unified "nation" against corrupt "elites" and external enemies, and claims for a charismatic leader the power to voice the will of the nation. It is therefore fundamentally illiberal, rejecting diversity of identity and of opinion within society and discarding basic principles of modern constitutional thinking: that democracy requires constraints on the will of the majority and checks on the decisions of the executive. It feeds on the gap between what mainstream political leaders promise and what they deliver, which is why the utopian vision and quotidian results of the EU have nourished its growth. The anti-elitist, anti-immigration, and protectionist platforms of the

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017: CHANGES IN DEMOCRACY SCORE

Number of changes in DS per year; average changes weighted and unweighted for population.



Eighteen out of 29 countries recorded declines in their Democracy Scores, the highest number since the financial crisis.

Total number of changes in category scores

Democracy Score

Brexit and Trump campaigns drew on the same set of frustrations.

It was no surprise, then, that populists in Europe celebrated the events of 2016, and none more enthusiastically than Orbán, who hailed Trump's victory as the end of "liberal non-democracy" and "the return to real democracy." The year was also a triumph for Vladimir Putin. For the past decade, the Russian leader has backed populists in Europe and the United States as part of a covert effort to destabilize the transatlantic order. The results in 2016 were perhaps beyond his wildest dreams. Although Russia's economy continues to stagnate, Putin seems tantalizingly close to his goal of a new division of Europe into Western and Russian spheres of influence.

Careful What You Wish For

Despite the newfound confidence of the region's illiberal leaders, the populist revolt provides no answers to their internal dilemmas. In Eurasia, presidents who

bristled at U.S. support for civil society and independent media may welcome a more transactional American foreign policy, but their systems' structural dysfunctions remain. The 2014 collapse in oil and gas prices brought the second financial crisis in seven years to a region that is still heavily dependent on hydrocarbon exports. The regional recession is near its end on paper, but it has left chaos in the banking sector and drained national reserve funds in the largest Eurasian economies: Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

The countries with the most closed and rent-seeking economies—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—are experiencing hard currency shortages and bank failures that cannot be overcome without painful structural reforms, which would threaten leaders' political control. Even those countries with larger fiscal buffers and more deft crisis management are heading for years of slow growth and weak private investment after another cycle in which they failed to reform.

Physical and human capital continues to depreciate across the region. Political opposition, civil society, and the independent media have been choked off, but the popular grievances they would normally channel remain. The authoritarian regimes in Eurasia have proven that they are capable of retaining power, but not of creating efficient or effective, much less representative, states.

The question for 2017 is whether populism's recent success carries within it the seeds of a revival of liberal democracy.

The global populist turn in 2016 leaves these structural problems unaddressed, and it also increases security risks. With the United States suddenly ambivalent about the EU and NATO, countries across the region are likely to rush to exploit new opportunities, hedge against worst-case scenarios, and secure existing gains before a new equilibrium is reached. Nationalist and revanchist appeals could once again become the most powerful currency for vulnerable leaders and parties. Every country will have to rebalance its security, diplomatic, and domestic policies absent the traditional assumptions about American power and interests.

This rebalancing could increase the threat of war in Europe and Eurasia. Early 2017 has already brought the worst fighting in two years in eastern Ukraine, rising tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, and increasing interethnic friction as part of the political crisis in Macedonia. And after engaging in their deadliest combat in 22 years in April 2016, Armenia and Azerbaijan are watching closely to see whether the new U.S. administration is still committed to preserving peace in the Caucasus.

The European Union Tested

The uncertainty about U.S. foreign policy means that the EU will need to be more assertive, most importantly with its own member states and accession candidates. The expansion of the EU to include the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe, and countries in the

Balkans has helped spread liberal democracy across the continent. It is still the best vehicle for advancing the rule of law and accountable institutions in the region. But with each wave of integration, the challenge of sustaining the union has grown, and the flawed assumptions of the original institutional design have become more apparent. The United States should have done more to support democratic consolidation in Europe as the EU struggled over the last decade; now the EU will be forced to shoulder even more of the democratization burden in its neighborhood.

If it is to succeed in doing so, it has to reform. While the eurozone and refugee crises have received the most urgent attention, the crisis of accountability in the EU—its inability to take disciplinary action when leaders in current and aspiring member states violate the rules—is no less threatening to democracy's future. From Hungary and Poland to accession candidate Serbia, there are still no consequences for politicians and parties that undermine their countries' independent institutions. Without accountability, populists will continue to corrode the union from within and push nationalist narratives that threaten peace in Europe. The EU must reform in a way that allows it to respond swiftly and effectively to attacks on democracy.

A Moment of Truth

The question for 2017 is whether populism's recent success carries within it the seeds of a revival of liberal democracy. As the political scientists Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser have written, "Populism often asks the right questions but provides the wrong answers." In the democracies of the *Nations in Transit* region, populism has seized on deep frustrations with the EU and the post-Cold War socioeconomic model, capitalizing on fears of eroding identity, economic insecurity, and inequality. *Nations in Transit's* research shows that de-democratization is possible. The populist moment should be taken as a call to shake off the dangerous assumption that progress is inevitable, and to appreciate the constant work that is required to create and sustain an inclusive civic nationalism in a diverse society—or societies, in the case of the EU. The only thing that will preserve democracy is people who believe in it, and act on their beliefs.

The European Union at the Breaking Point

The history of the European Union is one of greater and lesser crises that slow but do not stop progress toward integration. The founders' dream—a Europe at peace with itself and connected through countless bilateral, multilateral, and person-to-person ties—has already materialized. War between EU members has been avoided for six decades, and the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people has stitched the continent ever more closely together.

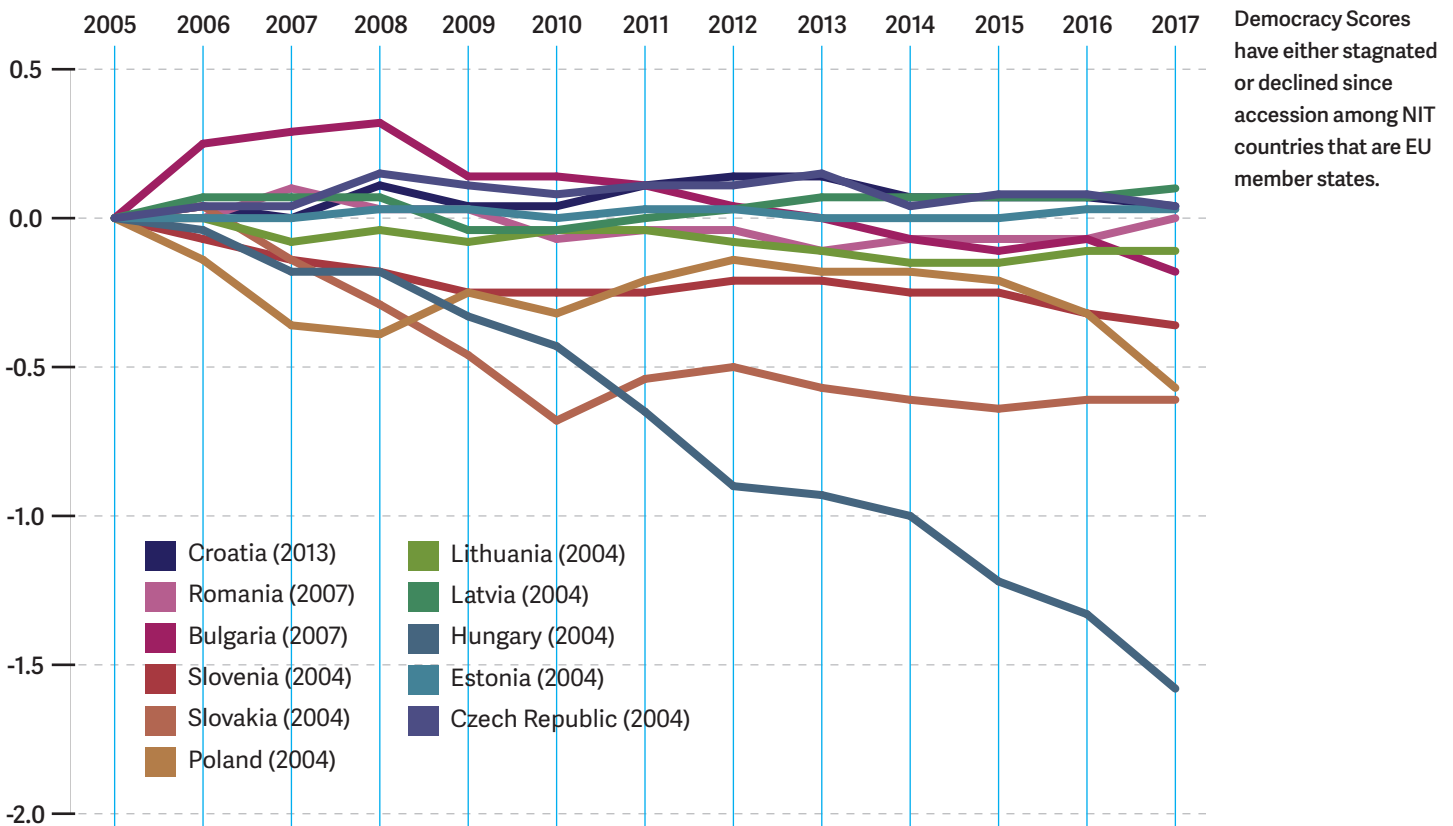
But the architects of integration also assumed that closer economic and interpersonal ties would eventually produce a strong European identity and smooth over national divisions. The lack of solidarity during the refugee and eurozone debt crises, which have prompted growing calls for return to a Europe of nation-states, shows that this assumption was painfully wrong. Faced with genuine institutional design failures, the EU has been unable to act in a way that would protect its own vulnerable citizens.

The last decade's institutional crises have reignited

the long-standing debate over whether Europe should have multiple “speeds,” with some states, most importantly Germany, pursuing deeper integration while others opt to back out or go no further. In most versions of this scenario, a “core” Europe that includes Germany, France, and certain Northern European neighbors would push ahead with integration, leaving the rest of the continent somewhere behind.

On the outside looking in at these proposals for a “core” or “multi-speed” Europe, the Visegrád countries, primarily Poland and Hungary, argue that the union should retain its 27 equal members (minus the United Kingdom), but that national parliaments and governments should be strengthened relative to the European institutions that make integration work—the “inter-governmental” model. At the same time, recognizing the changed geopolitical environment and fearing Russia's influence absent American leadership, they would also like to see the EU become a “superpower” and develop a common European army.

CHANGES IN EU MEMBER STATES' DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE ACCESSION



CHANGES IN DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE 2007 IN EU MEMBER STATES AND CANDIDATES

Among EU members and accession candidates in NIT, 11 countries have had net declines in their Democracy Scores in the past decade, 5 have improved, and 1 has had no net change.



The same paradox is clear in the Visegrád states' oxymoronic "flexible solidarity" approach to refugees, under which member states contribute only as much as they consider appropriate and possible. This call for both "less" and "more" Europe is really a request to continue free riding—receiving the EU's benefits while disregarding its obligations, including adherence to the rule of law.

The way forward is neither a retreat to the core nor a hollowed-out EU-27. To move beyond its current impasse, the EU has to give backbone to its shared values under the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The rise of populism within and beyond Europe can be an opportunity to do just that—a chance for the EU and its leading democrats to unify around a European vision that rejects the crude majoritarianism of the populists and their withdrawal behind closed national borders.

If Europe is to defend liberal democracy, it must

strengthen European institutions and hold renegades to account. Although the EU's flexibility is supposedly what has kept the bloc together, the "bend but don't break" approach has now reached its limits. It is time for the union to firm up.

A faltering engine for democratic change

The European Union has expanded eastward in three waves since this century began. The first, in 2004, took in much of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic states. Two subsequent waves in 2007 and 2013 brought Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia into the bloc. Eleven of the 29 states covered by *Nations in Transit* are now members of the EU; six more are at various stages of accession, and three have signed Association Agreements that their governments hope could lead to future membership. The EU has been the most important vehicle for promoting liberal democracy on the continent.

EU ACCESSION IN THE NATIONS IN TRANSIT REGION

The Democracy Scores of candidates for European Union membership are much lower than those of current member states.

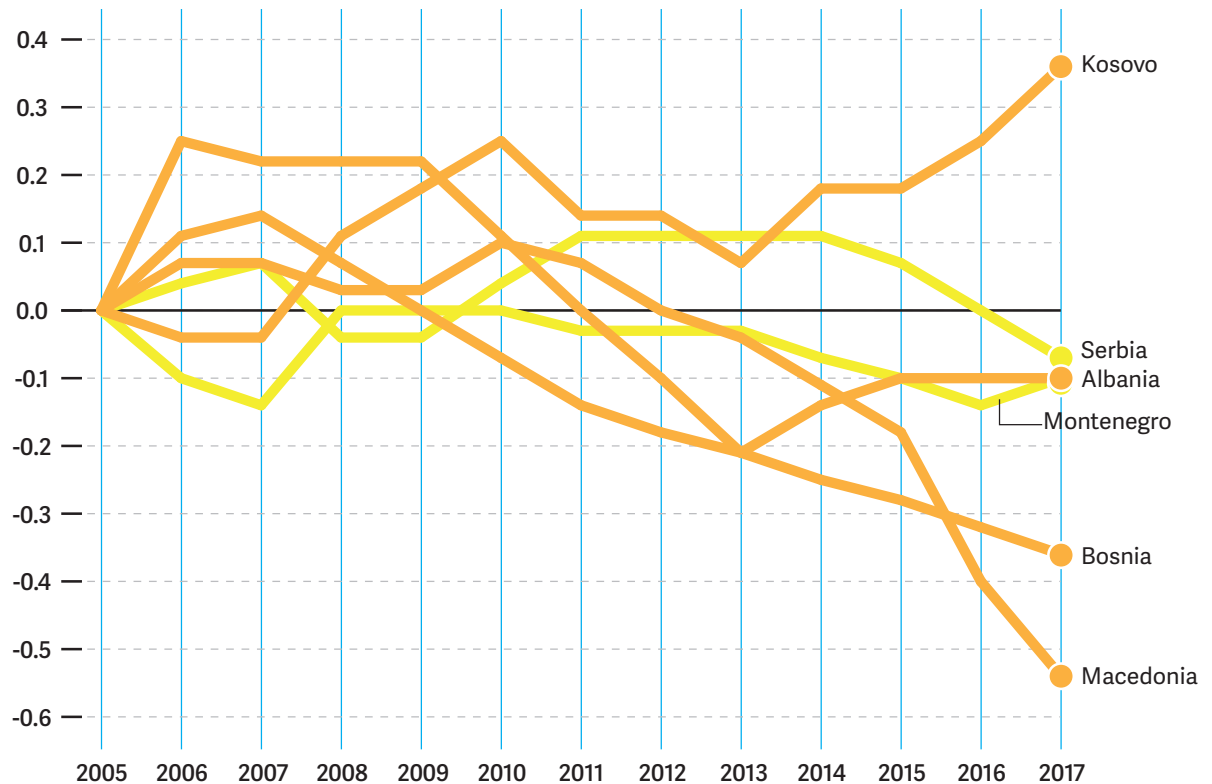
EU Graph Explainer

The graph shows the present status of countries on the clockwise path to EU accession, from initial Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) to full membership. Colors correspond to current Nations in Transit regime type. All states that joined in 2004 except Hungary are Consolidated Democracies (green). Hungary, all states that joined in 2007 and 2013, and candidates Serbia and Montenegro are Semi-Consolidated Democracies (yellow). Other applicants and SAA states are Transitional/Hybrid Regimes.



CHANGES IN BALKAN COUNTRIES' DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2005

Serbia's score is now the worst it has been since 2003, despite its progress in EU accession negotiations.



EU accession is a lengthy process with incentives and checks to ensure democratic reforms. Candidate states' laws are screened for compatibility with European legislation, with a strong focus on human rights and the buildup of institutions for democratic governance. Where inconsistencies exist, candidates' legal systems are overhauled through the opening and then closing of topical "chapters" in a procedure called "harmonization."

To facilitate democratization and respect for human rights, candidates are also provided with funding. Albania, for example, will receive €649.4 million in aid from 2014 to 2020 to focus on goals including improving democratic governance, strengthening the rule of law, and completing energy and infrastructure projects.

With democratic values under attack in several Central European member states, the question of whether the EU is actually capable of consolidating democracy through harmonization has pushed its way to the top of the agenda. Continuing assaults on civil society and the media, grand corruption, and flawed elections across the Balkans show that despite the opening of chapters and progress on paper, democratic norms are not taking root.

In Montenegro and Serbia, the two Balkan countries

furthest along in the accession process, problematic elections in 2016 exposed domestic volatility as well as a perfunctory understanding of electoral democracy. Election day in Montenegro featured a nationwide shut-down of mobile messaging applications and accusations from the authorities that Serbian nationalists had plotted a coup. As of February 2017, prosecutors were seeking the arrest of two opposition leaders in the alleged plot. The country's longtime prime minister, Milo Đukanović, stepped down following the elections, but talk of his return began immediately after he resigned. Such a short-lived "retirement" would echo his previous two breaks from politics in 2006 and 2010.

Serbia held its second snap elections since 2012 even though Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) already controlled an absolute majority in the parliament. The party retained its majority after the voting, which featured significant irregularities, but Vučić chose not to form a government for three and a half months, instead ruling through an interim government that enjoyed even less independence from his decisions than the formal governments that preceded and followed it.

Nationalist fear-mongering and hate speech also ramped up in 2016, with politicians and progovern-

ment tabloids branding partisan opponents and civil society activists as traitors who serve foreign interests. In Macedonia, former prime minister Nikola Gruevski implied that opposition leader Zoran Zaev should be assassinated. Meanwhile, intimidation of nongovernmental groups reached a new level with an initiative called “Stop Operation Soros,” founded by the editors of the state-run news agency and two progovernment news portals.

Many politicians played on ethnic divisions to advance their political goals. The leader of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Serb republic, Milorad Dodik, celebrated the founding of the semiautonomous entity in plain defiance of a ruling by the country’s Constitutional Court. Tensions are rising between Kosovo and Serbia in advance of the latter country’s presidential



In March 2016, the progovernment Serbian tabloid *Informer* claimed that investigative journalist Stevan Dojčinović was working with the mafia to attack the family of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić.

elections in April, and Gruevski in Macedonia has put his country’s multiethnic character at risk by courting nationalist sentiment against Albanians.

Since the end of the region’s wars in the 1990s, the EU’s dilemma in the Balkans has been to balance the need for long-term reform with the priority of maintaining stability in the short term. In practice, stability has nearly always won out. But while the EU has been carefully working to keep the peace, its institutional crises and broken promises have eroded its own credibility. The window for the EU to push through transformative reforms in the Balkans may have already closed, unless the union can make a major recommitment to its principles and find the will to confront political leaders who attack its fundamental values.

Poland and Hungary: The Populist Assault on Democracy

The *Nations in Transit* project began in 1995 with a number of baseline assumptions. One of them was that the countries included in the survey were in transition, but that their movement was unidirectional: freed from dictatorship, they were leaving their past behind and moving, some slowly, others with haste, toward liberal democracy. Although there was still a broad range of regime types even a decade later—9 of the 29 countries were Consolidated Democracies in 2007 while 5 were Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes—the accession of the Central European countries to the European Union seemed to support the assumption that once a country



Progovernment magazine *Do Rzeczy*: “Poland against the Gay Empire”

had achieved democracy, it would stay at that end of the scale.

Current conditions present a very different picture. The number of Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes has increased to 8, and the number of Consolidated Democracies has dropped to 7. Nearly all of the consolidated democracies have shown deterioration in the rule of law and adherence to democratic values. In the past 10 years, the average Democracy Score in Central Europe has declined faster than in either of the report’s two other subregions, the Balkans and Eurasia, with corruption and pressure on media accounting for much of the drop.

Poland's five declines left its score at its poorest point on record.



Mateusz Włodarczyk/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Members of the opposition hold signs saying “free media” in Poland’s parliament.

While Hungary has suffered the greatest decline, Poland’s trajectory has been equally troubling. In *Nations in Transit 2017*, both countries registered wide-ranging downgrades, with drops of 0.50 points on the 1-to-7 scale—reserved for dramatic changes—in two categories each.

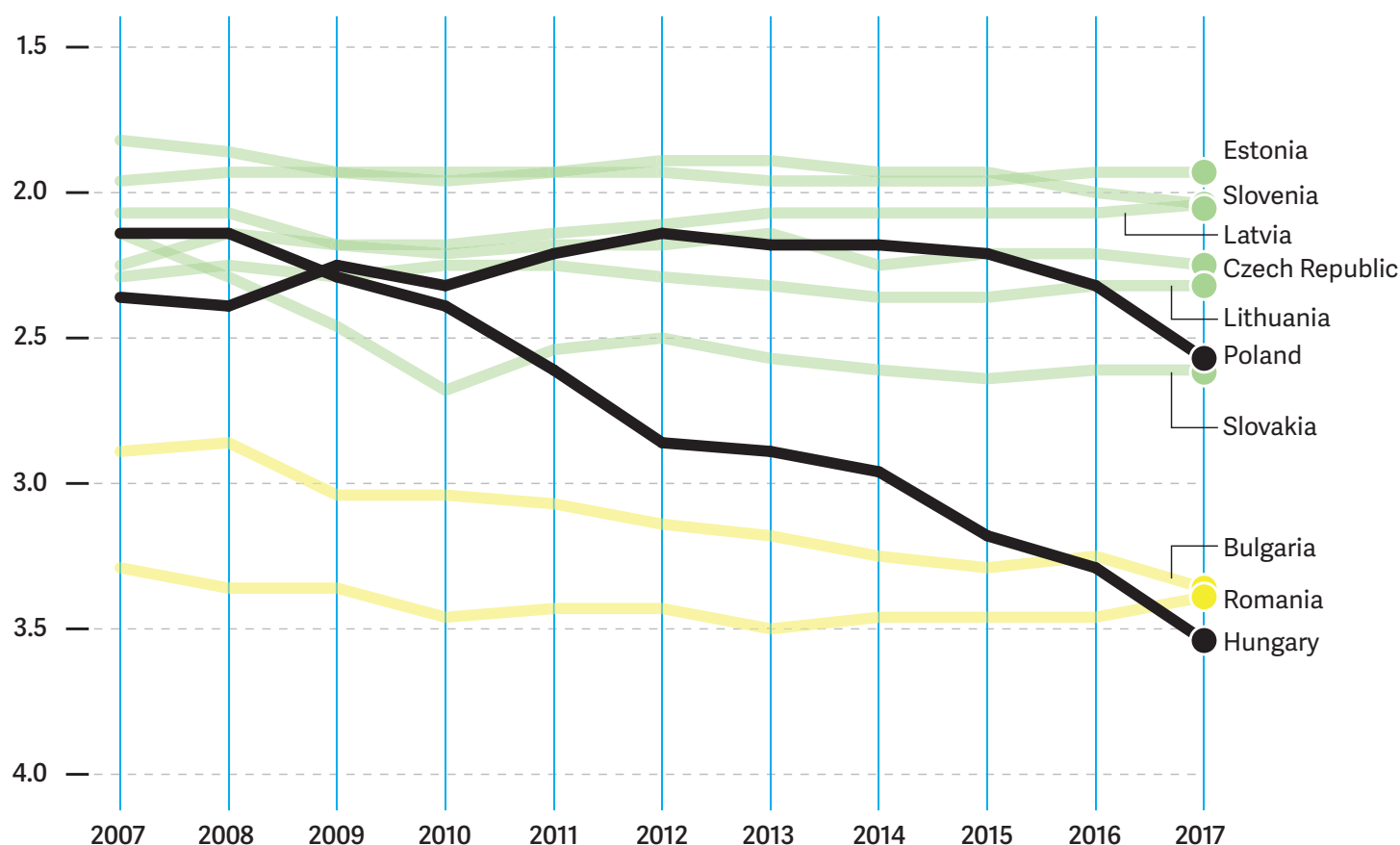
In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his ruling Fidesz party have entrenched themselves ever more firmly in power each year since 2010, increasingly stoking bigotry and hatred through a self-serving anti-immigration campaign. Having spent its first years rewriting the constitution, taking over the courts, and warping the electoral system, the government has now snuffed out most of the critical media and built an efficient machine of state capture and grand corruption. With the 2018 elections nearing, Fidesz is turning its attention to civil society, threatening to “sweep out” organizations backed by foreign funding. In Poland, the Law and Justice (PiS) party has proceed-

ed in a manner eerily similar to the first few years of the Fidesz government. Immediately after winning election in late 2015, PiS mounted an egregious attack on the Constitutional Tribunal and captured the still-influential public media by amending the law on the appointment of its top directors and changing the editorial policy.

It has deployed uncompromisingly populist rhetoric, reserving the harshest words for its political enemies—a category that encompasses independent judges, civil society activists, critical media outlets, and anyone else who disagrees with the ruling party and its leader, Jarosław Kaczyński.

The biggest difference between Orbán’s Hungary and Kaczyński’s Poland, however, is that PiS is transforming the Polish landscape at breakneck speed and in violation of the country’s own laws. With a parliamentary supermajority, Fidesz was able to rewrite the constitution and the legislative framework in ways that were

CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2007



formally legal, even though they clearly violated the principles of liberal democracy.

Nothing demonstrates PiS's utter contempt for the rule of law better than the way the party has neutered the Constitutional Tribunal, Poland's highest court. It first delegitimized the judges by accusing them of partisanship and, among other slurs, comparing them to "Iranian ayatollahs." It then proposed several rounds of unconstitutional legislation, including the introduction of a two-thirds majority requirement for tribunal rulings, even though the constitution clearly states that the tribunal votes by simple majority. The PiS government also ignored several rulings of the tribunal by refusing to publish them in the official register. By the end of 2016, the party had assumed control of the institution, appointing its own candidate to replace the retiring chief justice.

Both Poland and Hungary were exemplars of demo-

cratic transformation in the 1990s. The spectacular breakdown of democracy in these countries should serve as a warning about the fragility of the institutions that are necessary for liberal democracy, especially in settings where political norms have shallow roots and where populists are able to tap into broad social disaffection. Despite their apparent maturation, the media, the judiciary, and institutions of democratic representation in Poland and Hungary have turned out to be quite vulnerable, lacking both elite consensus on their inviolability and the necessary public support to turn back partisan attacks.

The reasons for the success of the populist assault in Central Europe are manifold, but the years following EU accession in 2004 have shown that superficial compliance with and outside recognition of democratic norms are no substitute for proper internalization, and can actually engender a dangerous complacency that lays the groundwork for state capture.

Hungary's Democracy Score is now the worst in the Central Europe region after five more declines in this year's report.

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017



SURVEY FINDINGS

Regime Type	No. of countries							
Consolidated Democracy (CD)								7
Semi-Consolidated Democracy (SCD)								6
Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime (T/H)								7
Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (SCA)								1
Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (CA)								8
Total								29

The map reflects the findings of Freedom House’s *Nations in Transit* 2017 survey, which assesses the status of democratic development in 29 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia during 2016. Freedom House introduced a Democracy Score—an average of each country’s ratings on all of the indicators covered by *Nations in Transit*—beginning with the 2004 edition. The Democracy Score is designed to simplify analysis of the countries’ overall progress or deterioration from year to year. Based on the Democracy Score and its scale of 1 to 7, Freedom House has defined the following regime types: **Consolidated Democracy (1–3)**, **Semi-Consolidated Democracy (3–4)**, **Transitional Government/Hybrid Regime (4–5)**, **Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (5–6)**, and **Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (6–7)**.

Illiberal Civil Society: Pushing into the Mainstream in Central Europe

Central Europe's average Civil Society score is at its poorest in NIT's history.

In *Nations in Transit 2017*, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine suffered declines on the Civil Society indicator due to the increased influence of violent extremist and intolerant groups on the public discourse. These four countries have among the best Civil Society scores in the survey (above 2.50 out of 7.00). Violent extremist groups have been noted in a number of other countries covered by the report, but they were not downgraded because the scores were already low enough to account for the presence of such groups.

The local causes for the growth in extremist activity vary, but everywhere they thrive, these forces have built on existing societal prejudice and intolerance toward certain minority groups. In the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria, the ongoing refugee crisis reawakened illiberal groups and spurred a sharp rise in hate speech and radical mobilization. Vigilante units that had previously focused on intimidating Romany communities in small towns turned to patrolling train cars and border areas in 2015 and 2016, with some attacking refugees and posing as “migrant hunters.”

Politicians in all three countries courted the extremists, sometimes explicitly. In the Czech Republic, President Miloš Zeman cheered on the Islamophobic far-right, appearing at rallies for the “Bloc Against Islam.” In Bulgaria, the dominant center-right Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party harnessed populist rhetoric, cooperating with the extremist Patriotic Front in government and banning the full-face veil. The political strategy did not always work: Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico tacked hard to the antirefugee right during 2015 and 2016, but his party lost ground in elections even as the neofascist People's Party—Our Slovakia entered parliament for the first time alongside a number of other outsider parties.

In Ukraine, the radical right has grown in the context of the war with Russia, which has left nearly 10,000 Ukrainians dead and understandably generated nationalist sentiment. After playing a major role in confronting the Russian invasion in 2014, far-right paramilitary groups have been pulled off the front lines, but they still play a provocative role in national politics, often with the tacit approval of the government. In 2016, right-wing protesters sacked the offices of a pro-Russian television station, Inter TV, and radical activists released the names and personal information of dozens of local and international journalists who had entered separatist-held areas of Donbas to report on the war. The minister of interior approvingly called the hackers “true patriots.”

Violent extremist and radical elements exist in every society, but they are usually relegated to the fringes in consolidated democracies. The danger in this part of Europe is that such groups—and the normalization of their extremism—will have a harmful influence on the framing of public discourse and eventually on public policy.

In all of these countries and in many others in the region, mainstream politicians now send rhetorical signals to the extremist fringe to establish their bona fides with a dedicated subculture that scorns liberal democracy. Radicals have successfully pushed other actors to render complex issues in black and white, treating any type of caution or compromise as a betrayal. While truly extremist groups are typically only one part of a diverse civic ecosystem, their growing symbiotic relationships with prominent politicians represent a major threat to democratic norms, which prize rational dialogue and reject violence and persecution of minorities.

The Baltics: Stability or Stagnation?

The three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are among the best performers in *Nations in Transit*. Since 2005, they have consistently been among the top five countries in the survey. At the same time, their scores have moved very little over the last decade. As of *Nations in Transit 2017*, Estonia and Latvia have slightly better overall Democracy Scores than in 2005, and Lithuania's is slightly worse. But the changes are extremely small: On the report's scale of 1 to 7, even the largest change in the past 12 years, Lithuania's, is a decline of just 0.11 points.

This raises the question of whether the Baltic states are experiencing stability or stagnation. Unfortunately, the evidence points toward stagnation.

There is still room for improvement in the scores of all three countries. Their ratings for corruption in particular are a drag on their overall scores, as is the case in most countries in the report. High-level corruption often provides an opening for outsider and populist parties, and recent events in the Baltics have revealed popular dissatisfaction with establishment parties.

In Lithuania, an outsider party, the Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union (LPGU), secured an unexpected plurality in the 2016 parliamentary elections after running on a somewhat populist platform. It now governs in coalition with mainstream parties, marking the first time since 2004 that a party other than the Social Democrats or Christian Democrats has won the general elections.

In Estonia, the center-right Reform Party (RP) was toppled in a sudden governmental shake-up in 2016, when the left-wing opposition Center Party (CP) cut a deal with one of the RP's partners and put itself at the head of a ruling coalition for the first time in 25 years. The change in government was enabled by the CP's removal of its longtime leader, Edgar Savisaar, who had become persona non grata among other parties in Estonia due to corruption allegations and his relatively pro-Russian views. With Savisaar out, smaller parties leapt at the chance to collaborate with the CP and take revenge on the RP for old slights.

In Latvia, there were no elections or changes of government in 2016, but populist discourse is becoming more pervasive, and municipal elections

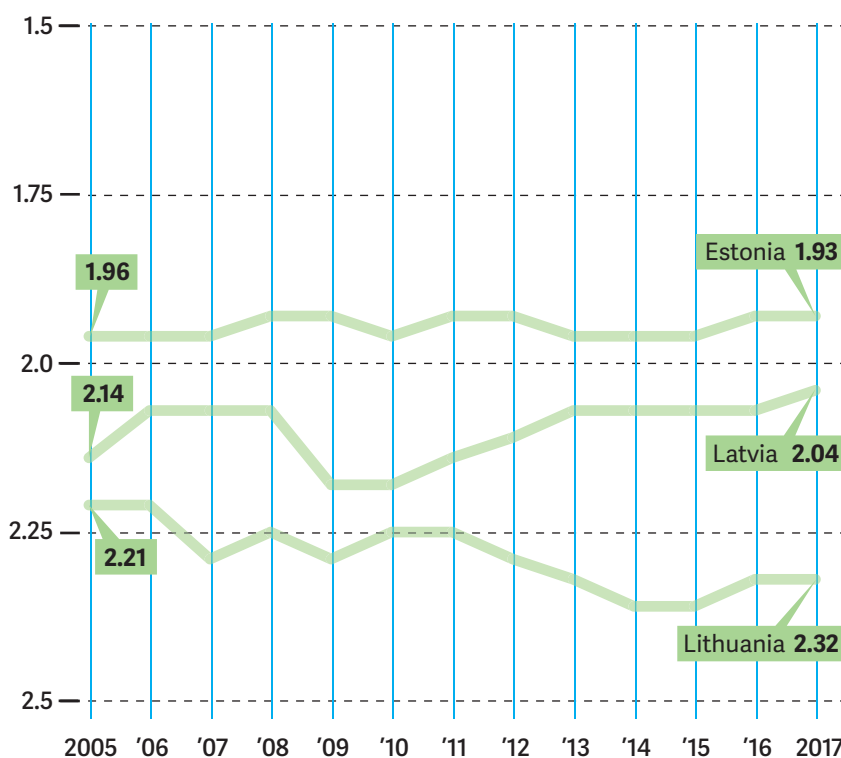
in 2017 may see outsider candidates like the former actor Artuss Kaimiņš threaten the establishment. Both Latvia and Estonia already have far-right parties in the parliament, and their political debates in 2015 featured demonization of refugees (a dearth of actual refugees notwithstanding), indicating that some constituencies in these countries are ripe for radicalization.

This is not to say that the Baltic states are about to be engulfed in populism. Collective memories of Soviet occupation and the continuing threat to Baltic sovereignty from Russia enforce a collective sense of responsibility and an orientation toward Euro-Atlantic institutions that have made populist politics relatively unappealing.

Instead, the main risks are that Russia—emboldened by changes in U.S. policy—will expose weaknesses in NATO's commitment to the Baltics, and that populations threatened by Russia will then be more open to nationalist appeals by their own politicians. Such developments would test popular and elite attachments to democratic institutions, and these countries' current stagnation could turn to erosion.

The Baltics' scores are the best in this year's survey, with Estonia in first and Latvia in second place.

BALTIC COUNTRIES' DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2007



Don't Count Ukraine Out

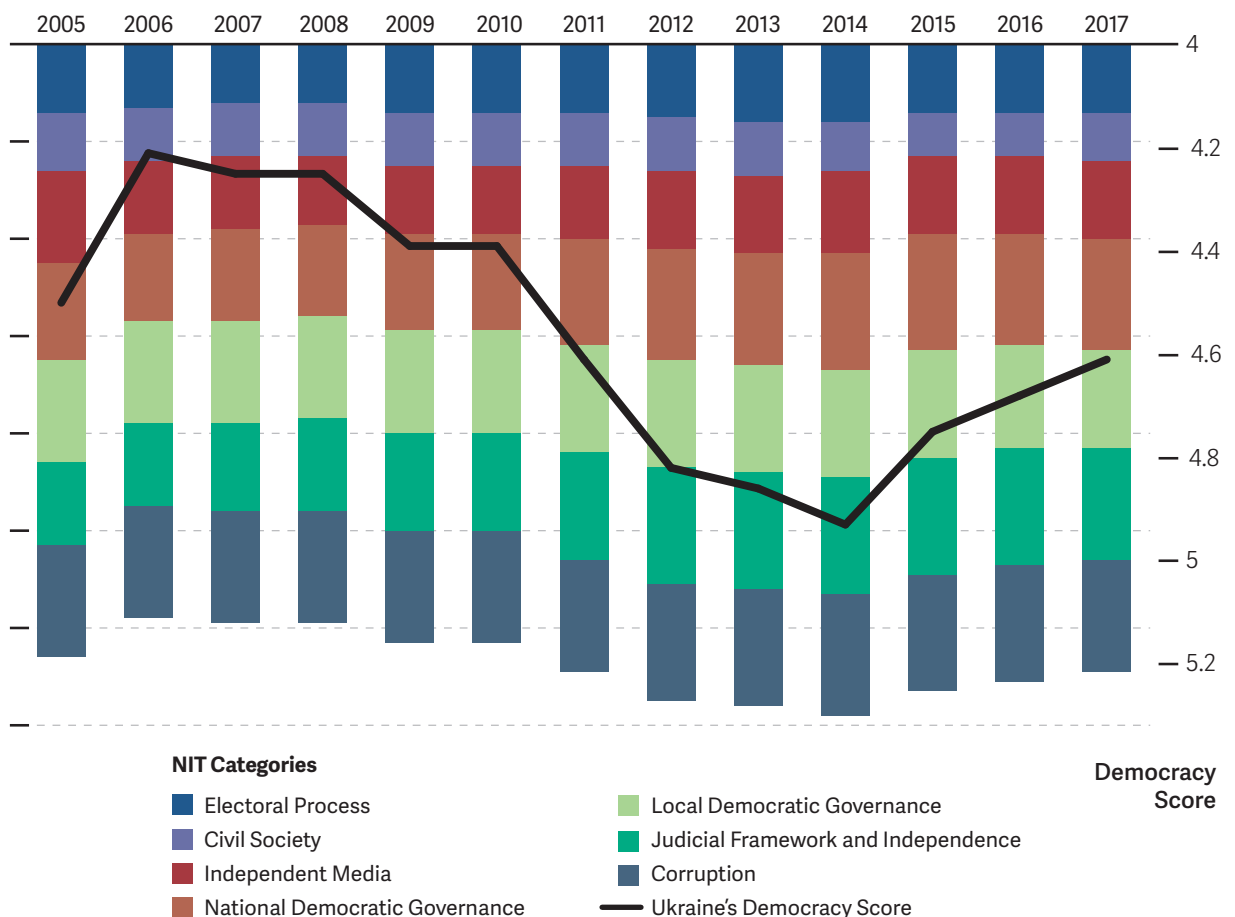
Progress in Ukraine since the revolution in 2014 has not been as decisive as reformers in the country, or the international community, would like. Corruption still permeates the state, and it is clear that the political will at the top of the government has not been sufficient to dismantle the old system. Russia's invasion of eastern Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea have undermined Ukraine's economy and poisoned its politics, giving officials ample excuses for slowing down or avoiding major reforms.

Yet there have been significant changes. Passionate and professional civil society groups have kept the pressure up on the government, with the backing of the United States, the European Union, and the International Monetary Fund. In 2016, the parliament passed wide-ranging judicial reforms, including items that required constitutional changes, and put in place a comprehensive anticorruption framework modeled on EU best practices. A major decentralization project

that involves combining local government units into larger entities has started to make an impact in the form of more efficient and better local governance.

It is not a small thing to transform a state. Ukraine has had other opportunities and failed, most notably after the Orange Revolution. What makes this time different is the desperation of Ukraine's situation: Russia's seizure of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine are forcing the state to completely reorient its economy and its society toward the EU. Competing in the European market requires a much higher level of efficiency, stronger regulations, and better rule of law than was needed for trade with Russia. So long as Ukraine's international partners remain clear about the fundamental principles that will lead to success, and continue to back change with both short-term and long-term incentives, the country will have no choice but to press ahead with major reforms.

UKRAINE DEMOCRACY SCORES SINCE NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2005



Armenia and Kyrgyzstan: Changing Constitutions to Keep Things the Same

One benchmark for distinguishing between democratic and nondemocratic systems is the ability of voters to change their leadership through elections. In the last two years, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have shifted from presidential to parliamentary systems in an attempt to make such political change harder to achieve.

Presidents Serzh Sargsyan of Armenia and Almazbek Atambayev of Kyrgyzstan argued that constitutional revisions were needed to bolster the democratic power of parliaments in a region where strongman syndrome is endemic. But the actual effect of the reforms will be to entrench the presidents' parties and an oligarchic elite even further.

Armenia and Kyrgyzstan fall near the threshold for designation as a Consolidated Authoritarian Regime in the *Nations in Transit* methodology, but each retains a measure of political pluralism that prevents total domination by one person or group. In both cases, the incumbent presidents are approaching the end of their terms and cannot run again. Moreover, they cannot be confident that fellow elites or the public would not revolt if they simply extended their terms, either legally or extralegally. The constitutional overhauls are seen as a way for Sargsyan and Atambayev to preserve their power (and assets) without risking an open confrontation.

Certainly both presidents pulled out all the stops to ensure the success of the constitutional referendums. In Armenia, after the oligarch and Prosperous Armenia Party leader Gagik Tsarukyan (better known by his nickname Dodi Gago) called on Sargsyan to resign, the president expelled him from the National Security Council and ordered an investigation of his business dealings. Tsarukyan backed off and withdrew from politics for over a year.

In Kyrgyzstan, the constitutional reform was not on the agenda at all in the fall 2015 general elections. The president raised it only several months later, after the parliament had already convened. When the governing coalition declined to take up Atambayev's proposal in parliament in October 2016, Atambayev pulled strings to force the coalition's collapse and install a more pliant alliance that supported the referendum.

And in both countries, the referendums themselves were held on short notice, with little debate and poor public understanding of the changes, and with intim-

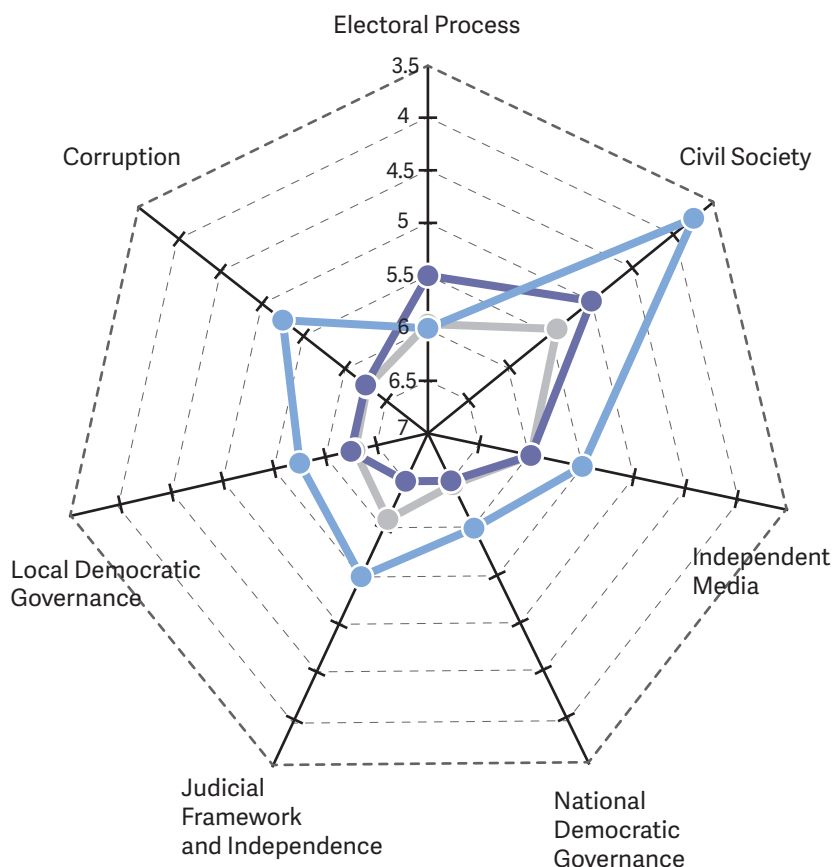
idation and state patronage that ensured passage. In Armenia, a monitoring mission from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe noted that violations on the day of the referendum were so flagrant as to cause an "alteration of the actual voting results."

So what did Atambayev and Sargsyan gain from the new constitutional arrangements?

In Armenia's case, aside from the shift of powers to the parliament, the most significant provision of the revised constitution was a new system for ensuring a "stable majority" following elections. This procedure—designed for countries that have suffered from perennially unstable coalitions, which Armenia has not—grants extra seats to the party that wins a plurality in the general

ARMENIA AND KYRGYZSTAN NIT 2017 RATINGS

● Armenia ● Kyrgyzstan ● Eurasia Average



Each spoke of the spider graph represents one category of NIT rated from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The NIT 2017 ratings reflect the period from January 1 through December 31, 2016.

elections, strengthening its hand in government formation. The result in Armenia will be a government and parliament dominated by Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), which Sargsyan can continue to lead either officially or from behind the scenes; he has been ambiguous about whether he would serve as prime minister. The parliamentary system is simply a mechanism for ensuring that the RPA will remain in power for the foreseeable future, despite the country's increasingly frequent outbreaks of antigovernment protest.

In Kyrgyzstan, the constitutional changes were more of a deal among a number of groups in the elite, most importantly President Atambayev and his Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK). The revisions actually do not weaken the presidency much at all. What they do is reduce the independence of the judiciary and increase the control of the prime

minister over the governmental coalition. It will be much more difficult for dissenting factions within the ruling coalition to break away, and the prime minister will enjoy greater control over local governments, at the expense of local elected officials. The changes will effectively bolster the position of an oligarchic ruling class with little popularity or legitimacy.

The Armenian and Kyrgyzstani cases illustrate how authoritarianism continues to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, even in weaker states with super-ficially competitive political environments. Faced with large-scale popular discontent and lacking the resources to completely co-opt or repress civil society and the opposition, presidents and ruling parties in these countries must find more subtle ways of retaining their grip on power. They may be changing the very structure of the state, but the goal is to preserve the political status quo.

Central Asia: The Transition Will Not Be Televised



Uzbekistan's first new president since 1991, former prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Valery Sharifulin/
TASS via Getty Images

One of the most important events in the *Nations in Transit* region last year was something that did not happen.

Observers have long speculated about the chaos that might ensue after the death of one of Eurasia's aging dictators. But when Islam Karimov—Uzbekistan's only president since independence in 1991—fell

ill and then died in early September, the transition was seamless. After a few days of speculation while Karimov was hospitalized, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev emerged as the clear successor. He presided over Karimov's funeral, then took over the presidency in violation of the constitution, which stipulates a transfer of power to the speaker of parliament when the president is incapacitated. Mirziyoyev dominated snap elections with no genuine opposition in December, and now is turning to the other two men named as potential Karimov successors: Rustam Inoyatov, head of the security services, and Rustam Azimov, until recently the finance minister.

Mirziyoyev is not in the clear yet. According to social media and rare journalistic accounts, the economic crisis that started with the global drop in oil prices in 2014 is far more serious inside Uzbekistan than the state will admit. With fewer hard-currency remittances from Uzbek migrant workers in Russia and weaker commodity exports, the country's long-standing policy

of keeping a nonconvertible local currency has gone from being a drag on growth to a severe structural problem that will require painful remedies.

While he still has the advantage of novelty, Mirziyoyev may want to make these and other overdue changes to liberalize Uzbekistan's economy and get ahead of the bigger problems that have been mounting during the country's long and futile pursuit of autarky. But if he does so, he will threaten his own control, as the reforms he has to enact will likely result in significant short-term suffering, and the interests that benefit from the current system will mobilize to protect their investments.

The same dilemma pertains in Kazakhstan, where President Nursultan Nazarbayev is now the oldest serving leader in Eurasia, and there is no guarantee that the country will avoid a fractious competition for power when he dies. A personalized system by definition depends on personalities, and the arrangements that elites make among themselves to keep or transfer power can break down in unpredictable ways. Kazakhstan's always-frequent cabinet shuffles and regime purges have reached a frantic pace in the last three years. With neither oil prices nor the Russian economy likely to recover soon, Kazakhstan's economy is struggling, and nationalist voices are gaining ground. The early 2017 announcement that the country will shift to a putatively parliamentary system seems like just another coat of paint on the old democratic façade, an attempt to defer yet again an actual separation of powers.

The contradictions of these authoritarian systems are clear to everyone. Yet somehow, Central Asia's brittle regimes sputter on. The elites themselves probably recognize that their hollowed-out institutions depend on a single paramount leader, providing an incentive to quickly accept the anointed successor and keep the system afloat. As of early

2017, Mirziyoyev's ascension seems to show that these personalized states are just institutionalized enough to prevent the apparatus from completely breaking down. But they have yet to reach the end of their economic troubles, and history suggests that supposedly eternal regimes often seem stable until the moment of their collapse.

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017: OVERVIEW OF SCORE CHANGES

▼ Decline ▲ Improvement □ Unchanged

	COUNTRY	DS 2017	EP	CS	IM	NDG	LDG	JFI	CO
BALKANS	Albania	4.14							
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.50 to 4.54				▼			
	Croatia	3.68 to 3.71			▼				
	Kosovo	5.07 to 4.96			▲			▲	▲
	Macedonia	4.29 to 4.43	▼			▼		▼	▼
	Montenegro	3.96 to 3.89							▲
	Serbia	3.75 to 3.82	▼			▼			
CENTRAL EUROPE	Bulgaria	3.25 to 3.36		▼	▼	▼			
	Czech Republic	2.21 to 2.25		▼					
	Estonia	1.93							
	Hungary	3.29 to 3.54	▼	▼	▼	▼			▼
	Latvia	2.07 to 2.04						▲	
	Lithuania	2.32							
	Poland	2.32 to 2.57		▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	
	Romania	3.46 to 3.39	▲			▲			
	Slovakia	2.61		▼	▲				
	Slovenia	2.00 to 2.04				▼			
EURASIA	Armenia	5.36 to 5.39	▼		▲	▼			
	Azerbaijan	6.86 to 6.93				▼			▼
	Belarus	6.64 to 6.61				▲			
	Georgia	4.61							
	Kazakhstan	6.61 to 6.64							▼
	Kyrgyzstan	5.89 to 6.00	▼	▼				▼	
	Moldova	4.89 to 4.93						▼	
	Russia	6.50 to 6.57		▼				▼	
	Tajikistan	6.54 to 6.64			▼			▼	▼
	Turkmenistan	6.93 to 6.96							▼
	Ukraine	4.68 to 4.61		▼			▲	▲	▲
	Uzbekistan	6.93 to 6.96							▼

Categories:

EP – Electoral Process

CS – Civil Society

IM – Independent Media

NDG – National Democratic Governance

LDG – Local Democratic Governance

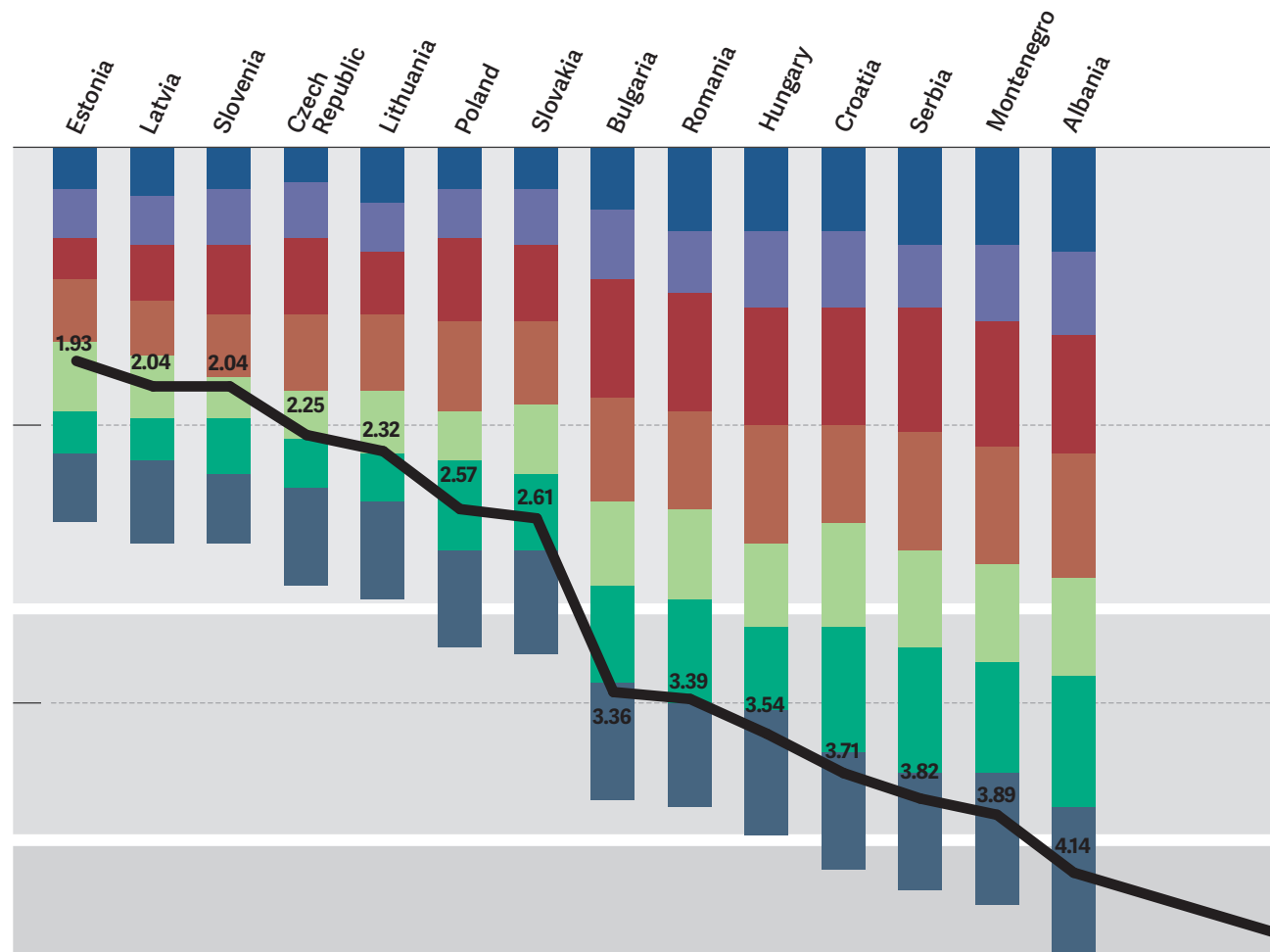
JFI – Judicial Framework and Independence

CO – Corruption

DS – Democracy Score

The NIT ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The NIT 2017 ratings reflect the period from 1 January through 31 December 2016.

Nations in Transit 2017 Scores



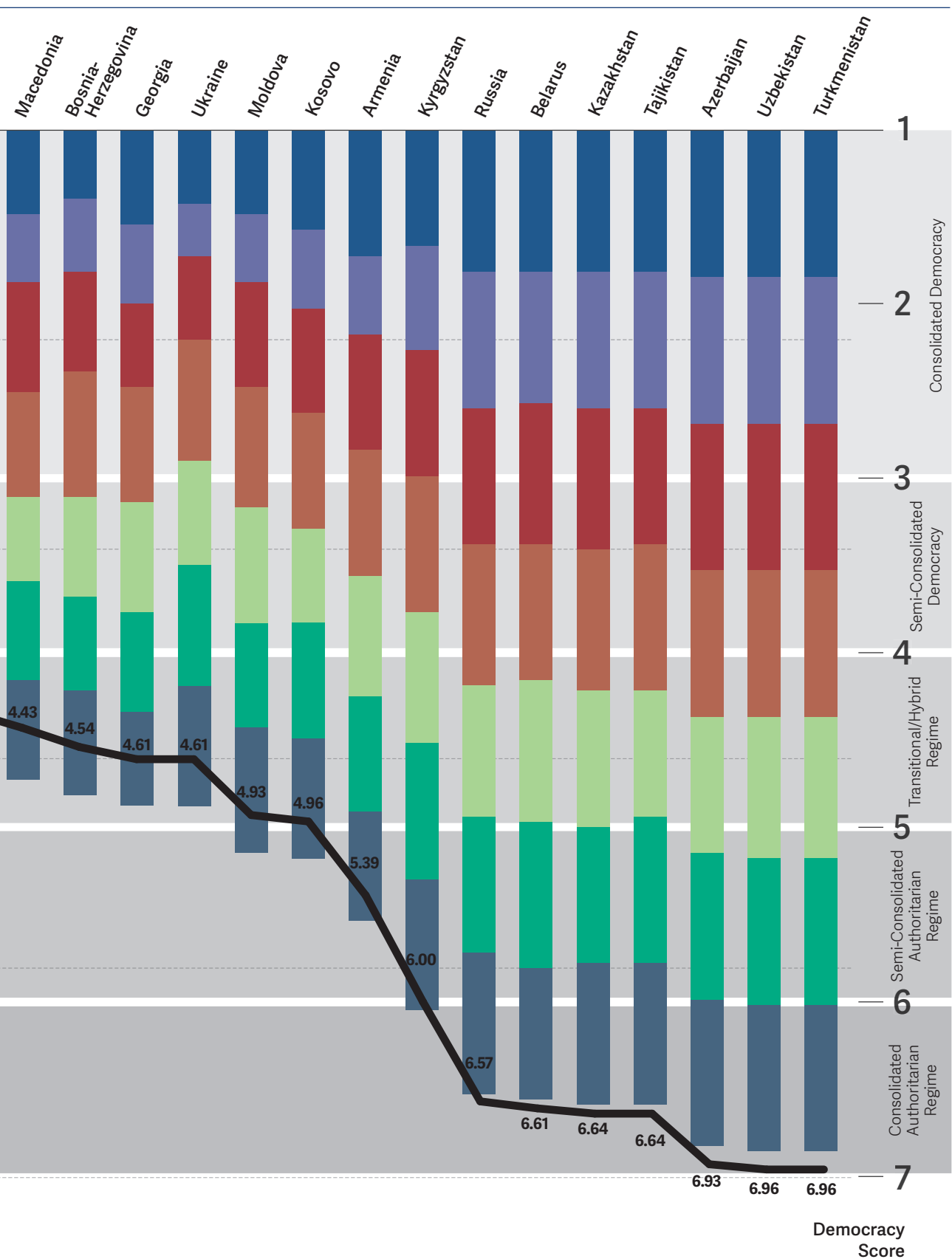
Nations in Transit scores its 29 countries on a scale of 1 to 7 in seven categories: National Democratic Governance, Local Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Independent Media, Civil Society, Judicial Framework and Independence, and Corruption. Category scores are based on a detailed list of questions available on page 22. These category scores are straight-averaged to create a country's "Democracy Score" on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most democratic, and 7 the least.

Democracy Scores are used to assign the following regime classifications:

- 1–3** Consolidated Democracy
- 3–4** Semi-Consolidated Democracy
- 4–5** Transitional/Hybrid Regime
- 5–6** Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime
- 6–7** Consolidated Authoritarian Regime

NIT Categories

- Electoral Process
- Civil Society
- Independent Media
- National Democratic Governance
- Local Democratic Governance
- Judicial Framework and Independence
- Corruption
- Each Country's Democracy Score



Methodology

Nations in Transit 2017 measures progress and setbacks for democratization in 29 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia. The 21st edition of this annual study covers events from January 1 through December 31, 2016. In consultation with country report authors, a panel of academic advisers, and a group of regional expert reviewers, Freedom House provides numerical ratings for each country on seven indicators:

- **National Democratic Governance.** Considers the democratic character and stability of the governmental system; the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of legislative and executive branches; and the democratic oversight of military and security services.
- **Electoral Process.** Examines national executive and legislative elections, electoral processes, the development of multiparty systems, and popular participation in the political process.
- **Civil Society.** Assesses the growth of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), their organizational capacity and financial sustainability, and the legal and political environment in which they function; the development of free trade unions; and interest group participation in the policy process.
- **Independent Media.** Addresses the current state of press freedom, including libel laws, harassment of journalists, and editorial independence; the emergence of a financially viable private press; and internet access for private citizens.
- **Local Democratic Governance.** Considers the decentralization of power; the responsibilities, election, and capacity of local governmental bodies; and the transparency and accountability of local authorities.
- **Judicial Framework and Independence.** Highlights constitutional reform, human rights protections, criminal code reform, judicial independence, the status of ethnic minority rights, guarantees of equality before the law, treatment of suspects and prisoners, and compliance with judicial decisions.
- **Corruption.** Focuses on public perceptions of corruption, the business interests of top policymakers, laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest, and the efficacy of anticorruption mechanisms.

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic progress. Minor to moderate developments typically warrant a positive or negative change of a quarter point (0.25), while significant developments warrant a half point (0.50). It is rare for any category to change by more than a half point in a single year.

A country's Democracy Score is the average of its ratings on all seven indicators covered by *Nations in Transit*. Based on the Democracy Score, Freedom House assigns each country to one of the following regime types:

Consolidated Democracies (1.00–2.99): Countries receiving this classification embody the best policies and practices of liberal democracy, but may face challenges—often associated with corruption—that contribute to a slightly lower score.

Semi-Consolidated Democracies (3.00–3.99): Countries receiving this score are electoral democracies that meet relatively high standards for the selection of national leaders but exhibit weaknesses in their defense of political rights and civil liberties.

Transitional or Hybrid Regimes (4.00–4.99): Countries receiving this score are typically electoral democracies where democratic institutions are fragile, and substantial challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties exist.

Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes (5.00–5.99): Countries receiving this score attempt to mask authoritarianism or rely on informal power structures with limited respect for the institutions and practices of democracy. They typically fail to meet even the minimum standards of electoral democracy.

Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes (6.00–7.00): Countries receiving this score are closed societies in which dictators prevent political competition and pluralism and are responsible for widespread violations of basic political, civil, and human rights.

Nations in Transit does not rate governments per se, nor does it rate countries based on governmental intentions or legislation alone. Rather, a country's ratings are determined by considering the practical effect of the state and nongovernmental actors on an individual's rights and freedoms. A more detailed description of the methodology, including complete checklist questions for each democracy indicator, can be found at <https://freedom-house.org/report/nations-transit-2017/methodology>

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017: CATEGORY AND DEMOCRACY SCORE SUMMARY

Countries are rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic progress. The average of these ratings is each country's Democracy Score **(DS)**.

Categories

EP - Electoral Process
CS - Civil Society
IM - Independent Media

NDG - National Democratic Governance

LDG - Local Democratic Governance

JFI - Judicial Framework and Independence

CO - Corruption

Country	CATEGORIES							
	EP	CS	IM	NDG	LDG	JFI	CO	DS
Estonia	1.50	1.75	1.50	2.25	2.50	1.50	2.50	1.93
Latvia	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.25	1.50	3.00	2.04
Slovenia	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.25	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.04
Czech Republic	1.25	2.00	2.75	2.75	1.75	1.75	3.50	2.25
Lithuania	2.00	1.75	2.25	2.75	2.25	1.75	3.50	2.32
Poland	1.50	1.75	3.00	3.25	1.75	3.25	3.50	2.57
Slovakia	1.50	2.00	2.75	3.00	2.50	2.75	3.75	2.61
Bulgaria	2.25	2.50	4.25	3.75	3.00	3.50	4.25	3.36
Romania	3.00	2.25	4.25	3.50	3.25	3.75	3.75	3.39
Hungary	3.00	2.75	4.25	4.25	3.00	3.00	4.50	3.54
Croatia	3.00	2.75	4.25	3.50	3.75	4.50	4.25	3.71
Serbia	3.50	2.25	4.50	4.25	3.50	4.50	4.25	3.82
Montenegro	3.50	2.75	4.50	4.25	3.50	4.00	4.75	3.89
Albania	3.75	3.00	4.25	4.50	3.50	4.75	5.25	4.14
Macedonia	4.00	3.25	5.25	5.00	4.00	4.75	4.75	4.43
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.25	3.50	4.75	6.00	4.75	4.50	5.00	4.54
Georgia	4.50	3.75	4.00	5.50	5.25	4.75	4.50	4.61
Ukraine	3.50	2.50	4.00	5.75	5.00	5.75	5.75	4.61
Moldova	4.00	3.25	5.00	5.75	5.50	5.00	6.00	4.93
Kosovo	4.75	3.75	5.00	5.50	4.50	5.50	5.75	4.96
Armenia	6.00	3.75	5.50	6.00	5.75	5.50	5.25	5.39
Kyrgyzstan	5.50	5.00	6.00	6.50	6.25	6.50	6.25	6.00
Russia	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.75	6.25	6.50	6.75	6.57
Belarus	6.75	6.25	6.75	6.50	6.75	7.00	6.25	6.61
Kazakhstan	6.75	6.50	6.75	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.75	6.64
Tajikistan	6.75	6.50	6.50	7.00	6.00	7.00	6.75	6.64
Azerbaijan	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	6.50	7.00	7.00	6.93
Turkmenistan	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	6.75	7.00	7.00	6.96
Uzbekistan	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	6.75	7.00	7.00	6.96
Average	4.02	3.68	4.62	4.84	4.29	4.58	4.97	4.43
Median	3.50	3.00	4.50	5.00	4.00	4.75	4.75	4.43

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017: DEMOCRACY SCORE HISTORY BY REGION

Country	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Central Europe										
Bulgaria	2.86	3.04	3.04	3.07	3.14	3.18	3.25	3.29	3.25	3.36 ▼
Czech Republic	2.14	2.18	2.21	2.18	2.18	2.14	2.25	2.21	2.21	2.25 ▼
Estonia	1.93	1.93	1.96	1.93	1.93	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.93	1.93
Hungary	2.14	2.29	2.39	2.61	2.86	2.89	2.96	3.18	3.29	3.54 ▼
Latvia	2.07	2.18	2.18	2.14	2.11	2.07	2.07	2.07	2.07	2.04 ▲
Lithuania	2.25	2.29	2.25	2.25	2.29	2.32	2.36	2.36	2.32	2.32
Poland	2.39	2.25	2.32	2.21	2.14	2.18	2.18	2.21	2.32	2.57 ▼
Romania	3.36	3.36	3.46	3.43	3.43	3.50	3.46	3.46	3.46	3.39 ▲
Slovakia	2.29	2.46	2.68	2.54	2.50	2.57	2.61	2.64	2.61	2.61
Slovenia	1.86	1.93	1.93	1.93	1.89	1.89	1.93	1.93	2.00	2.04 ▼
Average	2.33	2.39	2.44	2.43	2.45	2.47	2.50	2.53	2.55	2.61
Median	2.20	2.27	2.29	2.23	2.24	2.25	2.31	2.29	2.32	2.45

Balkans

Albania	3.82	3.82	3.93	4.04	4.14	4.25	4.18	4.14	4.14	4.14
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.11	4.18	4.25	4.32	4.36	4.39	4.43	4.46	4.5	4.54 ▼
Croatia	3.64	3.71	3.71	3.64	3.61	3.61	3.68	3.68	3.68	3.71 ▼
Kosovo	5.21	5.14	5.07	5.18	5.18	5.25	5.14	5.14	5.07	4.96 ▲
Macedonia	3.86	3.86	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	4.00	4.07	4.29	4.43 ▼
Montenegro	3.79	3.79	3.79	3.82	3.82	3.82	3.86	3.89	3.93	3.89 ▲
Serbia	3.79	3.79	3.71	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.68	3.75	3.82 ▼
Average	4.03	4.04	4.04	4.07	4.09	4.13	4.13	4.15	4.19	4.21
Median	3.82	3.82	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	4.00	4.07	4.14	4.14

Eurasia

Armenia	5.21	5.39	5.39	5.43	5.39	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.39 ▼
Azerbaijan	6.00	6.25	6.39	6.46	6.57	6.64	6.68	6.75	6.86	6.93 ▼
Belarus	6.71	6.57	6.50	6.57	6.68	6.71	6.71	6.71	6.64	6.61 ▲
Georgia	4.79	4.93	4.93	4.86	4.82	4.75	4.68	4.64	4.61	4.61
Kazakhstan	6.39	6.32	6.43	6.43	6.54	6.57	6.61	6.61	6.61	6.64 ▼
Kyrgyzstan	5.93	6.04	6.21	6.11	6.00	5.96	5.89	5.93	5.89	6.00 ▼
Moldova	5.00	5.07	5.14	4.96	4.89	4.82	4.86	4.86	4.89	4.93 ▼
Russia	5.96	6.11	6.14	6.18	6.18	6.21	6.29	6.46	6.5	6.57 ▼
Tajikistan	6.07	6.14	6.14	6.14	6.18	6.25	6.32	6.39	6.54	6.64 ▼
Turkmenistan	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96 ▼
Ukraine	4.25	4.39	4.39	4.61	4.82	4.86	4.93	4.75	4.68	4.61 ▲
Uzbekistan	6.86	6.89	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96 ▼
Average	5.84	5.92	5.96	5.97	5.99	6.00	6.02	6.03	6.04	6.06
Median	5.98	6.13	6.18	6.16	6.18	6.23	6.31	6.43	6.52	6.56

“The only thing that will
preserve democracy is
people who believe in it,
and act on their beliefs.”

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Freedom House is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

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