

CAN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES LEARN? THE CASES OF BELARUS, KAZAKHSTAN, RUSSIA AND  
UKRAINE.

BY STEPHEN HALL

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School of Government and Society

College of Social Sciences

University of Birmingham

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## ABSTRACT

Authoritarian learning has received scant attention in academic literature. This analysis emphasises how authoritarian regimes in the former-Soviet Union (FSU) learn from one another to consolidate authoritarianism. The argument is that regimes use similar tactics and institutions to consolidate authoritarianism. The study uses the cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine to offer comprehensive analysis of authoritarian consolidation. Using a methodology of case studies, longitudinal analysis and discourse analysis, I show that these regimes have become more authoritarian, using similar tactics and building comparable institutions. The research suggests that the cases share similar characteristics that seem unlikely to have appeared in each state by themselves. Learning is the most applicable explanation for this. The investigation uses hypotheses that make a strong case for authoritarian learning. The thesis argues that existing authoritarian typologies should explain a few cases which share similarities. Currently, literature uses a chosen rubric universally to explain many cases. This weakens typologies, exhausting effectiveness in explaining different authoritarian regimes.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Asia-Pacific Economic Council	APEC
Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation	BSEC
Collective Security Treaty Organisation	CSTO
Common Economic Space	CES
Commonwealth of Independent States	CIS
Council of the Baltic Sea States	CBSS
European Court of Human Rights	ECHR
Eurasian Economic Community	EurAsEc
Eurasian Union	EaU
European Union	EU
Former Soviet Union	FSU
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
Russia Today	RT
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation	SCO
World Trade Organisation	WTO

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2003 a new type of phenomenon occurred in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Its apogee arose a year later in 2004. The 'colour revolutions' that transpired in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) brought significant numbers of protestors onto the streets of Tbilisi and Kiev, demonstrating against alleged electoral fraud after a presidential election. The Kiev demonstrations (especially) snowballed into massive protests with demonstrators in Kiev setting-up a tent city on the central Maidan Square. Protests in both states escalated to such an extent that they precipitated regime collapse in Georgia and the Ukrainian election's being reheld. The new electoral results in Ukraine ousted Leonid Kuchma and his chosen successor (Viktor Yanukovych) from power in favour of the 'Orange coalition' leader Viktor Yushchenko.

Authoritarian regimes across the FSU saw the 'colour revolutions' as a call to arms to defeat democratisation and consolidate authoritarianism to maintain power. Having witnessed the collapse of the Georgian and Ukrainian regimes, they set about finding ways to undermine and stop potential domestic 'colour revolutions'. The most prominent examples of how authoritarian regimes overcame demonstrations and potential 'colour revolutions' were Belarus (2006 and 2010) and Armenia (2008). I am concerned here with authoritarian learning and how these regimes use learning to consolidate authoritarianism. The Belarusian regime learnt that by using force, police charges, tear gas and corralling demonstrators (in 2006) would save it from the same fate as the Ukrainian regime in 2004. This investigation is concerned with how authoritarian regimes learn from one another to use the same tactics, institutions and ways for consolidation.

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century authoritarian regimes in the FSU have consolidated (Silitski, 2010b: 341; Cameron and Ornstein, 2011a: 3). They have usurped any democratic institutions that existed in the region, turning them into authoritarian institutions that help regime consolidation. This authoritarian increase is part of a larger world development towards authoritarianism, which is aided by two of the world's great powers being non-democracies (China and Russia). Both have espoused an alternative to democracy (Ambrosio, 2009: 3), through the promotion of authoritarian models, mixed (in China's case, especially) with rapid economic growth. Having these alternative authoritarian models to the liberal-democratic paradigm, allows other regimes to copy them, making current prevalent democratic standards less certain (Gat, 2007: 59). These models have strengthened the possibility for authoritarian states to emerge and grow (Ambrosio, 2009: 3). Russia, as the designated successor state to the Soviet Union, has tried to incorporate its 'near-abroad' (the other FSU states), into its sphere of influence through promotion of regional organisations, like the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) (Cameron and Ornstein, 2011a: 5).

Existing academic literature on Russian foreign policy contends that Russia uses foreign policy to manipulate (Allison, 2004: 464) and maintain a sphere-of-influence (Stent, 2008: 1102; Averre, 2009: 1703). To protect its stability and preserve regional interests, Russia attempts to keep 'friendly' FSU regimes in power (Stent, 2008: 1100). By having a sphere of influence, Russia promotes its claims to be a world power (Trenin, 2009: 4-5). Other states in turn seek support from Russia for regime preservation and for ways of curbing democratic concepts from gaining a foothold in their own states (Averre, 2008: 36). I will assess the contestation as to whether Russia is promoting authoritarianism in the FSU.

I do not include the Baltic States within the FSU region. Whilst, the Baltic States were Soviet republics, they had previously been independent and so democratic recollection still existed (Pettai and Kreuzer, 1998: 149-150). Now they are considered democratic, through their membership of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). They share a cultural and political affinity with Central European states, making them distinct from other FSU states (Onken, 2007: 24). Map one (below), shows the states to be assessed in the longitudinal analysis section. These are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

### Map One: The FSU States



Source: Koyzis, 2009

The collapse of the Soviet Union drastically affected the newly emerging FSU states. The disintegration of the political institutions and the economies of the successor states in the early 1990s, brought demands for a return to strong leadership (reminiscent of the Brezhnev era in the Soviet Union). The public in the successor states hoped this would protect them from further economic shocks and political instability. Strong-man leadership resonated across the region, quickly becoming an integral aspect of most of the regions political systems (Pei, 1994: 2). In Central Asia, for instance, most incumbent presidents have remained in power since the collapse of the Soviet Union. I do not contend that Russia coerces other FSU states into becoming authoritarian, but, since the 'colour revolutions' it has tried to curb democracy in the region (Brudny and Finkel, 2011: 813; Recknagel, 2010). Nor do I confuse Russia's natural influence in it's 'near abroad' with authoritarian learning. Russia, as the regional hegemon, will naturally promote its interests in neighbouring states. This is not the same as authoritarian diffusion. However, Russia does promote itself as a model for others (Lukyanov, 2010).

Political learning is how politicians and the public learn from decisions. During the 'Arab Spring' (the people protest that occurred in North Africa and the Levante leading to the overthrow of governments in Egypt and Tunisia), protestors learnt tactics and means of participating to find effective ways to overcome authoritarian regimes (Heydemann and Leenders, 2011: 648: 651). Governments faced with mass-protest, followed examples other regimes in learning ways of regime preservation (Volpi, 2012: 3). The King of Morocco (Mohammad VI), seeing the conflagration in Egypt and Tunisia, reformed the constitution to placate protestors (El Amrani, 2012). Learning is a process where ideas are disseminated from various areas. Learning is understood here to be how people overcome authoritarian

regimes and how authoritarian regimes can overcome protests and consolidate power (Heydemann and Leenders, 2011: 649).

I state that the FSU regimes are authoritarian. Linz (1964: 297) defines authoritarianism as a regime limiting pluralism by not allowing citizens to compete for office, or participate in electing representatives. Levitsky and Way (2002: 52) argue that the FSU regimes cannot be classified as democracies, or truly dictatorial. If democracies are where government is chosen through open elections, nearly all adults can vote, political and civil liberties are preserved and those elected govern, then the FSU regimes cannot be classified as democratic (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53). By referring to FSU states as authoritarian, the analysis means a restrained authoritarianism, rather than the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. I stipulate that totalitarian regimes engage in mass ceremonies, with ranks of civilians (or the army) waving flags and holding torches “chanting combative slogans and sentimental hymns, cheering to the words of their fatherly leaders” (Schedler, 2013: 48). A prime example is North Korea, where the authorities stage massive shows of ‘support’. Authoritarian regimes, by contrast are less ideologically driven. These regimes (like, Russia) use youth groups and ‘staged’ protest movements to control the streets and curb potential opposition demonstrations (Robertson, 2010: 180).

Current literature on authoritarian learning in the FSU has only assessed Russia. The magnum opus is Ambrosio’s work (2009). He concentrated on Russia to “understand...political dynamics and future implications of this...authoritarian resurgence” (Ambrosio, 2009: 4). The current Russian regime has created a political system of limited competition, with state control of the economy and the media (White, 2011: 657;

Mikhelidze, 2011). The Kremlin insulates the political system from democratic encroachment (Ambrosio, 2009: 4). It has engaged in bolstering, subversion, insulation, coordination and redefinition (Ambrosio, 2009: 19-24), to protect the regime and other regional authoritarian regimes from democratic infringement (Ambrosio, 2009: 4-5). However, Ambrosio's work displays certain limitations. It does not look past Russia which serves as the sole case study (Ambrosio, 2009: 6). I will emphasise that an authoritarian trend occurs across the FSU and will expand the number of cases ascertaining whether learning occurs.

## METHODOLOGY

To comprehend how authoritarian regimes learn from one another, I will find applicable research methods to emphasise the concept of learning. The analysis will be qualitative. I agree with Bunce and Wolchik (2010a: 44-45) and Ambrosio (2009: 13) that it is difficult to measure learning quantitatively. However, I will use statistics for part of the analysis. Though difficult to quantify learning, it is possible to highlight authoritarian trends quantitatively. If whole regions become authoritarian, then quantitative data can draw inferences. A longitudinal analysis will illustrate potential assumptions. But, to sketch firm conclusions, a qualitative methodology needs to be central to the study.

I will provide a literature review to comprehend authoritarian learning. This will provide clarity to the researcher and reader and promotes thinking and aids the collection of data (Pain, 2012: 304; Smythe and Spence, 2012: 14). Similarly, it also highlights why the topic needs further expansion (Aveyard, 2007: 2). It is the most appropriate way to comprehend the intricacies of "qualitative analysis" and "explore...narratives" (Wiles *et al*,



2011: 590). A literature review provides the basis for formulating an argument, allowing the researcher to stipulate salient issues (Smythe and Spence, 2012: 14).

Discourse analysis primarily is the study of language. But, it allows the researcher to understand a social context, thus making inferences on an issue (Schiffrin, 2001: 56; de Melo Resende, 2012: 3). It allows scholars to comprehend why a particular set of language interpretations are being used, allowing interpretation of an issue through the language utilised. By doing various discourse analytical comparisons, researchers can track similarities in language and interpret a topic's meaning and discern whether the cases use comparable language (Brinton, 2001: 139). To interpret the discourse emanating from the chosen cases, I need to provide variables to track trends (Myhill, 2001: 162). I will take a critical discourse analysis approach. This allows the researcher to interpret language under analysis, making inferences from it that fit preconceived hypotheses (Van Dijk, 2001: 352). As I am concerned with understanding political institutions one needs to understand elite power relations and that politicians are highly adept at using language for purposes other than what they mean (Van Dijk, 2001: 356; Wilson, 2001: 400). Critical discourse analysis provides this. The discourse analysis chapter will show how I devised various variables to spot authoritarian trends and will emphasise similarities in language. The process of authoritarian learning in the four case studies (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine), will be assessed through elite speeches and government affiliated newspapers (*Rossiskaya Gazeta*, *Izvestiya*, *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, *Panorama*, *Vremya* and *Uryadovy Kurier*). By analysing language found in government discourse and these newspapers, I will infer that authoritarian learning occurs.

Case studies will be used to accentuate the learning process through the use of the multiple-case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 235). According to Yin (2003: 13) “a case study is an empirical inquiry” exploring “a phenomenon within its real life context”. Eckstein (2002: 123) argues that the case study is a technique “for gathering evidence”. According to Gerring (2004: 341) it is an “intensive study of a single unit...where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomenon”. The case study method can run the risk of selection-bias, particularly in small-N studies, where researchers select cases pertinent to conclusions they wish to draw (Collier and Mahoney, 1996: 57).

However, the case studies chosen here do not draw preconceived conclusions and could plausibly provide different conclusions than the ones I wish to infer. Yet, a small-N study helps the researcher build conjectural models from which to construct viable conclusions (Esping-Andersen and Prezowski, 2000). As Ragin (1987: 225) contends, small-N studies can be selective because they are in-depth and conclusive, allowing the researcher to find a wealth of evidence. I argue that incorporating examples from other FSU states (map one), in a longitudinal analysis will help ascertain trends in the four selected case studies. This will allow the research to follow the multiple-case study method. Likewise, having in-depth case studies draws tangible conclusions (Collier and Mahoney, 1996: 57). By treating variables as similar, I overcome selection-bias and counterfactual issues (Bergh, 2005). To understand authoritarian learning and provide answers to the research and sub-research questions it does not necessarily matter which cases are chosen. To ascertain a concept, the choice of case studies is not necessarily an issue. Yet, I am doing a small-N study, so it is not possible to be completely random (Seawright and Gerring, 2008: 295). The investigation has chosen four case studies (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine) that are

different and do not suffer from selection-bias, providing adequate understanding of authoritarian learning.

Russia has become an opponent of Western democracy. It engages in strengthening relationships with other authoritarian regimes, acting as a 'guardian' state and constraining democracy in the region (Ambrosio, 2009: 5). Belarus is included, as will be shown it is an outlier in the study and provides a different authoritarian typology to other FSU regimes (Wilson, 2011a: 177). Kazakhstan is chosen because its authoritarianism is dissimilar to Russia and Belarus. The regime has become entrenched whilst maintaining a facade of openness (Schatz, 2009: 208; Isaacs, 2010b: 17). Lastly, Ukraine provides an interesting comparison to the other three cases. It is not as authoritarian as the other cases but is in danger of becoming as authoritarian (Wilson, 2011b)<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst, Ukraine offers some differentiation, I will use a most similar systems design (MSSD). The four case studies are similar on the dependent variable (process of learning), but differ on the independent variable (what affects the learning) (Meckstroth, 1975: 137). The independent variables are: corruption, institutions, government policies, freedom of the press, and the strength of civil society and homogenisation of elites. I will utilise cases that are similar, but the phenomenon has different consequences for each case. Whilst, each case study has a distinctive political system, they have many similarities on the independent variables. I will use a loose application of MSSD, accounting for similarities in "background characteristics" between states (Anckar, 2008: 390). I am not using a most different systems

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<sup>1</sup> I wrote this paper in 2012 and 2013 and could not predict such a sequence of events occurring in Ukraine. However, I still argue that this corroborates the concept (as shown later) in the paper that Ukraine fits into the competitive authoritarian model as its institutions remain weak. I will refer to this later in the paper.

design (MDSD) as I will employ a small-N analysis and the cases have similarities. I am interested in understanding the dependent variable, which is applicable for MSSD, whereas MDSD focuses on the independent variable (Anckar, 2008: 390, 394). In choosing Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine, the analysis controls certain variables, by providing similar case studies.

The quantitative section of this investigation uses longitudinal analysis. Longitudinal analysis uses a regression model to create time-series data over a designated period. By using this research method I can pin-point specific issues and chart processes (Frees, 2004: 2). I will use data from Freedom House based on Freedom in the World (FitW), Nations in Transit (NiT) and Freedom of the Press (FotP). Freedom House has been accused of compiling data arbitrarily, grouping states together under a single label heading, rather than explaining differences between regimes (Giannone, 2010: 69). Ideologically, Freedom House has an agenda. Scores for regimes that do not espouse Western values (for instance, democracy and human rights) are discriminated against and in the past it has served as judge and jury, giving states preferential scores if they are allies of America (Giannone, 2010: 69, 70, 73-75). Consequently their data can be construed as tainted and this should be considered.

Yet, despite its failings the data is extensive and remains popular among social scientists for its broad analysis (Giannone, 2010: 69). Armstrong (2011: 661) contends that although Freedom House data has some statistical issues and can be ideologically driven, its data is rigorous. It may group disparate and distinctive states together, but in terms of statistical analysis, the data is succinct and viable (Armstrong, 2011: 662). In regards the

ideological implications of Freedom Houses data, Steiner (2012) contends that academics assess Freedom House's relationship with the American government and so infer that the data is somehow tainted. However, evidence for this is at best anecdotal. An analysis of Freedom House data over a time period shows that available data often criticises states that are considered American allies (Steiner, 2012). In using Freedom House data, I took the decision that its comprehensibility and extensive research outweighed the negative issues. It remains the most used and inclusive data-set for what I wish to do. I felt that possible methodological issues were outweighed by the inclusive data provided.

#### THE ARGUMENT FOR AUTHORITARIAN LEARNING AND CONSOLIDATION

How authoritarian regimes consolidate is integral for our understanding of an increasing number of political regimes. With alarming alacrity regimes are moving away from Western tenets of democracy towards political systems that possess democratic facades, but operate on very different political footings to what is considered democratic in existing academic literature. By analysing concepts of learning, diffusion and linkage and leverage, I will show how these regimes combine learning through dialogue and the use of shared tactics and institution building to consolidate authoritarianism. I contend that authoritarian learning is elite driven resting on elite dialogue. Ultimately, institutions are built by people and shaped by people's perceptions of society and daily events, but are elite instigated as these groups control the state. This is especially pertinent in the FSU where institutions were created in the successor states to the Soviet Union. Whilst (as I argue later) these institutions have a democratic facade they have been co-opted by regimes to consolidate authoritarianism. Even if a regime were to collapse I envisage that existing institutions would hamper any evolution by new elites towards

state reform<sup>2</sup>. Dialogue between elites provides the greatest understanding to authoritarian learning. Their interaction allows regimes to share ideas on tactics, institution building, the copying of legislation and authoritarian consolidation. This is the study's perception of the concept of authoritarian learning.

The thesis's argument is that authoritarian regimes learn from one another. Through dialogue these regimes share (and learn) ideas, tactics and institutions for the consolidation of authoritarianism. I will show through a discourse analysis that these regimes do use similar tactics and institutions for consolidation. From there the study can make the argument that if regimes use comparable tactics and institutions then learning must occur. It is difficult to prove this, but if enough examples of the same ideas or ways of overcoming democratic values are shown then I can infer that learning does transpire. It is unlikely that there is any other explanation to describe such events. Dialogue is integral to how these regimes consolidate. A similar regime discourse would also illustrate that it is likely they learn from one another.

I will ask a number of research questions. The main being 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region'? This will allow the study to track processes that authoritarian regimes employ to consolidate and whether learning techniques are due to diffusion or the linkage and leverage of other states. There is increasing literature on the topic, but it is currently fractured and limited in scope. I will provide a comprehensive analysis to increase understanding on this subject.

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned I wrote this paper before events in Ukraine. However, I still maintain Kiev will struggle to reform. Institutions and elites remain weak and existing institutions will shape the new regime. What will occur is a continuation of weak authoritarianism and Kiev maintaining equidistance between Moscow and Brussels.

Two sub-research questions provide further contribution to the study and the wider literature. The first is ‘why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?’ This allows the study to analyse the processes of why regimes take ideas from others and when they do this and how far they take examples. The second asks ‘does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?’ This analyses whether it is the regional hegemon instigating learning techniques leading to learning, or whether the regional hegemon learns from others.

## PLAN OF THE THESIS

In chapter two I will define the meaning of authoritarianism, before analysing authoritarian literature and the different typologies within it. This will allow the study to highlight that current literature is flawed by placing all authoritarian regimes into a single typology of their choice. I will also analyse the wider literature on authoritarianism looking at the institutions that exist in authoritarian regimes. I contend that whilst these regimes use institutions that appear to be representative and democratic they serve as a ‘democratic’ facade and provide the regime with a vehicle to provide rents for supporters. I argue these institutions are used for this reason.

Having in chapter two provided an analysis of authoritarianism and the derivatives of it, chapter three looks at the concept of authoritarian learning, diffusion, soft power and linkage and leverage. I argue that linkage and leverage best explains the concept of authoritarian learning. I also provide hypotheses to the longitudinal analysis and discourse analysis chapters.

Chapter four will analyse a longitudinal analysis of data from Freedom House. This will indicate that it is not just this study that argues that the FSU is becoming increasingly authoritarian. It is hoped the data will emphasise that existing authoritarian typologies can be used, but only to explain a few cases. The FSU states are too dissimilar to be lumped together under one typology.

Chapter five is the core of the thesis and uses discourse analysis. As argued in the methodology section, I will use a critical discourse analysis of affiliated newspapers for the four cases. The papers being investigated (*Sovetskaya Belorussia*, *Panorama*, *Vremiya*, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, *Izvestiya* and *Uraydoviy Kurier*) will allow the study to ascertain whether these regimes have a similar discourse. These newspapers print ministerial speeches and government documents so the newspapers echo the ‘voice’ of the regime. To corroborate this government websites (Kremlin.ru, president.gov.by, akorda.kz and president.gov.ua) will be used to emphasise the discourse of the cases and whether they have a similar language. If they use a comparable language then they follow the same precepts, use analogous tactics and engage in the same institution building. As this process cannot happen without dialogue and some form of learning, I can infer that learning occurs.

Chapter six is the thesis’s conclusion. It allows the investigation to discuss implications of arguments made and indicates potential future studies and analysis. There remain gaps in the literature which require additional analysis. Chapter six will also provide a synopsis of why the concept of authoritarian learning is relevant and important for academic comprehension and why it needs further investigation.



## CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING AUTHORITARIANISM AND ITS VARIANTS

### AUTHORITARIAN ADJECTIVES

Throughout the analysis on authoritarianism I will show similarities and differences between the cases. Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan share many comparisons with one another but there are fundamental differences, particularly with Belarus. Thus, they cannot be considered under the same rubric. There have been various attempts to classify authoritarian regimes. Academic literature has debated what an authoritarian regime is and whether the authoritarian label can only be given to regimes that share similar characteristics. I agree with Svoboda's (2012: 16) conjecture that it is difficult to place all regimes under one rubric, which conceptually stretches authoritarianism. Hadenius and Teorell (2007: 147) have differentiated between monarchical, personalist and military regimes. Yet these categorisations do not adequately explain Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, or Ukraine. Other scholars use typologies, like competitive, electoral and hegemonic authoritarianism to try to explain authoritarian regimes, without relying (like Hadenius and Teorell) on the form of government in each regime. What exists, whilst not perfect (Bogaards, 2009: 400; Pleines, 2012: 126; Snyder, 2006: 220), is vague enough to accommodate many cases and sufficiently diverse to emphasise stringent differences between cases. Existing categorisations allow the study to show differences, aiding understanding of authoritarian learning and consolidation. Until new categories are created which better explain the pseudo-democratic characteristics of FSU states (Birch, 2011: 704; Reuter and Remington, 2009: 508; Gel'man, 2004: 1022), existing categories are applicable.

### *Competitive Authoritarianism*

Competitive authoritarianism analyses the competitiveness of elections. It investigates the growing number of regimes that acquiesce in democracy, but control the system to “ensure...political survival” (Howard and Roessler, 2006: 365). Elections are not truly democratic, but act as a regime façade to maintain power and for the regime to gain legitimacy (Easter, 2008: 210). The competitiveness of elections is the pertinent factor that distinguishes these regimes from other authoritarian regimes. Elections allow the possibility for change, as the regime is less certain of maintaining power as it has not entrenched itself (Way, 2004: 143). Whilst elections are held, the regime creates an “uneven playing field” allowing it to manipulate democratic principles to keep power and thus consolidate the regime (Levitsky and Way, 2012: 30). Such “uneven playing fields” exist in regimes transitioning from one-party rule to a new authoritarian form (such as, from the Soviet Union, to its successor states) (Levitsky and Way, 2012: 37). Competitive authoritarian regimes face the dichotomy of allowing opposition factions room to manoeuvre, whilst limiting them to create the stability needed for regime consolidation (Levitsky and Way, 2005a: 26). I argue that competitive authoritarian regimes have weak political institutions. They are unable to control elections, which are competitive enough for the regime to plausibly lose control.

What constitutes a competitive authoritarian regime? It is a government using competitive elections, but violating them and the state’s political institutions (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 52). The opposition operates and contests elections with the possibility of winning, but the regime skews the playing-field to its advantage (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 5).

As Levitsky and Way (2002: 53) contend, competitive authoritarian regimes “abuse state resources, deny...opposition media coverage, harass opposition...and manipulate...results. Journalists, opposition politicians may be spied on, threatened, harassed, or arrested”. The major difference between competitive and electoral authoritarian regimes is that governments in competitive authoritarian states do not engage in overt electoral fraud, but rather manipulate existing institutions (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53).

Competitive authoritarianism does not explain many FSU states. For instance, Kazakhstan has a more durable authoritarianism (Isaacs, 2010b: 1), making it distinctive from existing competitive authoritarian literature. Belarus and Azerbaijan, like Kazakhstan are consolidated authoritarian regimes, thus not fitting competitive authoritarian literature (Guliyev, 2005: 397). The past two Russian elections (parliamentary and presidential) have been marred by electoral fraud and manipulation (Adomanis, 2012), which again does not fit into the concept of competitive authoritarianism. Rather this study argues that competitive authoritarianism best explains the Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian regimes. These have elections that are competitive, but where state institutions remain weak enough for incumbents to lose power (Way, 2005: 192; Way, 2004: 143-144; Levitsky and Way, 2005a: 30-31 Bunce and Wolchik, 2010: 44).

### *Electoral Authoritarianism*

Electoral authoritarianism incorporates aspects of democracy with authoritarianism, contending that authoritarian regimes are not necessarily “less democratic than democracies, but plainly *undemocratic*” (Schedler, 2002: 37). The basis of electoral authoritarianism is that the regime holds regular elections, but “they violate the liberal-

democratic principles of freedom and fairness...profoundly and systematically...to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than “instruments of democracy” (Schedler, 2006: 3). Electoral authoritarian regimes claim to follow democratic world trends (McElhenny, 2004), but they “are minimally pluralist...minimally competitive...and minimally open” (Schedler, 2006: 3) and they engage in “manipulation so severe, widespread, and systematic that they do not qualify as democratic” (Schedler, 2006: 3). These regimes use manipulation, change electoral rules, exclude opposition, infringe rights, restrict media access, limit people’s right to vote and redistribute votes (Schedler, 2006: 3). This allows elites to maintain power and provide the facade of openness, whilst not allowing elections to be competitive. The regime creates institutions to protect incumbency, whilst maintaining a facade for “legitimizing cover” decreasing “the high costs of repression and the grave risks of openness” (Case, 2009: 312).

Rather than classifying regimes as democratic if they hold elections, it is better to monitor those elections, determine how they operate and from there decide whether they fit democratic criteria. This will determine whether the state is electorally authoritarian according to Morse (2012: 162). Electoral authoritarian regimes imitate democratic institutions (constitutions, constitutional courts, legislatures, judiciaries, an independent media and civil society) (Schedler, 2010: 70). Electoral authoritarianism not only stops the opposition from gaining power, but allows the executive to control the state (Golosov, 2011: 623). One difficulty with electoral authoritarianism is that some academics include a wide range of states, where elections are so constrained they are non-competitive (Morse, 2012: 165), leading to charges that electoral authoritarianism is a catch-all term. I wish to address this issue, by limiting the number of states that can be analysed under electoral

authoritarianism. Indeed, scholars of electoral authoritarianism have established distinctions between facade elections and elections that allow some competition (Morse, 2012: 165). I view an electoral authoritarian regime as one with competitive but heavily manipulated elections. In the FSU, I argue that Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia are electoral authoritarian regimes. Elections are marginally competitive, but the regime uses manipulation to maintain power.

### *Hegemonic Authoritarianism*

The basic understanding of a hegemonic authoritarian regime is that it is stable and there is little competition. Elections are a formality (Un, 2011: 546). The basis of what constitutes a democracy “have been severely curtailed while periodic elections have been maintained” (Un, 2011: 547). As hegemonic authoritarian regimes do not use elections for legitimacy, the state finds other ways for gaining legitimacy. The regime keeps civil society and NGOs weak, curbing possibilities for the populace to unite and protest against it (Sim, 2006: 148, 150-151). Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have created parties of power that aid in the consolidation of a hegemonic authoritarian regime (Bader, 2011: 189). Nur Otan (Kazakhstan) with its coalition (the Civic Party and the Agrarian Party) holds 88% of the 98 seats in parliament (Ziegler, 2010: 808). YAP dominates Azerbaijani politics (Reuter and Remington, 2009: 504). In contrast, the Kremlin party of power (United Russia) is not a hegemonic party. It does not unite competing elites and resolve conflicts (Robinson, 2012: 306). Even though the Kremlin created a party to win elections (Roberts, 2012: 228) it was unable to dominate at the last parliamentary elections (2011) (March, 2012: 242). It is possible that United Russia could become a hegemonic party (Reuter, 2010: 293-294), but

with the possible rise of the All-Russia People's Front, United Russia's days may be numbered (Tsoi *et al*, 2013: 1). The All-Russia People's Front is a Kremlin inspired proto-political party attempting "to unite people across the ideological spectrum" (Nechepurenko, 2013). As Putin stated "the People's Front is to give everyone a way to create...a great country, a great Russia...we are ready to work with everybody who shares our goals" (Nechepurenko, 2013). Howard and Roessler (2006: 368) argue that a hegemonic regime should receive over 70% of the vote in a presidential election. By analysing electoral data from the last FSU presidential elections, I determine that Azerbaijan (Aliyev-88.8%), Belarus (Lukaschenka-80%), Kazakhstan (Nazarbayev-95.6%) and Turkmenistan (Berdymukhammedov-89.2%) all in a hegemonic authoritarian rubric (Azerbaijan Elections Website, 2008; State Electoral Commission of Belarus, 2010; Kazakhstan Election Commission Website, 2011; Turkmenistan Government Website, 2007). Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have been placed in this category too; neither has had an election of any meaning (Carr, 2013a; 2013b).

To provide clarity to the research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' and the sub-research questions 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another' and 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear' I will use a literature review. Having assessed the derivatives of electoral, competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism I wish to provide a synopsis of wider authoritarian literature and institutions that exist in these regimes. This will allow the reader to comprehend differences among FSU authoritarian regimes.

## AUTHORITARIANISM

A literature review will provide a better comprehension of authoritarianism and how these regimes use democratic institutions to create democratic facades, which will aid in comprehension of how regimes consolidate and learn from other regimes. However, I argue that authoritarian regimes use these institutions, partially as a democratic facade but mostly to give supporters access to resources thus helping regime consolidation. Literature on authoritarianism has started to gain notoriety not only on the FSU, but also in other regions. Yet, it remains an understudied topic. Existing literature will provide understanding on authoritarianism, letting the study show how the four cases use their political systems and institutions to maintain power. To really provide a comprehensive analysis of how authoritarian regimes operate, I will analyse: political parties, elections, parliament, media, civil society, the economy, coercion and the personalisation of power. I feel these will provide a comprehensive analysis of authoritarianism. Understanding how authoritarian regimes operate and where the four cases fit inside the wider literature on authoritarianism is important. These sections will help form the basis for the variables used in the discourse analysis in chapter four.

In defining authoritarianism, I use Linz's (1964: 297) definition that authoritarian regimes "are...systems with limited...political pluralism...without intensive or extensive political mobilisation...and in which a leader exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones". This is in contrast to the definition provided by Svobik (2012: 16), that authoritarian regimes are *not* democracies. Svobik (2012: 16) argues that any regime is authoritarian if it ceases "to be a democracy the moment a few key

mechanisms - especially electoral rules and the respect of certain liberties – are circumvented, even non-violently”. This definition runs into three conceptual problems. Firstly, saying that authoritarian regimes are those that are undemocratic, pits states as diverse as North Korea and Moldova together under the same rubric. Secondly, saying what something is does not help conceptualise what it is *not*. Thirdly, as McFaul (2010: 4) contends, scholars are still unsure about what constitutes democracy. Using democracy, which is also hard to define as a classification of authoritarianism is not adequate. Linz (1964: 297) provides a sufficient understanding for authoritarianism. Authoritarian regimes are different to ideological totalitarian regimes like North Korea, China, Laos, Cuba and Vietnam (Dimitrov, 2013: 3). As remarked on in chapter one, I argue that totalitarian regimes espouse an ideology (Schedler, 2013: 48), whereas authoritarian regimes are not ideologically driven.

I am not concerned with grouping disparate authoritarian regimes together, to ascertain which type (monarchical, military, or personal) they fit within, or where authoritarian regimes spring from (Geddes, 1999a; 1999b; Hadenius and Teorell, 2007). Rather, I wish to ascertain institutions in authoritarian regimes to explain how the Belarusian, Kazakh, Russian and Ukrainian regimes manage to share tactics, learn from one another and in three cases (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia) consolidate. I am interested in analysing the concept of authoritarian regime type and its different manifestations (as mentioned previously).

As all FSU regimes hold elections I will classify them like Hadenius and Teorell (2007: 147) under the rubric of “electoral regimes”. Within this variable there is the classification of



“limited multiparty regimes”. I contend that this explains three cases, with the exception of Belarus (referred to later). This classification fits into the debate on typologies of authoritarianism. However, the literature contends that authoritarian “electoral regimes” are more susceptible to collapse. The institutions of parliament and elections can lead to democratisation so these authoritarian regimes are considered to be weak (Hadenius and Teorell, 2007: 150; Levitsky and Way, 2002: 59). I make the contention that; whilst authoritarian institutions appear democratic (to fit the democratic paradigm) the real use of these institutions (elections, political parties and legislatures) is for the regime to bestow patronage on regime supporters tying them to its success. Thus, the regime creates them for this purpose. In the FSU, the regimes copy (to an extent) Soviet institutions which claimed to be democratic, but rather consolidated authoritarianism and provided benefits for supporters (Gel’man, 2012: 298).

If authoritarian regimes that use democratic institutions are weak then why have the FSU states not collapsed in over twenty years? Increasingly as Hadenius and Teorell (2007) note, more authoritarian regimes espouse democratic norms. Kratsev (2011: 10) rightly contends that, although authoritarian regimes use democratic language and institutions, they are not becoming weaker. The creation of a political party in an authoritarian regime bestows legitimacy on the regime from the public’s perspective, tying elites to regime survival through patron-client ties (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007: 1283; Brownlee, 2007: 3). I have already referred to the concepts I will investigate to provide an intricate understanding of authoritarianism and comprehension on FSU authoritarianism.

### *Political Parties*

Authoritarian regimes when creating a political party, or multi-party system, allow the regime to provide supporters with access to resources and power, thus entrenching support. In authoritarian regimes political parties serve as vehicles of regime patronage, co-opting other factions and curbing the possibility for other elites to usurp power (Bader, 2009: 110). FSU political parties serve as voices for their leaders, in what Wilson and Birch (2008: 54) term “small-scale political vanity, fanaticism, and whimsy, which have generated a penumbra of tiny ‘divan’ or ‘taxi’ parties”. This is particularly prevalent in Kazakhstan where existing parties are centred on elites, rather than on ideology (Isaacs, 2008: 382). In Ukraine, political parties exist to promote oligarch interests. Deputies have little loyalty to their party. If parties do not provide them with power they abandon them for others that do offer benefits (Kuzio, 2012b: 433). The creation of political parties by authoritarian regimes bestows legitimacy on the incumbent and allows regimes to co-opt other political parties, offering them the choice of some benefits, or shutting them out of the system (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007: 1283). It is a further way to rut the already uneven playing field. FSU regimes have created clone parties, copying symbols and policies of existing opposition parties (Wilson, 2002: 91-98; Birch, 2003: 526). This has been particularly so in Ukraine.

Alternatively, regimes create parties to fill the ideological spectrum and to drain votes from existing parties. The Kremlin uses this method against the Communist and Yabloko parties (Torochnikova, 2007). United Russia serves as a vast patronage system, providing clients with access to huge resources. As the Kremlin does not espouse an ideology, it uses United Russia to accommodate ideologically disparate factions (Way, 2010:

246-247). United Russia allows the Kremlin to control the federal (and regional) legislatures and has party branches throughout Russia, serving as the mechanism for 'get out the vote' campaigns (Gill, 2012: 461). Political parties exist to enable the regime to mobilise different areas of the electorate. By creating political parties to represent society, the regime can both control society and parliament (White and Kryshchanovskaya, 2011: 574). The creation of a multi-party political system is just one means that authoritarian regimes use to maintain power. The outlier is Belarus; Lukashenka does not have party affiliation or a party serving as a vehicle to get supporters into power (Pospieszna, 2014: 3-4). The authorities deregister or close down opposition parties on spurious charges, such as changing the law on party membership, allowing insufficient time to change to new legislation and then banning all parties who fail to adjust (Silitski, 2008). There are six pro-regime political parties, but these play a negligible role in the political system, unlike the systemic opposition in Russia (Pospieszna, 2014: 4).

### *Elections*

To comprehend further aspects of the uneven playing field, I will analyse electoral systems in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes use elections to legitimate the regime among the populace. Elections also allow the opposition a vehicle for some competition, but within the regime's control, rather than outside as a non-systemic opposition. Whilst, it gives the opposition a voice, the regime stops "short of rotating power or allowing fair elections that would risk their secure tenure in office" (Brownlee, 2007: 6).

In the FSU, elections, like parliaments and political parties exist as Potemkin institutions (Fisun, 2012: 93). Silitski (2010a: 278) posits that FSU regimes have turned

elections into a “carnival” to make the process appealing for the public. Nazarbayev calls the ballot a “colour coded” electoral campaign. Elections are used by authoritarian regimes to gain legitimacy and co-opt other political parties (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007: 1283, 1291; Brownlee, 2007: 9). The Kremlin has created an electoral system, allowing the regime to maintain control through electoral fraud, stuffing ballot boxes, miscalculating votes and providing United Russia and Putin, (or Medvedev) near total media coverage (Krastev and Holmes, 2012: 34). Yet, the Kremlin allows some competition and indecision in the results to show that elections were, at least, nominally competitive (White, 2011b: 537). This is the case in Belarus. But, the Belarusian authorities often turn off communication access for the populace (Silitski, 2010a: 285). Elections help divide state resources among the regime’s supporters, keeping the regime competitive (Krastev and Holmes, 2012: 36).

Elections are important ways to test new tactics to uneven the electoral playing field further. If regimes do not use elections to learn new tactics, then they may not be able to placate demonstrators in the future. Elections allow the regime to ascertain how effective regional elites are. If they cannot return victory for the ruling party then they are ineffectual and need replacing (Kratsev and Holmes, 2012: 36-38). Even in Ukraine, the 2006 and 2007 elections under the ‘Orange coalition’ still returned many examples of electoral malpractice (Lukinova *et al*, 2011: 42). Different political factions compete for prominence across the FSU. During the Belarusian presidential election (2006), most opposition factions suffered the arrest of prominent leaders (Marples, 2006: 352). The Belarusian regime controls media access using it to get its message across and limiting opposition voices (Marples, 2006: 358; Forbrig *et al*, 2006: 11). It has made elections highly uncompetitive (Silitski, 2006b: 21). Manipulation means authoritarian regimes do not need to worry about election night, as

elections are a foregone conclusion (Silitski, 2009a: 42). Electoral fraud and malpractice occur throughout the FSU, but have been perfected in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus (Bader, 2013: 525). Regimes make sure that the uneven playing field is not just uneven, but as Krastev and Holmes (2012: 35) contend about the Kremlin, it has “gone further and cordoned off the stadium’s entrances and exits”.

### *Parliaments*

As mentioned previously, most authoritarian regimes use democratic institutions to maintain the facade that their state is democratic, or transitioning to democracy (Wahman *et al*, 2013: 21; Kollner and Kailitz, 2013: 6). Authoritarian regimes manipulate the political and electoral systems to maintain regime pre-eminence through electoral fraud, creating political parties to counter opposition. The construction of these institutions allows the regime to distribute patronage to supporters. Parliament is another institution that has been usurped of its democratic meaning and exists in authoritarian regimes for supporters to voice some form of dissent. However, this is largely controlled by the regime through rents. As the example of Kazakhstan emphasises, parliament has become a rubber stamp institution (Starr, 2006: 6).

As mentioned, authoritarian regimes manipulate elections so that the party of power consistently wins. Legislatures exist to pass required legislation, allowing regimes to co-opt opposition, bribing them with a modicum of power and access to resources. Legislatures allow the regime to dispense rents and promote supporters. Like elections and political parties, parliaments serve as another form of regime legitimation. Yet, the most important aspect of creating a parliament is the opportunity to distribute patronage (Blaydes, 2008).

Ukraine's parliament, although not perfect, allows the opposition to debate and bring the government to account. This is the opposite of the Belarusian parliament, which has no leverage over Lukashenka (Astapenia, 2013; Rontoyanni and Korosteleva, 2005: 210). The creation of an upper house of presidential appointees significantly weakened the Belarusian legislature, but the reduction of the number of seats in the lower house and an opposition boycott made parliamentary deputies regime place-men, making it a rubber stamp institution (Rontoyanni and Korosteleva, 2005: 211; Silitski, 2010a: 282-283). In contrast after the Ukrainian parliamentary elections (2012), Party of Regions consistently faced opposition protests and was unable to pass legislation (Haran, 2013: 2).

Compared with Ukraine's (relatively) competitive legislature and its moribund equivalent in Belarus, the Russian State Duma appears similar to Ukraine, but in reality is closer to Belarus's legislature. This is because at first glance the State Duma has four political parties. However, United Russia dominates the lower house and two of the three other parties (A Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) tend to vote with United Russia (Stoner-Weiss, 2010: 264), making Russia's parliament effectively obsolete. United Russia has enough seats to pass legislation without needing to rely on other parties, but the regime controls United Russia to effectively reduce the State Duma to a rubber stamp institution (Roberts, 2012: 228). As United Russia is the dominant party in the State Duma it has control of most committees and leadership positions, allowing it to control the parliament and dispense patronage to supporters (Roberts, 2012: 229). As it dominates regional parliaments too United Russia allows the Kremlin to effectively control both the national parliament and its regional equivalents (Roberts, 2012: 231). A Just Russia and the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia have a discourse of regime rhetoric failing to

counterbalance United Russia. Both act as a “quasi-opposition at best” (White, 2011: 658). As remarked on, the Russian and Ukrainian regimes have divided the opposition in various ways by creating clone parties in Ukraine and filling the ideological field leeching votes from non-systemic parties in Russia (Bader, 2009: 101). As advocated here, parliaments are not created to give legitimacy (although it helps). Rather, FSU parliaments bind elites through patron-client ties (Fisun, 2012: 92). Parliaments allow opposition to voice concerns in a carefully contrived environment. For these reasons Putin will maintain the State Duma, elections and a (relatively) free media (Gill, 2012: 467).

### *Media*

With regards to the Belarusian regime, Minsk controls access to media, affecting how the opposition operates (Marples, 2006: 358; Forbrig *et al*, 2006: 11). However, it is not just an issue that affects the Belarusian regime. Authoritarian regimes routinely attempt to control the domestic media. Dissenting voices appearing in the public domain could erode the regime as the only source of information and affect its legitimacy (Stockman and Gallagher, 2011: 437). Authoritarian regimes control media outlets, either through the state, or through affiliates, directing information and preventing elite defection and alternative sources of information (Walker and Ortung, 2014: 71). Throughout the FSU, most editors and journalists are aware that if they write or speak out against the regime they will face sanctions. So they engage in self-censorship (Oates, 2007: 1286). By controlling the media, authoritarian regimes control the narrative and use media for regime promotion. This occurs predominately in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, but also in Ukraine (Walker and

Ortung, 2014: 71-72). Media control allows authoritarian regimes to promote their ideology and quashes alternative values before they become relevant (Walker and Ortung, 2014: 72).

During the 2011-2012 protests, Russian media used three strategies to regulate alternative messages. Firstly, the media praised governors who arrested demonstrators. Secondly, opposition groups were portrayed as intent on destabilising the state and thirdly, the media aired entertainment shows (such as, *Dom-2*), reducing the likelihood of mass protests. The regime hoped people would rather watch television than protest (Walker and Ortung, 2014: 75). Russian media covers news about Putin, Medvedev and to a lesser extent United Russia (Stockman and Gallagher, 2011: 437-438). This is also the case in Kazakhstan, where the media lauds the achievements of Nazarbayev (Kenny and Gross, 2008: 518). The Kremlin, fearing the internet allows Russians to access uncontrolled information, has limited access to various alternative news websites (Gerber, 2013: 1-2). It prefers to air scripted shows, such as the Presidential phone-in, which does not allow for unscripted questions (Orttung and Walker, 2012). The Belarusian situation is similar. Most media is controlled by the state or regime associates and recent laws have further stifled the media. Publications with a distribution of over 300 copies need to register with the authorities and those with less must send five copies to the Ministry of Information for approval, before distribution (Aliaksandrau and Bastunets, 2014b). This is in contrast to Ukraine where media is split between state and privately owned groups. This means that disparate political factions get their voice heard (Ryabinska, 2011: 6).

The Belarusian authorities have placed websites deemed by the regime to undermine the state on black lists. They force internet providers to have Belarusian domain



names. Internet providers must monitor what is viewed by each client and set-up systems for operative investigative actions (SORM). This data provides information on websites which can be viewed by the security services (Aliaksandrau and Bastunets, 2014b). Like the Kremlin, which controls most television media as most Russian's get news from television (Gehlbach, 2010: 78), the Belarusian authorities do the same for the same reason. Minsk makes life difficult for independent newspaper media. By controlling printing access it keeps printing costs artificially high for these outlets (Aliaksandrau and Bastunets, 2014a). The Kremlin forced resignations of journalists at lenta.ru, after pressuring them for adverse reporting over the broadcasting of the Ukrainian protests. It constrained cable providers to terminate the airing of *Dozhd* (rain) TV (an opposition channel) (Krainova, 2014; Ryzhkov, 2014). Russian state control of the media correlates with the regime's attempts to control other sectors of society (Orttung and Walker, 2013: 2).

### *Opposition*

Throughout this section, I have shown that authoritarian regimes are averse to losing power. So they create an uneven playing field when contesting elections, by using democratic institutions to limit opportunities for the opposition. Authoritarian regimes (as in the FSU) create systemic opposition parties to support the regime, acting as an opposition-lite. Regimes try to split the opposition. A united opposition makes it exceedingly difficult for a regime to maintain power, even through violence (Howard, 2006: 371). Authoritarian regimes harass opposition groups, abuse state resources, use the media for propagandistic purposes and engage in electoral fraud, to limit the functionality of the non-systemic opposition. As Levitsky and Way (2002: 53) contest "members of the opposition

may be jailed, exiled, or—less frequently—even assaulted or murdered”. Authoritarian regimes expend great effort curbing the opposition’s ability to get its messages across (Geddes and Zaller, 1989: 344). In the FSU the media has become a mouthpiece for regimes. Political parties, parliaments and the media help regimes keep the systemic opposition in check. By using the media to emphasise that opposition does exist and denying media time to the non-systemic opposition, regimes can confuse the populace about alternatives (Lai and Slater, 2006: 115). If need be the regime can outlaw the opposition, claiming they want to overthrow the state. Consequently, the regime claims they exist to protect the populace (Geddes, 2006: 7). Authoritarian regimes often claim the opposition is a fifth column, or an ‘other’ (Lai and Slater, 2006: 117). Another option is to ban political parties’ outright, stopping opposition from coalescing around common issues (Schedler, 2002: 43). To an extent this occurs in Belarus. The opposition have political parties, but elections are so contrived that members of the Belarusian parliament, (technically), are independents. Yet, most regimes co-opt opposition, dangling opportunities of resource access whilst demanding regime support (Svolik, 2009: 493; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007: 1280).

In Kazakhstan there is the systemic, semi-systemic and non-systemic opposition. The Kazakh regime co-opts opposition activists by denying their political party access to the political field (through the high 7% parliamentary threshold), but allowing them access to resources for regime support (Bowyer, 2008: 14). The Russian State Duma also uses this high threshold to prohibit opposition parties from accessing resources (Stoner-Weiss, 2010: 265; White 2011: 673). The Russian Communist party is a semi-opposition trying to change Kremlin policy on certain issues, without opposing the system (March, 2002: 232-234). Yet, the Kremlin’s creation of parties (for instance, A Just Russia) to split the communist vote has

limited it to a lone voice surrounded by pro-Kremlin influences (Gel'man, 2005: 235). A Just Russia operates as another vehicle for the Kremlin to control parliament and help limit opposition voices, whilst serving as a state controlled opposition (White, 2011: 673). Unlike the Kazakh regime, the Kremlin does not (with the exception of splitting the communist vote) use political parties to dupe the electorate. Rather, Kremlin-created parties tend to channel opposition into controllable sources; serving as alternatives should United Russia fail as a political vehicle (March, 2009: 505, 513-515). Within the Russian State Duma the opposition represents different levels of closeness to the regime (Bacon, 2012: 106). Regime legislation has made it difficult for smaller parties to operate, thus stabilising the political system (White, 2012: 211). Like March (2012: 242), I argue that Russia has an 'opposition', rather than an opposition. Routinely the Belarusian and Russian authorities starve opposition parties of funds, making their ability to function difficult (Way, 2010: 237). The Belarusian authorities have limited "political space" pressurising the opposition and "discouraging citizen participation in...political life" leading to a weak opposition (Borowska, 2013a). In contrast to Ukraine, Russia has become a non-democratic system, as party competition has declined (Gel'man, 2008: 914-915). However, the Ukrainian opposition suffers, like its Russian and Belarusian counterparts, from factionalism (Kedelia, 2012).

### *Civil Society*

The analysis so far has inferred that the FSU regimes do not countenance loss of state control. Thus, they do not allow the operation of an independent civil society. I will now assess civil society in the FSU and how these regimes counter, or co-opt, these factions. Since the 1990s regimes have been adept at playing on people's apathy. Lukashenka, for

instance, has been particularly skilful in this, claiming that the state should be the primary source for making people's lives better (Howard, 2002: 164). This discourse plays on a larger fear among authoritarian regimes that should civil society be allowed to fully operate, it will become a strenuous independent voice (Howard, 2002: 165).

Throughout the FSU, authoritarian regimes have tightened controls through legislation on the remit of NGOs. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have drafted recently more prohibitive legislation (Maher, 2013). Since the 'colour revolutions', which the FSU regimes perceived as (partially) led by NGOs, they have restricted the remit of independent NGOs by limiting their functionality (Silitski, 2010c: 342). In Belarus, Lukashenka has set about eradicating the small civil society that existed prior to his taking power (Silitski, 2010a: 286; Marples, 2007: 65). Under Putin the regime has clamped down on civil society, equating these organisations with vehicles to precipitate demonstrations (Kramer and Shevtsova, 2012). Putin has stated that NGOs should be involved in society but they should not be involved in politics. The regime determines what is political, limiting the remit of NGOs (Makarychev, 2008a: 63). Both Belarusian and Russian regimes use Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs). These imitate civil society organisations but are regime controlled (Richter, 2013: 2; Marin, 2012: 20). Javeline and Lindemann-Komarova (2008: 1-5) have argued that the Kremlin does provide support for NGOs and funds an array of organisations. Like Richter (2008: 4-5; 2013: 1-5) I contend that Putin has created NGOs for his own purposes. New legislation allows NGOs to be accused of treason for working with, or receiving funding from foreign states, or international organisations (Richter, 2013: 3).

### *The Economy*

I am less concerned about understanding how the economy operates in authoritarian regimes here, but rather whether it is controlled to the benefit of the regime. Way (2010: 230) argues that if a regime has well funded security forces, a hegemonic political party and control over its economy, its survival is practically assured. By controlling the economy and relying on state companies, authoritarian regimes can fire workers for infringements, such as, demonstrating against the regime (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009: 412). By managing welfare access and the economy, authoritarian regimes extract rents distributing these to supporters. Liberalisation is not considered viable. It would mean the loss of regime control over the economy and welfare systems (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009: 415). A large public sector enables the regime to dole out positions to supporters. This is the case with Belarus, where Lukashenka's control of the economy provides him with legitimacy in the public's view, allowing him to garner support by providing positions for supporters (Way, 2010: 249). If businesses wish to function in Belarus then the regime can claim rents from them to ensure survival (Greene, 2009: 813).

Some authoritarian regimes (mostly hegemonic) are able to control the economy and survive most economic crises through providing supporters with rents. They will preserve the regime to maintain their control (Gandhi and Reuter, 2007: 8). The Belarusian regime has survived crises by selling state assets and forcing elites to stop rent seeking (for a time), to alleviate economic problems (Dudko, 2012; Tsikhanovich, 2012). Nazarbayev has devalued the Tenge (Kazakhstan's currency) on occasions, but has remained popular (Boulegue, 2014; Isaacs, 2010a: 20). Wright (2008: 322) argues that authoritarian regimes

rely on the economy to shore up control. Yet, if the state controls the economy, then surely it has the resources to buy off supporters? The Belarusian and Russian regimes control their respective economies and so do not rely on marginal supporters of the regime. Unlike Ukraine they have not suffered from competitive institutions (Way, 2010: 237). Lukashenka, claims that the Belarusian economy is a collective farm “Belarus is a small country and should be managed from a single centre like a good production collective” (Feduta, 2005: 109). Through the creation of a presidential fund, Lukashenka has bought off opposition, giving resources to supporters (Way, 2010: 250). The regime has created a state-run economy and thus controls employee jobs. If employees of state-run enterprises are caught demonstrating they face unemployment, or in most cases demotion and wage freezes (Silitski, 2005b: 92; Frear, 2012: 23). As Gandhi and Przeworski (2006: 18) state, authoritarian regimes with large mineral deposits are less prone to compromise with other elites. The Kremlin’s support is largely homogenous. A relatively small cadre of elites have been able to monopolise the economy (Stoner-Weiss, 2010: 254).

### *Coercion*

Academic literature mostly argues that authoritarian regimes rely on violent coercion (Nathan, 2003: 6). Leaders in authoritarian regimes are never certain that they are secure, thus they are forced “to continually prevent, detect, and contain threats to their hold on power” (Schedler, 2013: 21). To paraphrase Hobbes and as the ‘Arab Spring’ has represented, the life of a dictator is nasty, brutish and (often) short.

As I have shown here, authoritarian regimes have other means to maintain and consolidate power. Contrary to the view advocated by George (2005: 3), I do not assert that

coercion is anything the regime uses to maintain power. Of course changing the political system, parliament, the media, dominating civil society and opposition and controlling the economy are means of coercion, but I will only analyse violent coercion. Coercion is very much an important aspect of the apparatus of an authoritarian regime. As Way (2010: 230) claimed in the previous section, an integral aspect of an authoritarian regime's chances of survival depends on a well equipped and funded security service. Nevertheless, coercion remains a very expensive means to keep the populace down. Authorities naturally prefer less costly means to keep the peace (Gobel, 2010: 177). I argue that authoritarian regimes do not like using coercion to remain in power. Vladislav Surkov (Kremlin aide) states that Russia is "shifting from coercion to persuasion, from repression to cooperation, and from hierarchies to horizontal links" and the regime will use "persuasion technologies" and refrain from coercion (Surkov, 2006a; 2006b; Oreshkin, 2012: 5).

If an authoritarian regime does not have effective security services then it is open to potential protests (Bellin, 2004: 43). Authoritarian regimes need to have the perceived ability (by their populace) of having effective coercive capabilities (Bellin, 2004: 145). In Russia the regime has limited the occurrence of protest rallies to occur and has used media to praise the regime, thus lowering the need for state coercion. People are too apathetic and risk averse for the regime to need significant coercive tools to deal with protest (Lyal, 2006: 388). Violent coercion is used more by military or monarchical regimes, which are susceptible to viewing the world with a zero-sum remit and will more willingly use violence to maintain power (Fjelde, 2010: 196; Lai and Slater, 2006: 118). Of course violent coercion is used across the FSU. However, excessive coercion leads to international consternation. Understandably authoritarian regimes are loath to use it (Lachapelle *et al*, 2012: 5).

Whilst FSU regimes are wary of using too much overt repression, if the regime feels threatened it will coerce opposition factions (Gel'man, 2013: 6). Having said this, the coercive apparatus that the Kremlin has at its disposal is limited. The Kremlin has found it difficult to maintain coercion throughout Russia. Security services are close to Moscow and St. Petersburg, as the regime feels these are the most likely cities for mass protest (Hanson, 2007: 72). The Belarusian regime follows a similar line to the Kremlin that coercion would inflame an issue. Whilst the Belarusian regime makes life challenging for the opposition on occasion, it does not use overt coercion to maintain legitimacy (Korosteleva, 2012: 43, 47). This is largely true, but after 2010, it cracked down on opposition (White, 2011a: 800).<sup>3</sup> Although FSU regimes do not like to use overt repression they have done so previously. Violence like in Armenia, Uzbekistan and to a lesser extent Kazakhstan has occurred (Mkrtchyan, 2011; Levitsky and Way, 2010: 45; Aimbetova, 2012c).

### *Leader Popularity*

The perceived legitimacy of a leader helps the public observe the regime as legitimate, than they are more willing to support it. An authoritarian leader can alternatively manipulate institutions (like the media) to portray a sense of legitimacy and support among the populace (Egorov and Sonin, 2012: 2). Yet, an incumbent's loss of legitimacy does more damage to a regime than anything else (Brownlee, 2007: 48). So if regimes lose authority, consolidation becomes impossible. It is, therefore, important to preserve legitimacy.

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<sup>3</sup> Events in Ukraine have shown that regimes willingly use coercion when faced with mass protest (Traynor and Walker, 2014), but this is outside this paper's remit.



There is certainly some sense to this, but the leaders of FSU regimes appear to have a large legitimacy pool among their populaces. Lukashenka and Nazarbayev as ‘father’s’ of their nations need to have overwhelming support. Electoral fraud serves to inflate the conceived mirage of popularity (Egorov and Sonin, 2012: 2) even though Lukashenka is popular among Belarusians for stability and economic development (Liuhto *et al*, 2009: 65). The economic crisis has affected Lukashenka’s reputation, but Belarusians consider the opposition worse, so Lukashenka’s popularity is high (Frear, 2012: 23). Though Nazarbayev has been accused of corruption, stealing elections and human rights abuses, he remains popular with Kazakhs for improving their lives (Koch, 2013b: 27; Koch, 2013a: 112). The popularity of Putin is nearly as high as Lukashenka and Nazarbayev, bestowing legitimacy on the Kremlin (Treisman, 2008: 1). Like Lukashenka and Nazarbayev, Putin’s popularity is based on creating stability and wealth (Aron, 2007: 2). The economic upswing occurring in Putin’s first term is seen by Russians as Putin’s doing. This helps explain his continued popularity (White and McAllister, 2008: 622). Ukrainian governments have found it difficult to maintain legitimacy amongst disparate groups, limiting how the state functions. Ukrainian politicians tend to represent different groups and there has been no ‘father of the nation’ (with the possible exception of Kravchuk), so Ukrainian governments have lacked legitimacy across all sectors of society (Haran, 2010: 4).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to explain the intricacies of authoritarianism, contending that there are three authoritarian adjectives: competitive, electoral and hegemonic. I then assessed in-depth the minutiae of authoritarianism, using the examples of

the four case studies (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine), to emphasise how these fit into the literature on authoritarianism. I used certain variables: elections, political parties, the media, opposition, coercion, leadership capabilities, civil society, the executive and the legislature which I feel help explain authoritarianism. These also link with the variables that will be used with the discourse analysis in chapter five. Chapter two provided an understanding of authoritarianism helping offer the argument that the different FSU authoritarian regimes do not fit into one rubric, but rather each authoritarian adjective explains only a few cases. This is the basis of the argument that I make in chapter four on longitudinal analysis. On top of this it allows the reader to understand the basic underpinnings of authoritarian institutions and where the case studies fit in the wider literature. I was able to make the contention that authoritarian regimes use democraciesque institutions not so much to portray a facade of democracy, but to allow supporters access to rents thus preserving the legitimacy and support of the regime.

### CHAPTER THREE: AUTHORITARIAN LEARNING

This chapter provides additional analysis of authoritarian learning to further understanding on this key topic. I will assess literatures on diffusion, linkage and leverage and soft power. I advocate that linkage and leverage and soft power explain authoritarian learning. Diffusion has certain failings in adequately analysing authoritarian learning. Its main deficiency is its short-termism in comprehending events. I feel linkage and leverage is a more adequate theoretical concept for understanding authoritarian learning. Soft power also helps comprehension of authoritarian learning. If other states perceive that a state has a viable model they will likely copy legislation, ideas, tactics, concepts, values and institutions from it. If that state is authoritarian then through soft power it can 'coerce' others into adhering to an authoritarian model. I will provide the theoretical comprehension of what I consider authoritarian learning.

This leads into the sub-research question 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?' To assess whether the regional hegemon instigates authoritarian learning and coerces other states to authoritarianism, I will assess Russia's linkage and leverage and soft power with other FSU states. Russia as the successor state to the Soviet Union is commonly considered the regional hegemon. However, to understand the sub-research question 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear' I will analyse the counter revolution that has been instigated across the FSU. This was prompted by FSU regimes against the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) and against future 'revolutions' from occurring. The preventative counter revolution is important to understanding the intricacies

of the tactics, institutions and legislation that regimes share and for grasping the details of these regime's learning processes. I will investigate the linkage and leverage Russia has with the other cases to analyse whether the regional hegemon instigates authoritarian learning and authoritarianism. At the end of the chapter I will provide hypotheses for chapters four and five which will further comprehend the study's research questions.

## DIFFUSION

There are two types of diffusion. Norm diffusion is a process by which values are conceptualised as important. These concepts percolate into individual states, or across regions (Hyde, 2011: 361). Political elites follow trends set internationally, copying these in the hope of being considered as aspiring to western values (Acharya, 2004: 269). Regimes espouse pseudo-democracy to placate and endear themselves to international organisations, eager that their authoritarian traits are over-looked (Hyde, 2011: 361). Policy diffusion allows different groups to learn from policies existing in domestic regions or abroad (Gilardi, 2010a). Using the example of America, Karch (2007: 30) found that popular policies came from the state-level, percolating to the federal-level after being implemented across many states. Once one state's politicians had a debate and the media provoked further debate, other states would implement policies depending on the furore caused.

Diffusion has become synonymous with democratic spread (Di Palma, 1990: 14). Academic literature in the 1990s argued that the 'democratic third wave', would spread democratic ideas across the globe (Kraxberger, 2007: 1055). It is important to understand how people learn, as it allows one to track the process of ideas throughout regions (Di Palma, 1990: 14). Scholars of democratisation contend that diffusion has transported

democratic ideas across borders, shaping values and tactics (Di Palma, 1990: 24). Since the success of democratic diffusion in the 1980s, Western states have analysed ways to diffuse democratic ideas to other regions (Kegley and Hermann, 2002: 15). Starr (1991: 356-357) contends that diffusion creates a domino effect. When democratic ideas cause a revolution in one authoritarian state, it leads to the collapse of other authoritarian regimes in the region. The literature on democratic diffusion expanded with the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe (Kopstein and Reilly, 2000). However, its most recent apogee was during the late 1990s and early 2000s when revolutions occurred across Eastern Europe and the FSU, following ideas of democratic mobilisation from previous examples (Bunce and Wolchik, 2007: 96). These revolutions were the so-called 'colour revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (Beissinger, 2007: 259) and groups from previous 'revolutions', dispensed ideas and tools to beat dictatorships (Colin, 2007: 68-69).

It is argued that diffusion is limited to states in proximity to one another geographically (Schmitter, 2001: 38; Whitehead, 2001: 5). However, technological progress has allowed information to spread further, influencing states in disparate regions (Schmitter, 2001: 38). Diffusion allows a person to pinpoint the importance of an idea, showing how learning operates and the importance of mobilisation (Beissinger, 2009: 75). By grouping disparate states together, diffusion runs the risk of incorporating too many dissimilar cases. Kyrgyzstan is one such example (Bunce and Wolchik, 2009: 70). Diffusion scholars see Kyrgyzstan as different to other cases and acknowledge that mass protests and the model of other 'colour revolutions' were not prevalent. Ortmann (2008: 363) contends that Kyrgyzstan is too different to be placed in diffusion literature and should be viewed as an outlier, rather than part of the diffusion phenomenon. The Kyrgyz 'revolution' was

backed by the Kremlin, who claimed to be exporting 'stable democracy' and not a 'colour revolution' (Ortmann, 2008: 363-364). The 'revolution' did not produce democratic minded elites, but competing factions (Chadova-Devlen, 2011: 52). Even so diffusion scholars include it as a viable case. This is one of diffusion's weaknesses, as diffusion scholars admit disparate and tenuous cases.

I argue that diffusion has certain failings, the main being its short-term view of events. I agree with Way (2008a: 91) that linkage and leverage's longer term inferences, resonate more than diffusion in explaining regime collapse as a wave like effect. This does not adequately explain why some regimes are impervious to it (Silitski, 2009b: 87). Political diffusion literature focuses almost exclusively on democratisation. But, there is nothing to say that authoritarian regimes do not learn. Like democratic protestors, authoritarian regimes have access to technology (Silitski, 2010a: 275). Regimes in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia had time to learn from the protests (Silitski, 2009b: 88). Diffusion charts interesting phenomenon, but does not explain the wider repercussions behind the phenomenon and societal issues. Diffusion cannot clarify how a process starts or ends. It is left to scholars to draw conclusions from circumstances. Better means, such as understanding the state are available, rather than explaining processes through diffusion (Whitehead, 2001: 6). Supporters of diffusion do not provide a comprehensible synopsis of authoritarian failure (Way, 2008b: 55) and are unable to adequately allow for negotiation and changes in the political arena, without providing adequate interpretation of negotiation and dialogue problems (Walsh-Russo, 2004). The FSU revolutions have more to do with weakening incumbent regimes than diffusion allows for (Way, 2008b: 57; Way, 2009: 90-91). Yet, the

reader must remember that policy and learning can diffuse and should be considered, even if the theory is unable to explain wider phenomenon.

## LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE

A states interaction with the world explains how it operates in the international order and how other states react to it (Hurrell, 2001: 159). For instance, the Greek Junta's linkage with other governments allowed them to have leverage over Greece, making it easier for Greece to democratise (Tsingos, 2001: 346). As authoritarian regimes (to an extent) wish others to consider them as democratic, they hold elections, whilst ensuring maintenance of the regime (Levitsky and Way, 2006a: 206). The likelihood that an authoritarian state will hold regular elections depends on the linkage that that state has with democratic states and international organisations (Levitsky and Way, 2006a: 207-210; Levitsky and Way, 2005b: 520).

Leverage is the influence that a state has over others. States that rely on international aid and Diaspora remittances are susceptible to leverage, allowing democratic states to compel change. Western leverage is effective on autocratic regimes reliant on western trade. If autocratic regimes do not follow Western norms and values, then the West can threaten "punitive action" (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 40-42). Yet, a state does not need leverage to democratise others. Linkage can scare authoritarian regimes into democratising, "linkage has raised the cost of autocratic abuses by increasing...external response" (Levitsky and Way, 2006b: 379). The extent of linkage leaves regions either with a few authoritarian regimes or a propensity of them (Levitsky and Way, 2005a: 23, 26). Linkage and leverage is

like conditionality, as democratic states engage in a cost-benefit analysis as to whether democracy promotion is cheaper than maintaining authoritarianism (Ambrosio, 2009: 13).

Proponents of linkage and leverage recognise that democratic states may not exert pressure on authoritarian regimes if they do not have links with them (Levitsky and Way, 2006a: 209-212). Regions where the West has few regional experts' have maintained authoritarian regimes. The massacre in Andijan (Uzbekistan), did not receive Western condemnation for months, as Western governments were unsure what had occurred. Lack of western condemnation has allowed Lukashenka to ignore judicial censure on 16 constitutional violations allowing him to consolidate the regime (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 45, 79). In Central Asia the West's ability to influence states is weak, so authoritarian regimes have consolidated. By seeing authoritarianism as entrenched, the West makes little attempt to encourage change (Way and Levitsky, 2007: 48). Due to a shared Soviet past, FSU states have linkage with each other and so together blunt "Western pressure" (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 50).

Russia, as the regional hegemon, exerts influence on the other FSU states through a shared past and common culture (Cameron and Ornstein, 2012: 2). Russia influences "the forms of political authority and processes of political change in those states" (Cameron and Ornstein, 2012: 2). Scholars of democratic linkage and leverage have recognised that democratic regimes can change authoritarian regimes "through political, diplomatic, economic, moral, or cultural means" (Ambrosio, 2009: 13). Yet, Russia through cultural, economic and political leverage can shape institutions of other FSU states (Cameron and Ornstein, 2012: 5). Russia's growing authoritarianism provides legitimacy for FSU regimes to



increase their authoritarianism (particularly, Belarus and Ukraine) (Cameron and Ornstein, 2012: 24). This study contends that Russia exerts influence on other FSU states, to aid authoritarian consolidation in the region, whilst learning from others how to consolidate authoritarianism. I argue that linkage and leverage are pertinent in comprehending authoritarian learning. States that share a common culture, historical and economic traits are more likely to copy one another's ideas (Vanderhill, 2013: 28-29; Bunce and Wolchik, 2006: 297). If one state is economically dependent on another it is more susceptible to the wishes of that state (Vanderhill, 2013: 29). This has relevance in explaining Russia's relationship with Belarus and Ukraine (and to a lesser extent Kazakhstan).

## SOFT POWER

Soft power incorporates an array of concepts for a state to show its cultural values to the world. Unlike hard power, soft power does not rely on the use of military force to achieve its purposes (Nye, 2006: 26). Soft power is the ability to make someone do what is wanted without them realising they are doing it (Zahran and Ramos, 2010: 13; Lock, 2010: 33). America for instance, uses culture for seduction purposes by endorsing the promotion of democracy, individual opportunities and human rights (Nye, 2006: 26). It assesses the culture of a state and how attractive it is to others. Others will view those values as beneficial and applicable to how they wish to live and thus view the state's policies as inclusive "and legitimate" (Nye, 2010: 4). Soft power incorporates public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchange programmes, development assistance, disaster relief, the economy and military to military assistance (Nye, 2010: 7). It relies on civil society to promote values. Governments do not control transnational organisations, like, (using the example of

America), Hollywood, CNN or Harvard. Yet, these institutions promote cultural values that endorse American principles in the eyes of others (Nye, 2010: 7; Zahran and Ramos, 2010: 13). However, the state is not a person, so how is it possible for a state to be influenced through soft power (Laybe, 2010: 53)? States may follow international doctrines to promote their own legitimacy, but does this constitute shared mutual values, or a need to appear to accept international norms (Laybe, 2010: 54)? Can Russia (for example), use soft power in the region? It has become important in Russian foreign policy. Increasingly, Russia tries to influence its neighbours through the promotion of cultural values (Tsygankov, 2006: 1079). Since Russia used hard power in the Russo-Georgia war (2008), the Kremlin noticed that its neighbours espoused a marked coolness towards it (Wieclawski, 2011: 12). Russia perceived that soft power with the promotion of cultural values was the best means to assert itself (Tsygankov, 2006: 1080).<sup>4</sup> Many states contemplate the advancement of interests through soft power, such as China (Suzuki, 2010: 200).

## THE THEORY OF AUTHORITARIAN LEARNING

If democratic ideas can spread and people can learn tactics to overcome authoritarian regimes, then why cannot authoritarian regimes reciprocate and learn how to overcome democratic protests? Diffusion allows authoritarian regimes to view what is occurring in other states, through policy ideas, the building of institutions for authoritarian consolidation and learning from demonstration effects. Correspondingly, authoritarian regimes are just as susceptible to learning and ideas as their democratic antagonists

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<sup>4</sup> As referred to earlier this study was written before events in Ukraine occurred. However, I feel that the Kremlin still believes in the use of soft power and its value to the promotion of Russian cultural values.

(Vanderhill, 2013: 14-15; Ambrosio, 2010: 378). The linkage and leverage that authoritarian states have with one another is also significant in comprehending authoritarian learning. As I argued in chapter one, I believe that authoritarian learning is elite driven. It relies on dialogue between different elites in various authoritarian regimes. These elites talk about the best tactics and methods to overcome protest, opposition and alternative media through creating legislation, curbing independent sources of power and creating institutions to maintain power. Authoritarian learning is based on elite dialogue and taking examples from other states for use or re-shaping domestically.

Learning is a challenging concept to measure. It is open to interpretation (Zito and Schout, 2009: 1104). At times it is difficult to differentiate between competition, imitation and coercion, which may seem to be learning (Shipan and Volden, 2008: 840). However, I contend that one can, through the study of linkage and leverage and analysis of state discourse, at least infer that learning exists. It is difficult to prove learning conclusively. But if states use similar institutions, comparable discourse and pass parallel legislation, it is unlikely this is done from the ether. One can then make strong deductions that learning occurs. There are different concepts in the learning literature. Policy transfer analyses how regimes transfer existing policy or institutions between them (Stone, 2001: 1; Stone, 2004: 546, 548). Policy-makers are in constant dialogue, so it is understandable that groups share ideas and learning on policy implementation and applicable institutions (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000: 6). Policy transfer explains external influences on domestic policies and institutions (James and Lodge, 2003: 182). Political learning is an important concept, allowing states to follow ideas, rather than copy or modify existing policy or legislation (Gilardi, 2010b: 651). By analysing relationships between states, one can understand the

importance of learning and account for why states share similar policies and institutions (Volden and Ting, 2006: 2).

Authoritarian learning has become increasingly pertinent in the FSU since the 'colour revolutions'. These events led to the collapse of regimes in Georgia and Ukraine, which directly affected how the FSU regimes dealt with protests and potential democratic encroachments in the region. As will be shown, Russia saw the 'colour revolutions' as a western inspired means to destabilise and end authoritarian regimes. The Kremlin learnt from the 'colour revolutions' that activists and ideas permeated states (Ambrosio, 2007: 232-233). Other FSU regimes have been successful in stopping 'colour revolutions'. Lukashenka overcame protests in 2006 and 2010 and has continued to manipulate elections. In Central Asia, only Kyrgyzstan became moderately democratic, although since the 'Tulip revolution' it has slid backwards, becoming increasingly authoritarian (Beissinger, 2006). Authoritarian regimes are in dialogue on the best tactics to use to maintain power (Ambrosio, 2009: 3). These regimes saw the importance of civil society in the 'colour revolutions' and implemented "attacks on independent civil society and...opposition, limits on electoral competition" and made "efforts to...delegitimize colour revolution ideas...as subversive and alien" (Finkel and Brudny, 2012a: 2). Russia used 'colour revolution' tactics for authoritarian purposes, restricting civil society and the media, whilst changing electoral practices and limiting opportunities for independent election monitoring (Finkel and Brudny, 2012b: 15-16). Russia provides regimes with "political, diplomatic and practical support" (Burnell, 2006). FSU regimes have learnt what Ambrosio terms (2010b: 137-138) "authoritarian resistance" to potential democratic encroachment.

## AUTHORITARIAN LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE IN THE FSU

To comprehend the main research question ‘how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region’ and the two sub-research questions ‘why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?’ and ‘does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?’ I will assess the importance of linkage and leverage in the FSU. The linkage and leverage that states have with one another helps explain associations, making learning likely to occur. I will investigate Russia’s linkage and leverage with other FSU states. This will emphasise regional authoritarian growth, its consolidation and the sharing of tactics. I contend as Vanderhil (2014: 6) does that China may have linkage and leverage with other states, but it’s not concerned with authoritarian promotion in the same way Russia is. The Russian example will show how authoritarian regimes learn from one another and will emphasise why, when and to what extent regimes learn from one another, whilst highlighting if regional hegemons impose techniques on others.

## RUSSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY

### *The ideology behind Russian Foreign Policy*

Russia’s foreign policy promotes ideas of stability, protecting other states against Western ‘colonisers’ and creating a “‘democratic’ political order that” eliminates “independent opposition parties from competition for public office” (Horvarth, 2013: 6-7). The Kremlin uses political technology to control elections and gives affiliated states access to political technologies and technologists. As Wilson (2005: 86) contends, “the

job of the technologist is one of direction, shaping and even creating governing parties and politicians, trying to do the same for the opposition, as well". Political technology serves to counter instability. It is integral to Russia's counter revolution programme (Horvarth, 2013: 87), which has been diffused to other FSU states. Sovereign democracy, whilst no longer existing as a concept underpins Russia's foreign policy initiatives and has been followed in other FSU states. Belarus adheres solely to sovereign democratic values. Azerbaijan has adapted it to 'responsible democracy'. Armenia has modelled its political system on the Putin-Medvedev tandem (Gvosdev, 2011) with Robert Kocharian passing the mantle to Serzh Sargsyan. Georgia and Ukraine developed tactics from Russia, curbing media freedoms, human rights whilst using administrative resources to close courts and build "artificial party projects" (Popescu and Wilson, 2009: 35-36). Russia's values are used by other FSU states in their political systems to maintain power. This further highlights the trend towards authoritarianism in the FSU.

#### *Russian Foreign Policy in Understanding Authoritarian Learning*

Under Yeltsin, Russian foreign policy was divided between different elite factions who competed for prominence, but, with the emergence of a more solidified authoritarian regime, Russia's foreign policy has consolidated (Dawisha, 2011: 331-332). The Russian regime promotes "a strong, unified, centralized, and respected Russian state as the best guarantor against disintegration and dismemberment" (Dawisha, 2011: 346). Putin, according to Piontkovsky (2009: 52-53) "has only distaste for Western-style democracy". External threats to the regime need to be met "by all means". The regime promotes the West as a threat to legitimise itself. Although the 'Primakov Doctrine' originated in the

Yeltsin era, it has remained the guiding principle of Russian foreign policy. This dogma affirms Russian pre-eminence in the FSU, attesting that Russia will defend its interests there (Ambrosio, 2005: 4-5). Russia has fallen back on Czarist and Soviet rationales as a beacon to others (Ambrosio, 2005: 22-23). Although the growth of FSU authoritarianism is largely due to domestic factors, Russia's authoritarian 'model' serves to consolidate and reinforce authoritarianism in other FSU states (Cameron and Ornstein, 2011b: 20). The linkage between Russia and other FSU states remains high. Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, its history marks the region, Russian remains the regional language and the FSU economies remain inter-linked (Cameron and Ornstein, 2011b: 24-25). If Russia has an authoritarian model, linkage and leverage will be even closer.

Russia has tried to promote its role of serving as a 'model' for other states. With the weakening of America, other states are competing for prominence (Park, 2012). Russia hopes its 'model' will be considered another option from integration with the West, or an alliance with China. It has "the clout...economic might and...centre of attraction for adjacent republics and quite a few other countries" (Nixey, 2012: 2). Liberal democracy remains the dominant world mantra, but with China's rise, democracy is being reinterpreted (Park, 2012). Russia envisages a role for itself as a key player, with a model for other states. However, can Russia do this? Does it have the ability? Russia's aptitude to serve as a model should be tested. To understand how Russia exerts influence in the FSU, it is important to comprehend its ideology and political model. The concept of sovereign democracy was devised by Vladislav Surkov. According to Hudson (2009: 193) it "outlines a mission to secure Russia's sovereignty...the discourse takes a proactive tone...its logic rests upon a reaction to

perceived internal and external threats". Whilst the term sovereign democracy is no longer advocated, the values behind it permeate Russian thinking in domestic and foreign policy circles (Hudson, 2009: 193). Promotion of former sovereign democratic ideas allows other authoritarian regimes to justify their political systems. Russia's foreign policy under Medvedev became smarter, incorporating soft power (Mironov, 2013). It is a concept that remains an aspect of Russian foreign policy under Putin and so needs to be investigated.

#### RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN THE FSU

Soft power is the promotion of cultural values. As I am assessing authoritarian learning, it is pertinent to analyse soft power and how states promote authoritarianism. I do not include Chinese soft power or its linkage and leverage with other states here. I make the inference that China does not promote authoritarianism. Its soft power and linkage and leverage are benign. Whilst future studies will assess China's authoritarian promotion and its influence on others, I feel it is more pertinent to investigate the Russian regimes promotion of authoritarianism. The Russian regime engages in authoritarian promotion, looking to bolster other authoritarian regimes, whilst subverting democratic norms (Vanderhill, 2014: 6). An analysis of Russia's soft power and linkage and leverage will provide answers to the main research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' and the two sub-research questions 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?' and 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?'



The Kremlin had ignored soft power, but now urges “greater efforts by Russian media and business to consolidate and promulgate the country’s position in global affairs” (Monaghan, 2013: 6). The regime believes it has created a model promoting its cultural values and norms that other states will follow (Blank, 2012: 4; Makarychev, 2012). Its international English language news television channel (Russia Today) has become highly popular abroad (Kondrat’ev, 2013: 4). It has promoted new institutions and groupings, such as the BRICs and the Eurasian Union (EaU). The Kremlin wants to exert influence through culture, language, media, the economy and Diaspora’s, opening other states to its influence and protecting Russia from Western encroachments (Monaghan, 2013: 6). Since its mishandling of support for Yanukovych during the 2004 ‘Orange revolution’ in Ukraine, Moscow uses different tactics to maintain leverage in the FSU. It promotes civil society, culture, language, post-Soviet nostalgia and the Orthodox Church. A direct influence of the ‘Orange revolution’ has been promotion of “it’s” NGOs, using “it’s” web technologies, and exporting its own brand of political and economic influence” (Popescu and Wilson, 2009: 29). Putin classified the ‘Orange revolution’ as a dark period, warning that “if we embark on the path of permanent revolution...we will submerge the entire post-Soviet space in a series of endless conflicts, which will lead to...serious consequences” (Horvarth, 2013: 43).

Moscow offers an authoritarian political system as a model it hopes others will emulate (Rukavishnikov, 2010: 76-77). It has the financial resources and political acumen to branch out of the FSU into world politics promoting its model (Monaghan, 2008: 726; 2013: 6; Makarychev, 2008b: 4). In recent years, it has chaired the following organisations: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Organisation of the Black

Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC), Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. These coupled with the G8, G20 and its promotion of Kazakhstan to the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairmanship, have emphasised Russia's increasing international role (Makarychev, 2013: 1-3). Soft power is a foreign policy concept the Kremlin has adopted to improve its image abroad.

#### RUSSIAN LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE IN THE FSU

In order to assess Russia's linkage and leverage in the FSU and its promotion of authoritarianism and whether the regional hegemon instigates learning techniques, I will analyse a number of examples of potential authoritarian promotion in the region. I will investigate regional institutions arguing that these serve as potential vehicles for authoritarian promotion and for learning tactics, institution building and appropriate legislation for authoritarian consolidation. From this I will analyse the relationship between Russia and the other case studies (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine) to assess whether it is Russia that instigates learning techniques or learns from others.

*FSU Regional Organisations: The Eurasian Union (EaU), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)*

I include these regional institutions because they allow FSU states to engage in dialogue and learning. There is a lack of literature on these institutions authoritarian tendencies, but I contend that they allow Russia to promote its model to other states and thus promote authoritarianism. An analysis of these institutions fits within the main

research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region'. Understanding these institutions provides analysis of how FSU states deal with issues together. If the majority of FSU states have authoritarian tendencies this espousal of authoritarian discourse will influence other states in the region and promote authoritarianism.

The EaU is the most important institution because of its integration potential. It has latent possibilities to invigorate the FSU economies (Emerson, 2012: 2). Although it does not formally exist until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 its current members are Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. Armenia has signed the ascension treaty and Kyrgyzstan is likely to join. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have requested observer status (Hoffman, 2012: 4). The discourse emphasises democracy, freedom and human rights. This attempts to make the EaU attractive to European focused states, like Ukraine and Georgia. Lukashenka and Nazarbayev have spoken of the need for economic integration, because the FSU states share a common heritage (Hoffmann, 2012: 2). The existing Common Economic Space (CES), which is the precursor to the EaU, includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Chufrin, 2012: 7). Moscow has linkage and leverage over the economies of the other FSU states. Even though the Soviet Union ended over twenty years ago, the FSU state's economies are still centred towards Moscow and, (mostly), reliant on it for oil and gas (Laurelle and Peyrouse, 2012: 9-10).

Russia has developed the EurAsEc and the EaU to rival the EU in integrating FSU states, to provide a large market for Russian goods. Another creation, (the Eurasian

Development Bank), allows Russia to give friendly states loans (Aris, 2010: 3). The Kremlin hopes to bring other FSU states into its regional concept (Wisniewska *et al*, 2010: 3). The establishment of EurAsEC means, according to Dragneva and Wolczuk (2012: 2) that the EU is no longer “the ‘only game in town’”. Moscow perceives EurAsEC “as a vehicle for reintegrating the FSU, including...countries that fall within the sphere of the EU’s eastern neighbourhood”. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) exists for FSU states to engage in areas like: “foreign policy, the creation of a ‘common economic space’, transport and communication systems, environmental protection, migration policy and the suppression of organised crime” (Sakwa and Weber, 2009: 381). The CIS allows authoritarian states to fend off democratic protest and promote authoritarian principles (Kubicek, 2009: 240). Although I can only make suppositions here on the main research question ‘how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region’ these institutions allow dialogue between regimes. It is plausible that they provide opportunities for learning.

### *Russia and Kazakhstan*

Russia has worked with these regimes to stop any possible ‘colour revolution’ from occurring in the region. As Russia’s relationship with Kazakhstan is the most prominent affiliation in Central Asia (Laruelle, 2009: 5) I will analyse this relationship. Being a case study it is important to analyse how Russia uses linkage and leverage with Kazakhstan. Russia uses the carrot more than the stick in its relationship with Kazakhstan. It fears Kazakhstan could find other allies, thus reducing Russia’s appeal. So the Kremlin has embarked on heavy promotion of its culture and model in Kazakhstan

(Brill Olcott, 2007: 14). Both states have similar economic and political views. On the one hand Putin's concentration of power is viewed by Astana as something to emulate and protect the regime from 'colour revolutions'. On the other Kazakhstan has provided the Kremlin with ways to 'improve' the Russian political system. Most notably the Kazakh party of power (Nur Otan) is a direct influence on United Russia (Brill Olcott, 2007: 16). From this, one can infer that both states learn and are testing grounds for the consolidation of authoritarianism.

The 'colour revolutions' affected Kazakhstan in many ways. The regime perceived economic modernisation and wealth creation as insufficient to maintain stability, support and legitimacy. In order to preserve power and remain united, Astana limited any opposition. Nazarbayev, like Putin, has created a 'power vertical' (Schatz and Maltseva, 2012: 49, 51-52). Opposition candidates have been co-opted into prominent, but "strategically unimportant positions" (Schatz and Maltseva, 2012: 57).

Acknowledging that the 'colour revolutions' used youth groups extensively, the Kazakh regime has made entering university more accessible to young people and offered them free tuition making them beholden to the regime. If they protest the regime can withdraw funding (Ostrowski, 2009: 351, 355). The 'colour revolutions' unified the regime, making it difficult for opposition to operate effectively (Ostrowski, 2009: 362).

Astana sees threats in every eventuality and saw the Zhanozen (Western Kazakhstan) protests as dangerous. Striking oil workers were violently dispersed in events reminiscent of how the Uzbek regime dealt with demonstrators in Andijan. Kazakh police opened fire indiscriminately, killing sixteen and injuring sixty four. Many

striking workers were tortured and their lawyers arrested (Salmon, 2012: 73; Salmon, 2011: 507; Shishkin, 2012: 9). The authorities used the crisis to emasculate civil society, by further controlling the media. This provided Astana with the opportunity to round-up opposition activists (Sindelar and Toiken, 2012: 2). The Zhanaozen riots were seen by Astana as the start of a revolution. Whilst, there is no direct connotation that Kazakhstan followed Russia's counter revolution, there are certain similarities: arresting opposition activists, controlling media and claims of western influence for the demonstrators. As the authorities used violence in Zhanaozen there are correlations between this, the Andijan incident and the 2008 Armenian protests (Nurmakov, 2011).

### *Russia and Ukraine<sup>5</sup>*

The Kremlin views Ukraine as an integral part of its sphere of influence determined to keep it within its geopolitical sphere (Vanderhill, 2013: 56). Putin is alleged to have told President Bush that he did not consider Ukraine a state (Bohm, 2013). Until 2011 Russia believed that Ukrainian membership of the EU was impossible. However, with the possible signing of an association agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Russia tried to draw Ukraine closer to it. The Kremlin offered Kiev better trade conditions should it join the CU, promising reductions in oil and gas costs. It also used the mantra that Ukraine would become a vassal of Brussels if it joined the EU (Kononczuk and Matuszak, 2011).

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<sup>5</sup> As remarked on earlier, this thesis was written before the 2012 demonstrations precipitated the demise of the Yanukovich regime and led to the current impasse in south-eastern Ukraine. However, I would contend that in the short-term, if not the medium and long terms too, the new government of Petro Poroshenko will be in dialogue with Moscow. This could weaken Ukraine's institutions and force a reversion to a weak authoritarian regime.

The energy question underpins the relationship between Moscow and Kiev (Matuszak, 2010a: 1). Ukraine is reliant on Russian oil and gas and cannot afford to import oil and gas at market rates. Kiev negotiates from a position of weakness, allowing the Kremlin privileges, like the renewal of the Russian Black Sea fleet (Matuszak, 2010a: 1-2). As the Ukrainian government has not reformed the economy, loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have dried-up. Consequently Kiev has asked Moscow for help. The Ukrainian oil company Naftohaz solicited Gazprombank (a subsidiary of Gazprom) for a loan to pay Gazprom (Matuszak, 2012). Ukraine pays an inflated price (\$252 per 1,000 cubic metres compared to Belarus's price of \$194) (Matuszak, 2010a: 3-4). Yanukovych has spoken about Ukraine joining the CES, if and when Russia joins the WTO. With Russia's ascension to the WTO, Yanukovych's bluff has been called. Russia is the main destination for the majority of Ukrainian trade, so it is a matter of time before Ukraine joins the CES. The Russian and Ukrainian economic relationship is large, although Ukraine is fearful of too much Russian reliance (Matuszak, 2010b: 7).

During the 'Orange' coalition, Russia portrayed Ukraine as unstable. The Kremlin contrasted this to its political system of stability and predictability (Kramer, 2010: 2). Yanukovych with his electoral victory in 2010 began capturing the state, treating "electoral victory as a licence to appropriate and distribute state assets for the private benefit of its leadership and supporters". In prolonging the Black Sea fleet's tenure in Crimea, Yanukovych got concessions for allies (Emerson, 2010: 1-2). Party of Regions and United Russia have collaborated since 2005 (Hartel, 2010: 3). Kiev has limited independent media by not renewing media licenses if newspapers and television channels do not portray the government in a positive light (Iwanski, 2012: 1; Haran,

2010: 3). The National Commission for Freedom of Speech, Media Development, the National Commission for Strengthening Democracy and the Rule of Law, and the Department of Human Rights have all been dissolved (Haran, 2010: 3). Intimidation of opposition politicians and media has indicated that Ukraine's political system has not overcome the mantra of "managed democracy" (Moshes, 2010: 3). The 2012 Ukrainian parliamentary elections saw changes to the electoral code. Legislation introduced a mixed member electoral system (similar to Russia), banning political blocs and raising the electoral threshold from 3% to 5%. All this is similar to what exists in Russia. Kiev also uses facade parties to fragment opposition votes (similar again to Russia). Yanukovich often circumvents parliament, passing laws by presidential fiat. In 2013 at an EU-Ukraine summit, the EU set out conditions for Ukraine to meet, such as "judicial reform and resolution...of political prisoners; reform of the electoral system...real implementation of reforms...for approximating EU rules". However, Yanukovich has ignored these appraisals (Haran, 2013: 1, 4). Russia waits with the CU, should Kiev break with the EU (Kudelia, 2013: 1). In 2013 Ukraine signed a memorandum with the Eurasian economic commission, perceived by some as a step to membership (Haran, 2013: 3). Yanukovich's government often passes legislation "behind closed doors and without discussion" and lacking a quorum (Haran, 2013: 5).

As Yanukovich holds a majority in parliament it is plausible he will create, like Putin, a power vertical and construct a hegemonic party using Party of Regions as a base to control parliament, whilst buttressing his rule with administrative-bureaucratic resources (Fisun, 2010: 4-5). With the CU exhibiting "impressive growth" this may be the only valid alternative for Ukraine (Moshes, 2013: 3). Yanukovich's growing



authoritarianism and negation of liberal reforms needed for the EU, makes it unlikely Ukraine will join the EU soon (Moshes, 2013: 5). Kremlin political aide, Sergei Glazyev, contends that if Ukraine joins the EaU, it would have lower gas prices, no export duties and the elimination of other trade barriers. This will save Ukraine about \$11 billion, whereas the EU will bring only cost (Visloguzov, 2013: 2).

### *Russia and Belarus*

There are many aspects to Russia's relationship with Belarus. The Kremlin hopes that states with EU pretensions (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) will see the benefits of integration with Russia, rather than cling to their EU dream. It uses its relationship with Belarus and regional organisations, like the EaU, as an alternative to the EU. Moscow promotes the Belarusian economy making its regional integration plans attractive for other states (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 5). Belarus is strategically important to Russia, as it is close to Kaliningrad and allows Russian forces to dominate the Baltic States and Eastern Europe if necessary (Rinna, 2013).

Both regimes are allied politically, economically and militarily. Russia has an interest in maintaining Belarusian economic stability. Belarus is a 'pipeline' for Russian oil and gas, accounting for 25% of all Russian gas exports and 21% of Russian oil exports in 2012. 2.8 billion kilowatt/hours of Russian electricity passed through Belarus in 2012. 30% of Russia's trade goes through Belarus (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 10-12). Russian companies have exclusive rights "for the supply of natural gas to Belarus". They dominate "the transit and distribution of gas" (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 16). Russia accounts for 35% of all Belarusian exports. It keeps Belarusian enterprises operational,

providing them with favourable trading terms. If Minsk were to frustrate the Kremlin, Moscow could raise oil and gas prices forcing policy change in Minsk (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 22-23). Russian companies' control 25% of Belarus's banking sector. It is the main provider of foreign currency loans for Belarusian companies. Lukashenka has spoken of integrating the Belarusian economy further with Russia, allegedly benefiting Belarusian society (Ambrosio, 2006).

Politically Minsk and Moscow have joint interests, most notably the Russian-Belarusian Union State. If the Union State is successful it may lead to further integration with other FSU states (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 10). The Kremlin uses political lobbyists to promote Russian companies and investment. It has created pro-Russian political parties and opposition candidates, allowing it to exert pressure on Lukashenka, whilst ensuring Russia's interests should Lukashenka unexpectedly lose power (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 26-27). Moscow has also placed pro-Russian forces in the presidential administration, military and security services (Bugajski, 2004: 102) and has protected Minsk from external pressures to democratise. The Belarusian regime, having overcome democratic protests in 2006 and 2010 emphasises for the Kremlin that the 'colour revolutions' are over (Ambrosio, 2006; Tarkowski *et al*, 2011: 7; Padhol and Marples, 2011: 3). After the 2010 demonstrations Minsk restricted internet access and blogging websites, searching independent media outlets and suppressing the Union of Poles, seeing it as a Polish 'fifth column' (Gaidelyte, 2010: 73). The Russian-Belarusian Union State insulates Minsk "from...democratic trends in Europe". The Union State "allows the Belarusian regime to resist specific pressures from the West by supporting regime survival (conditionality); and provides it with an alternative to EU membership

(integration)” (Ambrosio, 2006). Moscow views Belarus, along with Ukraine, as a historical part of old Russia (Ambrosio, 2006). It protects “Belarusian authoritarianism”, through trade, military security and cultural identity (Ambrosio, 2006). Regular meetings between leaders confer recognition on Minsk. The Kremlin organises election monitoring for Belarusian elections, halting Western claims that Belarusian elections are undemocratic. Moscow defends Minsk from Western sanctions (Moshes, 2011: 3) and fears that if Lukashenka fell Belarus would become pro-European, distancing itself from Moscow (Ambrosio, 2009: 114). The failure of the ‘colour revolution’ inspired ‘Denim revolution’ in Belarus, allowed Minsk to learn and teach Russia ways to overcome a ‘colour revolution’ (Wilson, 2011: 211).

Culturally, Russia exerts huge influence. 90% of Belarusians use Russian as their first language. Since 1995, Russian has been a co-official language with Belarusian (Ambrosio, 2006). Most Belarusians identify “with the Russian cultural area”. Russian media dominates Belarus as Channel One, Rossiya and NTV, are the three most popular channels, shaping Belarusian’s world view, towards the Kremlin (Wierzbowska-Miaga, 2013: 28). Minsk believes that with Russia it “belongs to a separate civilisation that is Slavic and Orthodox. Eastern values...are fundamentally different than...the West” (Ambrosio, 2006). Western concepts of democracy and human rights are alien to Belarus. Lukashenka speaks of the immorality of Western culture and himself as a preserver of a Slavic-Eastern heritage. The former Orthodox Patriarch (Aleksii the Second) “honoured Lukashenka with the first ever “Christian Orthodox Unity” award” (Ambrosio, 2006). The Russian Orthodox Church promotes Russia’s foreign policy. The current Patriarch (Kirill) has stated that “faith, morality, sacred places, and homeland” are as important as

human rights (Satter, 2012). Kirill argues that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians hold spiritual unity, with affinity to 'holy-Rus' (Cwiek-Karpowicz, 2010: 336-337). Kirill views himself as Patriarch not only of Russia, but also of Ukraine and Belarus. He is the "good shepherd" integrating the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian world) (Curanovic, 2012: 21-22). Moscow has leverage over Belarus economically and strategically. Politically it supports the regime, even learning from it to build authoritarianism.

#### MINSK'S PREVENTATIVE COUNTER REVOLUTION. TEACHING MOSCOW?

To answer the sub-research question 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear' I will assess how Minsk reacted to possible 'colour revolutions'. How it dealt with protests and whether tactics, legislation and institutions used have given impetus for the Kremlin to copy techniques. From this I can infer both that learning occurs and that it is not the regional hegemon that diffuses authoritarian learning techniques to others. Russia also learns from others. During the 2006 'Denim revolution' Belarusian students created a youth organisation *Zubr*. Taking ideas from previous 'colour revolutions', they proclaimed the 'Denim revolution' in line with the other 'colour revolutions' ('Bulldozer', 'Orange', 'Rose' and 'Tulip'). Belarusians took to the streets in an "extraordinary mobilisation" (Ambrosio, 2009: 21). But, opposition parties were disunited and poorly coordinated. In contrast, the pro-government organisation *Belaya Rus* was united. Competing opposition groups espoused different ideologies, emphasising division, lack of leadership and basic organisational skills (Korosteleva, 2009: 328). The pro-regime Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRYU) exerted pressure on the opposition mobilising "school-leavers and

university students using...mechanisms of sticks and carrots" (Korosteleva, 2009: 329). Although the Belarusian opposition was divided, for a short period it seemed a 'colour revolution' could topple the regime (Korosteleva, 2009: 329).

The 'Denim revolution' scared and fascinated the Kremlin. Once assured that the Belarusian regime would survive Russian authorities learned how Minsk overcame the protests (Ambrosio, 2009: 68). The demonstrations failure highlighted that youth organisations have large porous memberships, allowing for state infiltration. The Belarusian effectively rendered many regional *Zubr* branches "ineffective" (Wilson, 2011: 221). After 2006, Lukashenka set-up NGOs "the facade of a genuine indigenous civil society, but one that...provided further evidence of a managed pluralism in Belarus" (Frear, 2011: 183). The Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRYU) performed tasks similar to its Russian equivalent (*Nashi*) (Astapenia, 2012). The media issued regime propaganda, portraying it in a positive light, whilst using *kompromat* (compromising material) against the opposition (Frear, 2011: 187). The Belarusian regime uses (like Russia), fake candidates to disperse and confuse opposition voters (Wilson, 2011: 211-212). In the aftermath of the attempted Belarusian 'colour revolution', Russian authorities found five areas they could use to overturn possible future 'revolutions': political repression, obstruction of independent media, weakening of the opposition, limiting opposition publications and maintaining regime support (Markus, 2010: 118).

The Belarusian regime, like the Kremlin learnt from the 'Orange revolution'. It used the security services to forcibly end demonstrations. Minsk limited the chances for NGOs to register, restricted the ability for international NGOs to operate and closed independent

polling organisations (Silitski, 2010a: 289-290). Lukashenka has routinely changed the constitution and political system to maintain power. If opposition leaders become too significant they are jailed or exiled (Silitski, 2005a). Although the notion of pre-empting democratic infringements started in Russia it was developed and honed by Minsk. Lukashenka refined manipulation and repression to an art form (Silitski, 2010b: 2). He curbed internet and media access, whilst strengthening his position. It is true that the Kremlin acts as a “black knight” providing Minsk with economic resources, but Minsk provides Moscow with examples of authoritarian consolidation (Potocki, 2011: 51-53).

Minsk has tried continually to bring the media under control. After a 1996 referendum Lukashenka gained powers to control the judiciary and legislature, whilst making presidential decrees law. This has centred all political institutions on the presidency. Lukashenka saw the defeat of Milosevic (in Serbia) as a lesson that elections should not be competitive. The regime should get the electoral result out quickly to neuter opposition mobilisation. The ‘Orange revolution’ was seen as threatening and security forces were trained to “resist the export of democracy” (Silitski, 2006a). During the ‘Orange revolution’ KGB operatives were in Kiev taking notes on stopping a ‘revolution’ and gathering information on potential democracy exporters. The KGB devised new tactics to stop demonstrations. The media “shared countless reports, documentaries, propaganda broadcasts, and newspaper articles” explaining to the populace the official discourse on the revolutions (Silitski, 2006a). Belarus and Russia have created an “authoritarian international” to pre-empt democracy by reinforcing authoritarianism. Putin has taken ideas and concepts from Belarus to consolidate authoritarianism in Russia (Silitski, 2006a). The failed Belarusian ‘colour revolution’ gave Russia ideas to overturn democratic movements.

The inability of the opposition to challenge Lukashenka has led to regime consolidation. All deputies to the Belarusian parliament are “elected through first past the post, single mandate constituencies, loyally supporting the Belarusian authorities”. A liberal party is allowed “to provide the semblance of competition”. Often ‘opposition’ candidates are withdrawn at the last moment, allowing regime candidates to contest unopposed, which confuses voters. The Belarusian parliament is a rubber-stamp institution “which almost never initiates...legislation” (Tucker and Frear, 2012). As Tucker and Frear (2012) claim “elections provide a veneer of electoral legitimacy...and demonstrate that the opposition has been comprehensively beaten. Electing deputies to represent the collective will of voters is not a priority”.

#### RUSSIA’S PREVENTATIVE COUNTER REVOLUTION

Whilst the Kremlin only began substantial counter measures to curb democratic infringements in the FSU after the collapse of the Kuchma regime in the ‘Orange revolution’ there were precursors towards preventative counter revolution before winter 2004. For example after the Serbian ‘Bulldozer revolution’, the Belarusian regime had started to analyse events that caused the Milosevic regime’s collapse (Silitski, 2005a; 2006a). The ‘Rose revolution’ which precipitated Shevernadze’s downfall in Georgia precipitated other FSU regimes ascertaining how to overcome potential ‘revolutions’. These tactics reached their apogee in Russia. The Kremlin set aside resources to undermine protests, the opposition, the independent media and civil society to curb possible ‘colour revolutions’ occurring in Russia.

The Kremlin set about creating policies to reduce potential opposition and demoralised it through propaganda. It views democratic regimes in the FSU as detrimental to its interests and willingly undermines them (Vanderhill, 2013: 4). The regime creates an uneven playing field by removing opposition “physically from the scene” through “jail, exile, or even murder” (Silitski, 2009a: 42-46). Russian media does not mention electoral fraud and follows regime discourse (as will be seen) that elections are free and fair (Wilson, 2010: 147-148). The Kremlin controls the “commanding heights” of the media industry, knowing that most Russians get news from television, so making it easier for the regime to control news (Gehlbach, 2010: 78). Moscow nominally follows the constitution, but in practice undermines its tenants, creating democratic institutions on paper, but creating opposing structures “that transcend the rules and constraints of the constitutional state” (Sakwa, 2014: 62). This aids regime consolidation, allowing it to deal with opposition protests without adhering to constitutional niceties (Bacon, 2012: 106; Shevtsova, 2009: 62).

Whilst the Kremlin (and Minsk) instigated a preventative counter revolution before the ‘Orange revolution’ its intricacies and development reached a pinnacle at this event. In the winter of 2004-2005, Yanukovych was defeated in the Ukrainian presidential election after outgoing President Leonid Kuchma tried to manipulate the vote in favour of Yanukovych. However, dissatisfaction at voter manipulation led to mass protests resulting in the ‘Orange revolution’ (Wilson, 2005: 1-6). Yanukovych’s defeat caused embarrassment for the Kremlin, which had backed him. The Kremlin believed that a ‘colour revolution’ could occur in Moscow. The ‘Orange revolution’ directly influenced Kremlin policy to counteract instability (Petrov, 2010: 1-2). Moscow’s



rationale for counter revolution against the “Orange plague”, started with the argument that there is “a revolutionary situation in Russia, not a political, but a social revolution (Maksimov *et al*, 2005). The Kremlin saw that NGOs played a prominent role in coalition building and organising opposition factions and youth groups. It had to counteract them. Some NGOs were likened to “communists, American agents and nationalists” and Al-Qaeda (Horvarth, 2013: 123). Protagonists of counter revolution argued that the Kremlin should “create their own NGO network and provide them with ideological, personnel, financial, and...political technological support” (Petrov, 2010: 2). The failure of ‘colour revolutions’ in Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia accentuated ways demonstrators could be beaten. The instability from the ‘Tulip’ and ‘Orange revolutions’ in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine (respectively) were widely publicised in the Russian media (Juraev, 2010: 2).

The Kremlin saw that it was important to limit how NGOs operated in Russia, fearing they could organise a ‘colour revolution’. Since 2006, NGO laws have been restrictive. Russian NGOs must register as a ‘foreign agent’ if they receive funding from abroad. NGOs must submit annual financial expenditure reports, disclose sources of funding and issue reports on personnel activities. Between 2006 and 2007, 2,900 NGOs were disbanded lacking funds, or were closed by authorities (Petrov, 2010: 2). This neutralised most civil society organisations. The regime has created GONGOs like the ‘Institute for democracy and cooperation’, “to monitor democratic freedoms in the US and Western Europe” (Horvarth, 2013: 124). It has created a systemic opposition to support the regime, but act in opposition to one another, thus curbing effective opposition (Bashlykova, 2013: 1). This is another tactic of the counter revolution.

After the Beslan school massacre, Putin created a public chamber “billed as an arena for dialogue and...scrutiny of state decisions and legislation” (Horvarth, 2013: 124). It allows the Kremlin to build its own “loyal civil society”, whilst monitoring potential adversaries. The public chamber consists of “pawns of the Kremlin” and “leading security officials” (Horvarth, 2013: 124). It is an institution constructed vertically from the president downwards. Although the public chamber was meant to represent NGOs to promote favorable legislation, it has “devoted little attention to legislation”. Putin has urged it to stop operating with NGOs as their “recommendations have been taken into account...now it is essential that the implantation of the law is monitored by the public”. It serves “as a buffer between civil society and state authorities”. The public chamber sets the tone and agenda of state-civilian dialogue pushing aside those deemed “inconvenient” (Petrov, 2010: 3; Richter, 2009: 40, 41).

Another aspect of the ‘colour revolutions’ was that the various ‘democratic movements’ created youth organisations, such as in Serbia (*Otpor*), in Georgia (*Kmara*), in Ukraine (*Pora*) and the failed Belarusian ‘colour-revolution’ (2006) (*Zubr*) (Horvath, 2013: 4, 14, 28). The Russian authorities watched these youth organisations spawn and diffuse ideas (Horvarth, 2013: 14). The creation of a Russian version of *Pora* by democratic activists (*Nash Vybor*-Our Choice), highlighted to the Kremlin that a ‘revolution’ could occur in Russia (Horvarth, 2013: 37, 65). The regime realised that legislation restricting NGOs, creating spoiler parties and “loyal opposition” was not enough. Nor, could Moscow rely just on the coercion of the security services to maintain control. The Kremlin created a youth organisation mirroring youth groups in the ‘colour revolutions’, but this youth group was created to eradicate alternative youth

group, helping limit possible future protests (Horvarth, 2013: 7). The regime considered them to be shock troops, or a “*Putinjegund*” (Petrov, 2010: 3). The youth organisation *Nashi* (ours) existed “to overwhelm...adversaries by mass mobilisation of the popular will”. It could organise pro-regime demonstrations and routinely get young people onto Moscow’s streets to counter possible opposition protests. Its anti-fascist ideology portrayed all anti-regime groups as fascists (Petrov, 2010: 3). This mantra of preventing a revolution became pertinent to Russia’s influence in the FSU.

#### HYPOTHESES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THE PROCEEDING CHAPTERS

The analysis of linkage and leverage emphasised the second sub-research question ‘does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?’ I contended that the regional hegemon (Russia) did in fact learn authoritarian tactics to overcome demonstrators from other states (particularly Belarus). However, by providing models, regional hegemons create representations that other states can copy. To an extent the other research questions have also been assessed. The main research question ‘how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region’ was partially shown. Russia has created regional institutions and a foreign policy that affects regional learning. This is seen in the tactics, legislation and institutions adopted to overcome demonstrations, after the ‘colour revolutions’. Yet, the first part of the main research question ‘how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate’ still requires clarity. The other sub-research question ‘why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another’ was also partially analysed, emphasising that after the ‘colour revolutions’ Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia learnt counter revolutionary techniques against

democratic ideas. However, Ukraine remains different. The regime has not consolidated against democracy. To understand why, further analysis will be made.

Having assessed various important literatures in comprehending authoritarian learning and consolidation I will provide possible hypotheses for the proceeding chapters on longitudinal and discourse analysis. I believe the longitudinal analysis will show that FSU regimes are increasingly authoritarian. I will emphasise that existing typologies should not be used as universal rubrics for all authoritarian regimes, but to explain only a few cases. Longitudinal analysis will clearly emphasise that there are different authoritarian categorisations between FSU states. The hypotheses in the longitudinal analysis section are ‘authoritarianism is increasing in the FSU’ and ‘there are differences in authoritarian levels between the FSU regimes’. These will explain the ‘why’ and ‘when’ aspects of the sub-research question ‘why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another’. If all the regimes are becoming authoritarian it will point to why it is occurring as regimes copy one another and the ‘when’ question will track movement over time showing that FSU regimes are becoming more authoritarian. The longitudinal analysis will point to the inference of different authoritarian levels in the FSU.

The discourse analysis chapter will provide analysis of the first section of the main research question ‘how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate’ and the second part of the sub-research question ‘why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another’. By analysing the language of the case studies through regime affiliated newspapers, government speeches and laws, I will show a similar discourse. Therefore, the first hypothesis is, ‘the case studies speak a similar language’. This leads to the second

hypothesis 'there is a learning process'. As Ukraine is less authoritarian than the others, it fits the 'to what extent' of the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?' Therefore, the third hypothesis is, 'there is a difference in language and tactics used by the Ukrainian regime'. These are the hypotheses I will use in the next two chapters to answer the research questions.

## CONCLUSION

Through analysing the theoretical literature on diffusion and linkage and leverage I argued that diffusion is not a viable concept to explain authoritarian learning. It is too focused on the short-term and cannot provide adequate explanations for why an event occurred. It is why I prefer linkage and leverage. Whilst, I do not deny that learning can diffuse across borders and people learn from events, I feel that linkage and leverage states have with one another is more conducive to learning.

Through extensive analysis of soft power, linkage and leverage and the Russian relationship with both, I started to answer parts of the research questions. First, I provided a comprehensive answer to the sub-research question 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?' I have shown that Russia, as the FSU's regional hegemon, does not impose authoritarianism on others. Rather it has learnt from others (for example, the failed 2006 'Denim revolution'). Whilst, it provides a model for other states and promotes its culture, it does not impose learning techniques, but learns tactics and ways to consolidate from other regimes. I showed with regards to the main research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' that the cases do learn from other regional

examples. However, further analysis in the following chapters needs to assess the first part of the question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate'. In regards to the research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another', I showed that the 'why' was due to the 'colour revolutions'. Regimes began concerted efforts to overcome democratic openings in the region after this event. Yet, I have only partially analysed two of three research questions. So the hypotheses investigated in the subsequent two chapters will provide answers to these research questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: AUTHORITARIAN LEARNING IN THE FSU

Chapter two provided an investigation of existing literature on different typologies of authoritarian regimes. I state that existing authoritarian rubrics are satisfactory, but these typologies place all authoritarian regimes under a chosen formula making them unwieldy. One purpose of this chapter is to show that the FSU regimes are not equally authoritarian and consequently should not be put in a single rubric. Another purpose here is to emphasise that the FSU has become increasingly authoritarian *over time*. Statistical data will emphasise this. This investigation is not alone in arguing that the FSU is becoming more authoritarian. Freedom House (and other comparative democratic bodies) show the same contention. Data from Freedom House will not show that learning occurs, but does emphasise a trend of increasing authoritarianism. I argue that what is pioneering is the use of models to explain only a few cases, rather than using one typology (for instance, competitive authoritarianism) to explain all authoritarian cases. The data will show that all FSU states are progressing towards hegemonic authoritarianism. This became particularly pertinent after 2004, with events in Ukraine. FSU authoritarian regimes, fearing domestic 'colour revolutions', began consolidation to counter this threat. The subsequent graphs will show, however that there are differences among FSU regimes in their authoritarian levels.

To aid the argument that models should be used to describe only a few cases, I offered hypotheses for this chapter (in chapter three), which elucidate the 'why' and 'when' of the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?' The two hypotheses are: 'authoritarianism is increasing in the FSU' and 'there are differences in authoritarian levels between the FSU regimes'. Both hypotheses help explain

differences in FSU authoritarian levels. I analysed in chapter two different authoritarian categorisations: competitive, electoral and hegemonic authoritarianism. Whilst, I agree that these classifications are hazy, they allow researchers to classify regimes simply if used correctly. Without these classifications one is left as Gilbert and Mohseni (2011: 271) advocate, with having to create new means to classify authoritarian regime types. Creating new rubrics for regimes that do not fit existing typologies does not provide more clarity and often blurs lines further (Bogaards, 2009: 400). I argue that competitive, electoral and hegemonic authoritarianism are diverse enough to highlight the various FSU authoritarian regimes, helping comprehend the differences between these regimes.

#### DATA ANALYSIS: AN AUTHORITARIAN TREND?

I agree with the argument made by Bunce and Wolchik (2010a: 44-45) and Ambrosio (2009: 13) that learning cannot be adequately measured quantitatively. If the data accentuates authoritarian evolution over time, then conclusions can be drawn that these regimes are becoming authoritarian. It will point to the notion that learning occurs, inferring that regimes copy institutions, tactics and maintain dialogue with one another, leading the study to argue that learning occurs.

In chapter one's methodology section, I discussed the issue of using Freedom House data. Firstly, there is the matter of arbitrability. There is little explanation for why Freedom House groups different states together and what their overall chosen typologies mean. It does not treat states as independent entities, but groups them homogenously together under undefined arbitrary criteria (Giannone, 2010: 69). Secondly, scholars contend that Freedom House has neo-liberal values, so it ranks states according to free market principles,

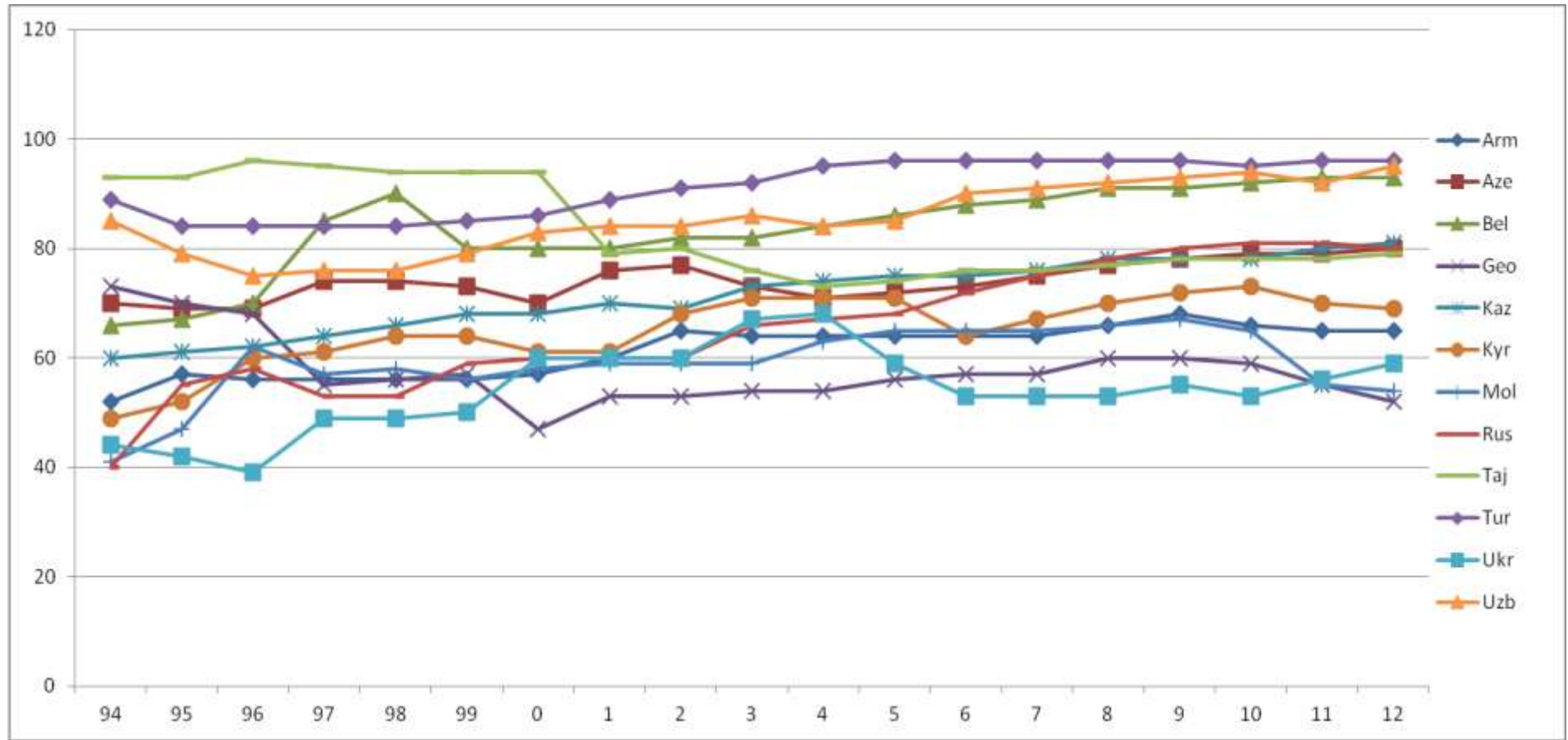


democracy and closeness (in foreign policy) to America (Bollen, 1993: 1212, 1215; Bollen and Paxton, 2000: 59; Mainwaring *et al*, 2000: 19). But, according to Gastil (1990: 26) criticism of Freedom House data on ideological grounds is based on “opinions...rather than detailed examination of survey ratings”. A third issue is that Freedom House often changes variables, which affects data gathering and results. As the data operates over a time period, changes in collating statistics are not accounted for. Previous data collection is not changed to accommodate a variables evolution (Munck, 2001: 10; Munck and Verkuilen, 2002: 16). Scholars should be aware of this. I will take this issue into account.

Despite all the issues with using Freedom House data there are significant benefits to utilising this data when looking at typologies and analysing levels of authoritarianism. The same problems concerning Freedom House data occur for all other democracy monitoring organisations and each organisation’s scores are not dissimilar (Pemstein *et al*, 2010: 7, 12). Freedom House provides comprehensive analysis of democracy measurement (Giannone, 2010: 69). Bowman *et al* (2008: 943) found that even though variables changed there was little variation adversely affecting data collection and analysis. Whilst not ideal, Freedom House provides viable information for measuring democracy and charting trends. The claim of ideological taint does have some tenancy, but is at best ambiguous. For instance, the graphs will show from 2010 to 2012 that the Ukrainian regime got progressively more authoritarian. This could be due to Yanukovich’s closer alliance with Moscow (Wilson, 2010), resulting in a higher score for Kiev, which the reader should consider as a possible ideological stance. Yet, it is not only Freedom House that claims that the Yanukovich regime has become more authoritarian since coming to power (Haran, 2013). The study will take a mildly critical view of Freedom House data.

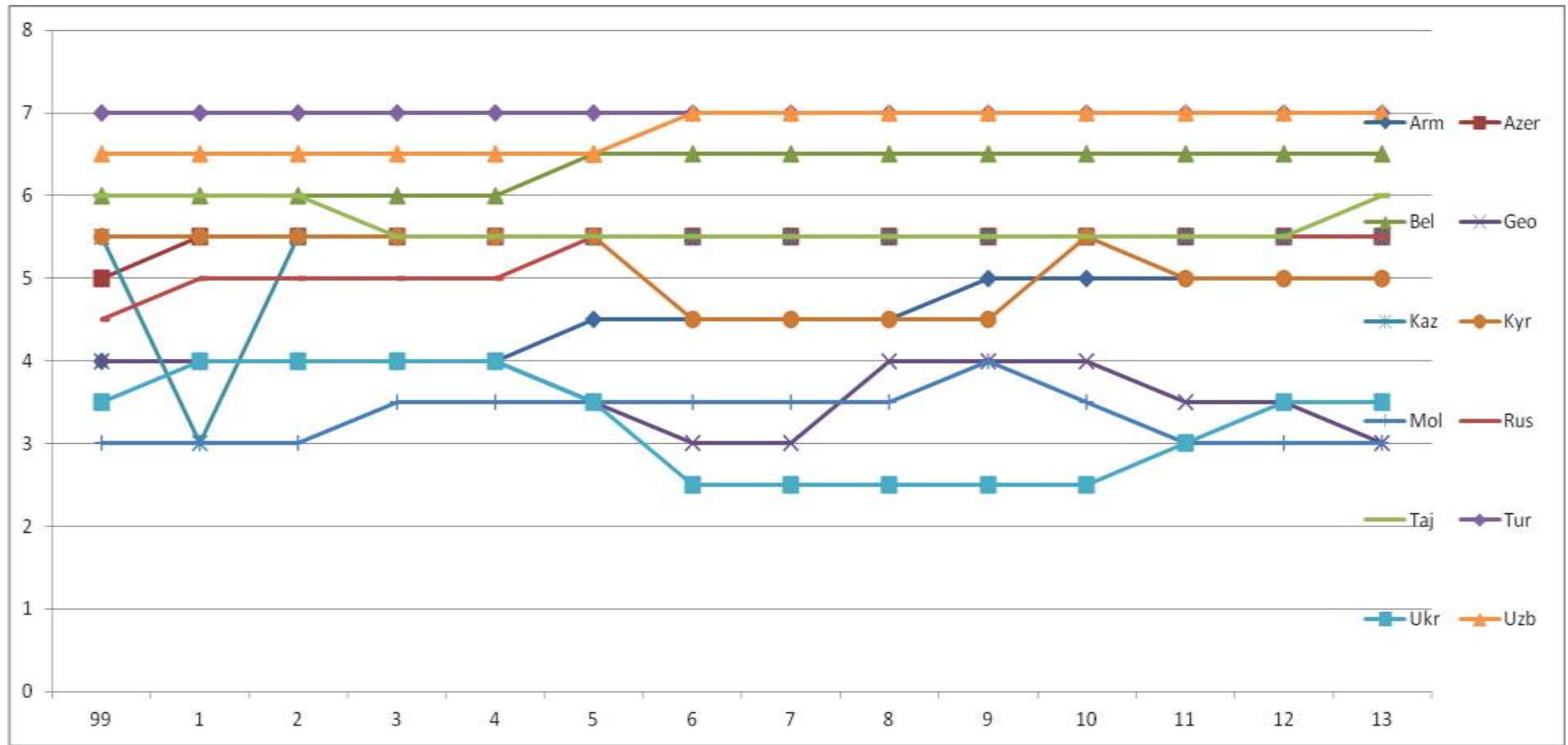
By using information from Freedom of the Press (FotP), Freedom in the World (FitW) and Nations in Transit (NiT) between 1994 and 2012, I will ascertain that FSU states are becoming more authoritarian. This study provides nine graphs analysing each Freedom House criteria, to establish whether an FSU authoritarian trend is apparent. Before 1993, there was the possibility the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) could become more than a loose regional conglomeration (Sakwa and Webber, 1999: 379-381). So the study uses data from 1994 because it is the first year FSU states were truly independent.

Graph One: Freedom of the Press in the FSU states from 1994-2012



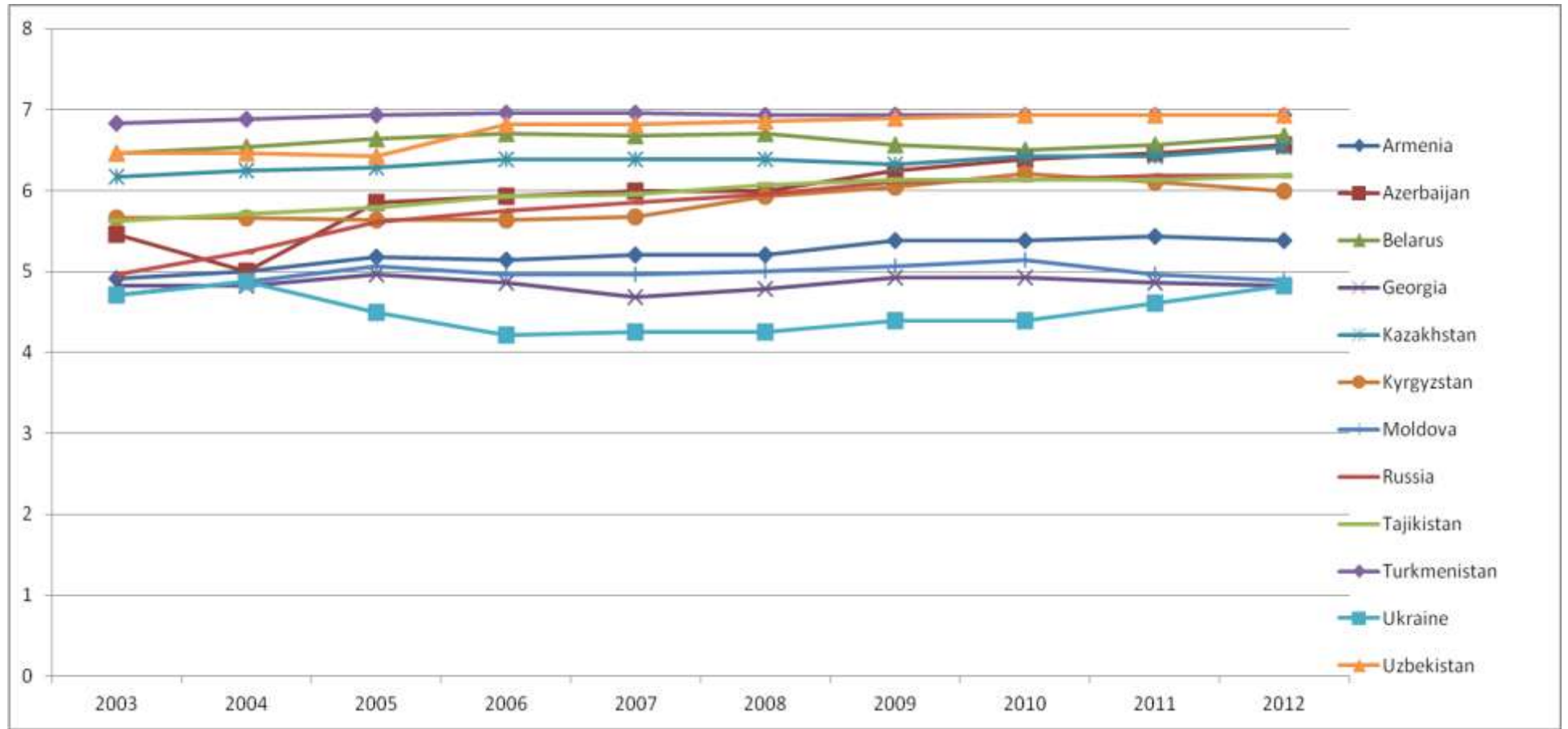
Source: Freedom House.

Graph Two: Freedom in the World 1999-2013



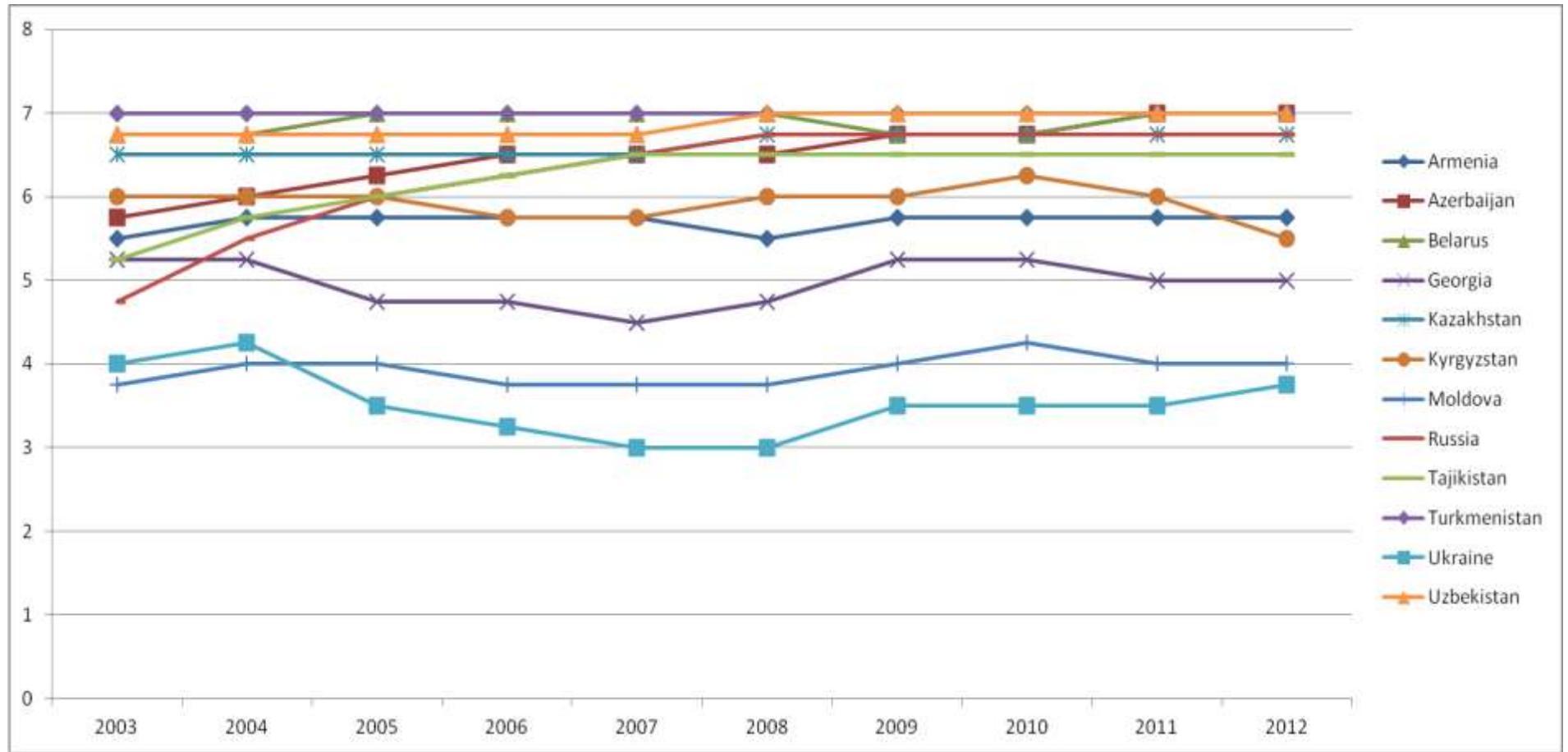
Source: Freedom House.

Graph Three: Nations in Transit: Democracy Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012



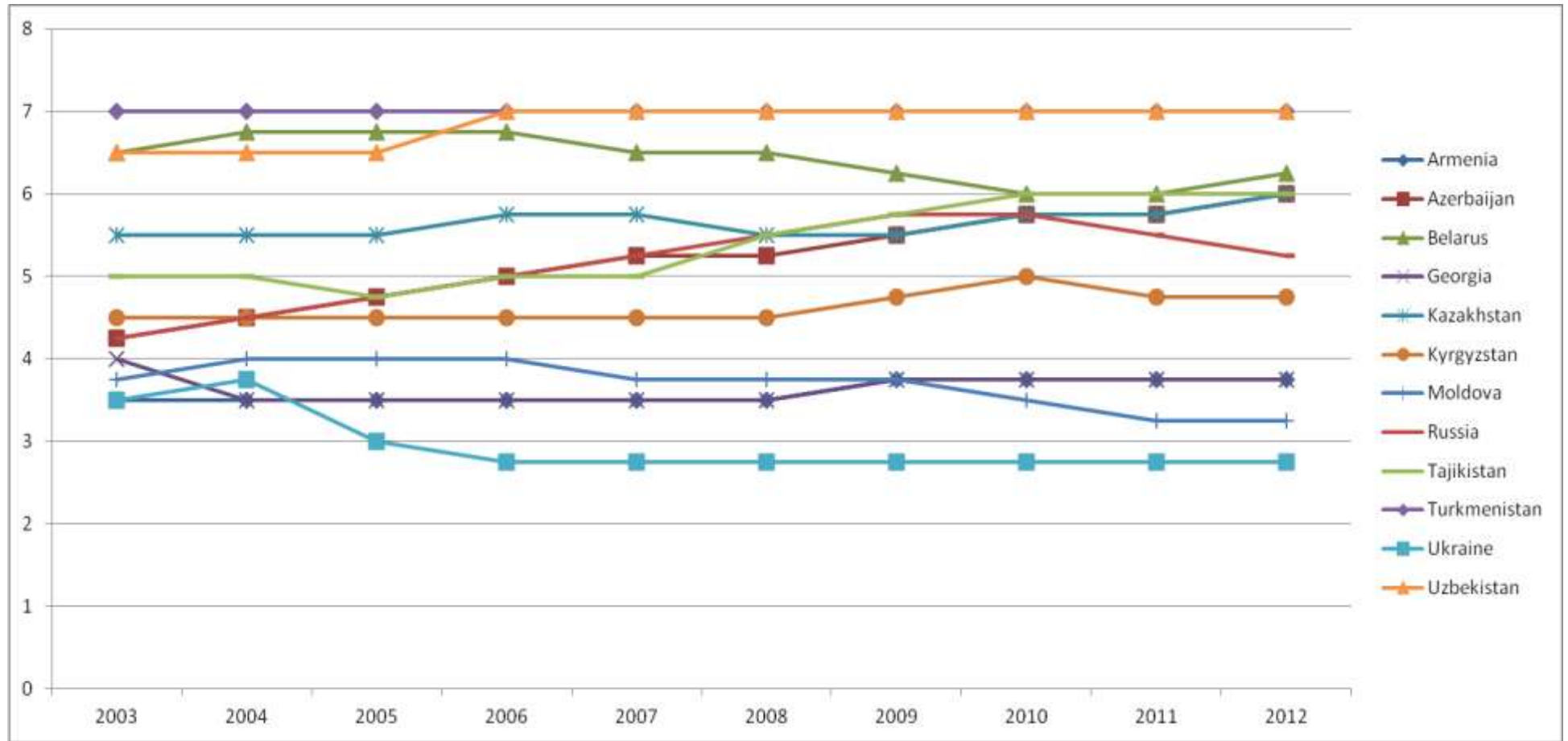
Source: Freedom House.

**Graph Four: Nations in Transit: Electoral Process Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012**



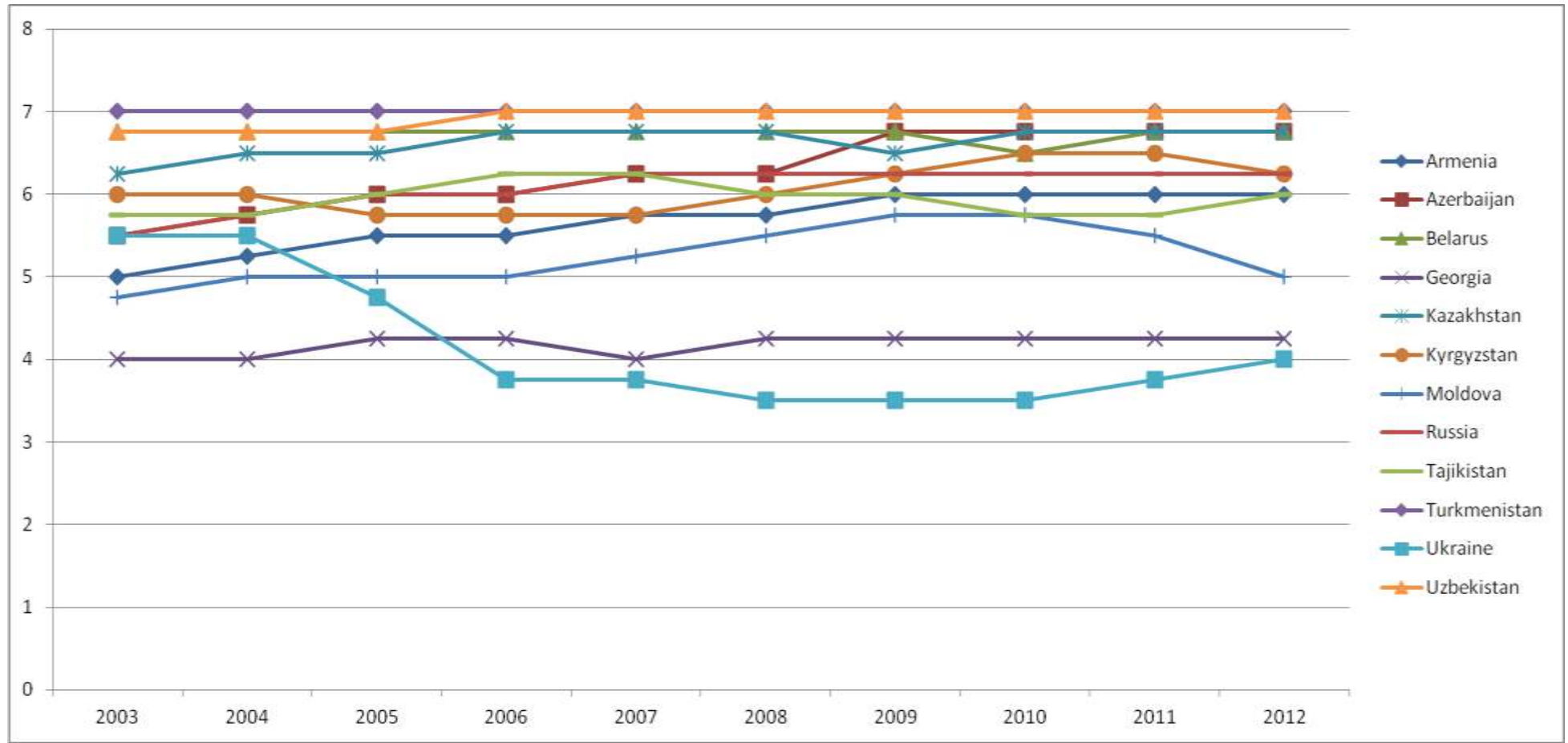
Source: Freedom House.

Graph Five: Nations in Transit: Civil Society Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012



Source: Freedom House.

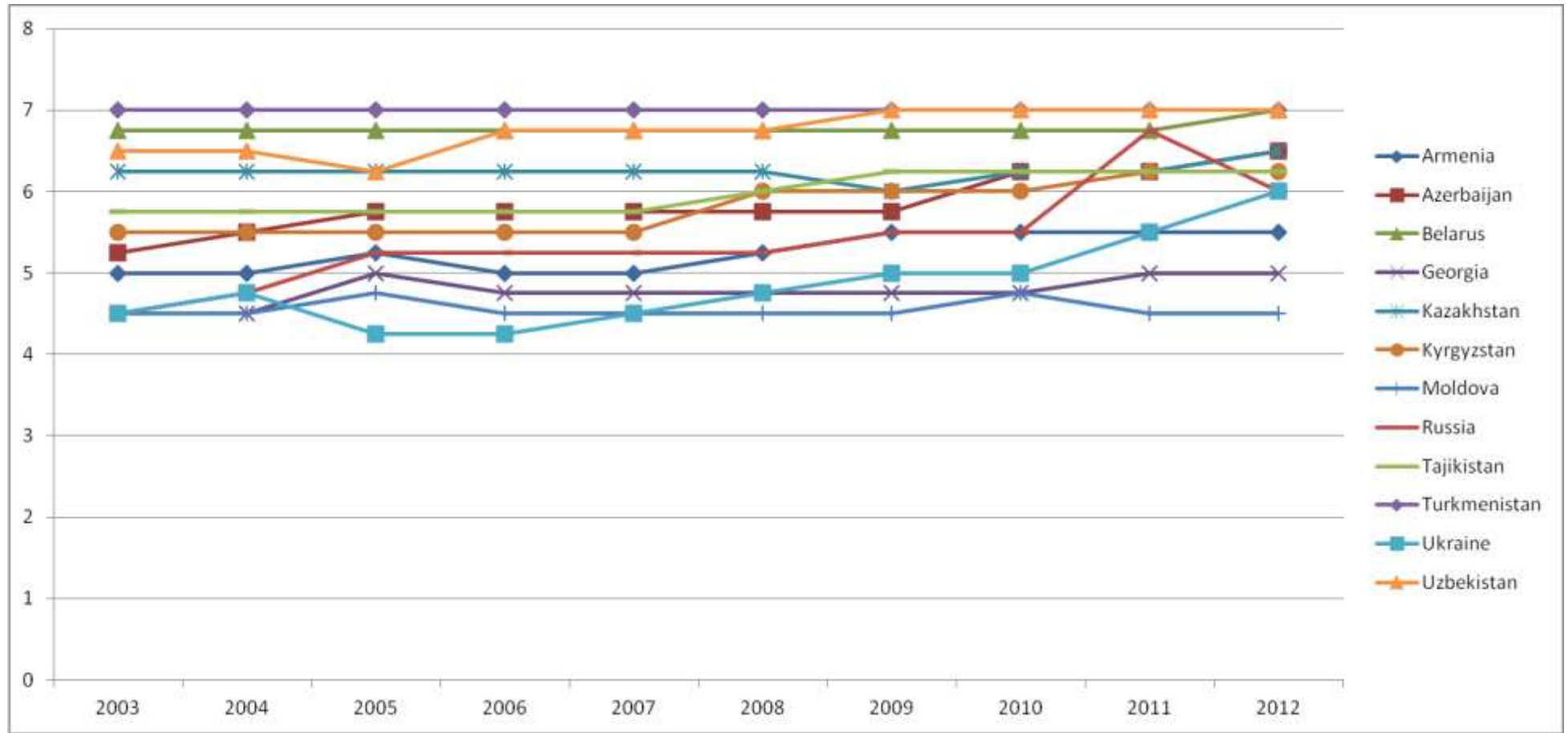
**Graph Six: Nations in Transit: Independent Media Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012**



Source: Freedom House.

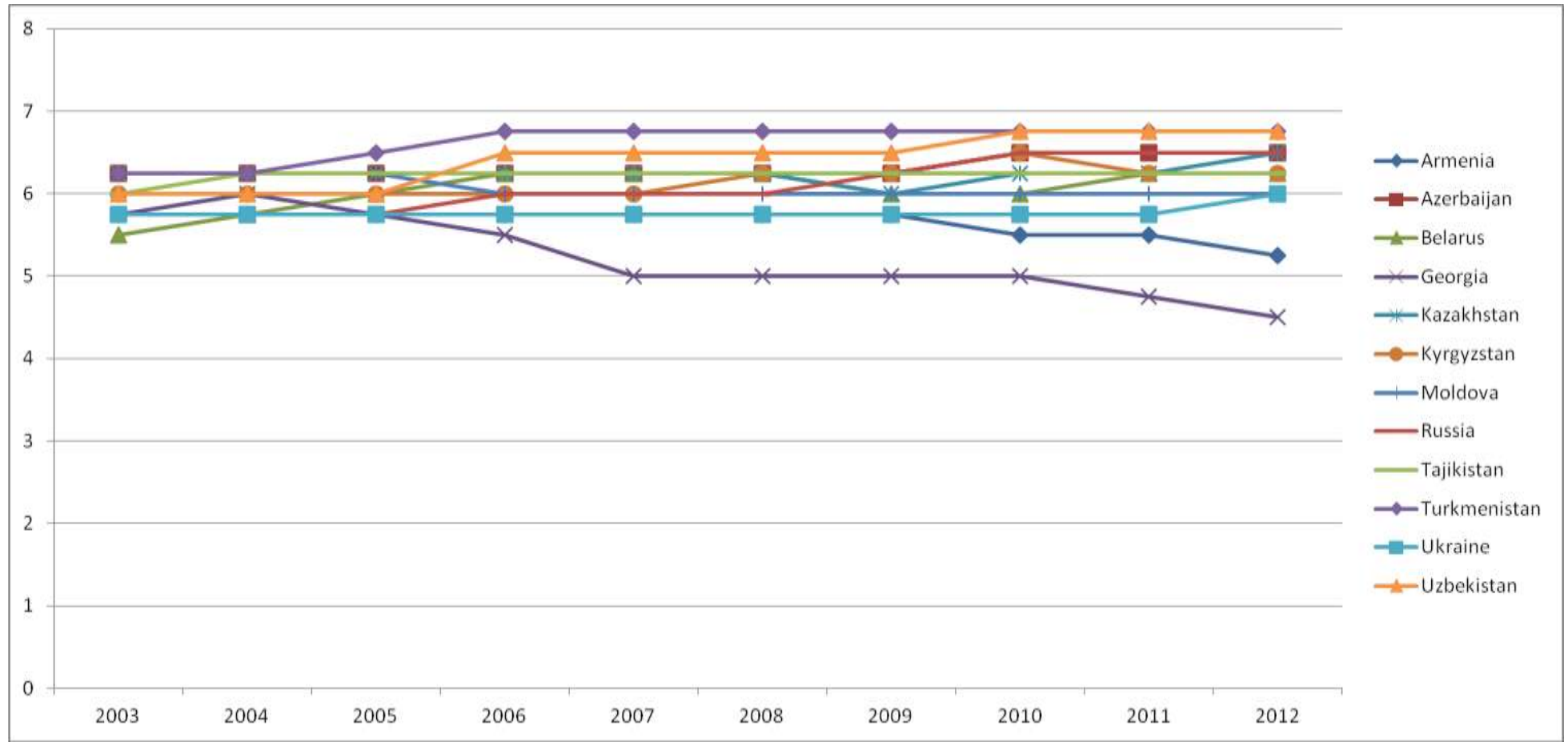


**Graph Seven: Nations in Transit: Judicial Independence Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012**



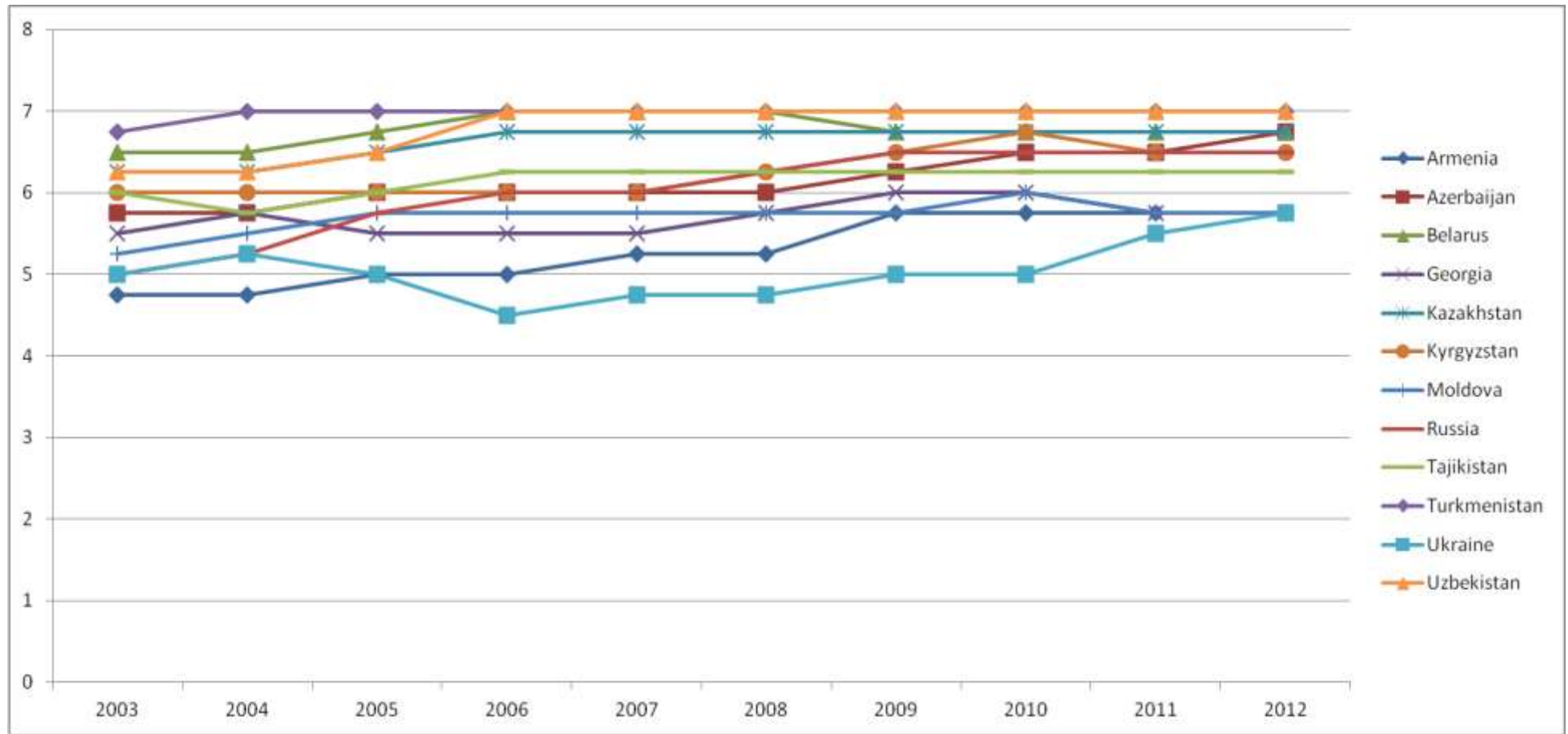
Source: Freedom House.

**Graph Eight: Nations in Transit: Corruption Scores of FSU states from 2003-2012**



Source: Freedom House.

**Graph Nine: Nations in Transit: Governance Scores of the FSU states from 2003-2012**



Source: Freedom House

### *Freedom of the Press (FotP)*

The FotP data will show how FSU states have usurped media freedom, instigating state control of media. The methodology, gives each state a score from zero to a hundred. Zero denotes total press freedom and a hundred denotes total state media control (Freedom House, 2012a). Each state is categorised under labels 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free', with 0-30 denoting 'Free', 31-60 marked 'Partly Free' and 61+ 'Not Free' (Freedom House, 2012a). The criteria are reliant on survey data and a coding system from zero to six. There are three categories that are amalgamated to give each state a score, these are: 'Legal Environment', 'Political Environment' and 'Economic Environment' (Freedom House, 2012a). One must take into account that 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free' are arbitrary categories. It is difficult to statistically show these variables. They do not help explain individual states. For instance, data from the new 2013 report (Freedom House, 2013a) emphasises a continual issue. There is no explanation as to why Ukraine has a 'Partly free' media with 60, but Armenia's media is 'Not free' with 61. Whilst, data provides good representation of declining FSU media freedom, the reader must remember that rankings are subjective. Is Armenia's media any less free than Ukraine's? I use data provided by Freedom House because it is comprehensive. I have not tried to produce a variable for 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free', due to difficulties in turning qualitative data into feasible quantitative variables. The reader must be aware that Freedom House's data is skewed, grouping states together, rather than differentiating between cases.

*Graph One: FotP in FSU states 1994-2012*

The graph highlights that press freedom is worsening across the FSU, Belarus, for instance, is wedged in the high scores. Russia has risen to the same level as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. After 2004 Ukraine's press freedom was considered relatively open, but has weakened since 2010. This could be due to the change from the pro-western 'Orange coalition', to Yanukovich's pro-Russian stance (Kuzio, 2012a). One should consider this. However, graph one highlights that Armenia and Kyrgyzstan's scores fell. Both governments are close to Moscow (Hartley and Walker, 2013; Minasyants, 2014). There may be ideological issues with data, but if so it would be more pronounced. This graph shows that Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are all close. Interestingly, Russia started below Ukraine (1994), but has since risen to join Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Belarus with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is at the top, although Belarus started at a lower level. This points to my contention that there are differences in classifying FSU regimes. Graph one shows that different states are grouped together, indicating similarities between them. Placing Kyrgyzstan and Armenia jointly in one authoritarian typology makes little sense as they share few characteristics in regime composition. This graph emphasises the contention of chapter two that we cannot classify all authoritarian regimes under one rubric, but should group like states together.

*Freedom in the World (FitW)*

The FitW is scored from 1-7 (Freedom House, 2013b). The FitW survey is split into two categories 'political liberties' and 'civil liberties' (Freedom House, 2013b). In 'political liberties' there are ten questions, with scores assigned to each state (Freedom House,

2013b). The 'civil liberties' category has fifteen questions (Freedom House, 2013b). The ratings 1-7 denote the typologies of 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free'. States with a score of 1.0-2.5 are deemed 'Free', 3-5 denotes 'Partly Free' and 5.5-7 are 'Not Free' (Freedom House, 2013b). In the Freedom House (2014) report, the published data claims Ukraine's trend has gone towards authoritarianism, scoring 3.5. However, as graph two will emphasise, the trend has stayed identical since 2012. This perhaps points to a perceived ideological bias.

#### *Graph Two: FitW 1999-2013*

The analysis is unable to include scores for 2000, due to missing data. The graph shows that only Kazakhstan had significantly different scores between 1999 and 2000, with a considerable downward spike. I feel apart from Kazakhstan there were no noteworthy changes. Belarus rose to Turkmenistan's level, this rise was rapid from 1999-2003. Between 1999 and 2005 Russia rose to join Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Kazakhstan started at the same level as Kyrgyzstan, before dropping to Moldova's level and then rising to join Azerbaijan and Russia. Ukraine started below Georgia, but was erratic and between 2006 and 2010 Ukraine was the most 'open' FSU state, but has since receded. The FitW data follows the FotP data, showing that the FSU is becoming authoritarian. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are close together. Kazakhstan and Russia are more authoritarian. Russia is just below the more authoritarian group of Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Graph two emphasises (like graph one) that all the FSU regimes cannot be placed in one homogenous category. However, some states share similarities with one another (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and so can be placed in a common typology.

### *Nations in Transit (NiT)*

There were issues with assessing the NiT's methodology. Freedom House included a 'democracy score', but, changed this variable in 2004 (Freedom House, 2012b). Before 2004, the democracy score was a calculation of two scores (democratisation and rule of law). These were calculated by the averages of all variables, adding them together and dividing by two (Freedom House, 2012b). Since 2004, the democracy score has been determined by adding all variables and dividing the total by the number of categories (Freedom House, 2012b). This affects the scores to an extent. However, I feel that the democracy score is viable as it explains "conditions of democratic institutions" (Freedom House, 2012b). Since 2005, new categorisations included 'Local Democratic Governance'. In keeping with continuity, I excluded it as the FSU states are highly centralised.

The NiT methodology relies on specialists rating each state on a 1-7 scale, (Freedom House, 2012b). The six categories are: 'National Democratic Governance', 'Electoral Process', 'Civil Society', 'Independent Media', 'Judicial Framework and Independence' and 'Corruption' (Freedom House, 2012b). Each variable uses questions helping researchers, give comprehensive scores (Freedom House, 2012b). The 'National Democratic Governance' variable analyses the "democratic character, stability, independence, effectiveness and accountability" of a state (Freedom House, 2012b). 'Electoral Process' analyses elections, electoral processes, a political system's development and how the electorate participates in voting. 'Civil Society' analyses NGO growth, their financial sustainability and the legislation allowing them to operate (Freedom House, 2012b). The variable 'Independent Media' assesses press freedom, viability of a private press and internet access (Freedom House,

2012b). The category 'Judicial Framework and Independence' emphasises judicial reform, judicial independence, treatment of prisoners and "compliance with judicial decisions" (Freedom House, 2012b). The last variable 'Corruption' investigates anti-corruption initiatives, public perceptions and legislation (Freedom House 2012b). Ranking issues do occur in the dataset, however, NiT data and methodology provides a broad comprehensive analysis (Habdank-Kolaczowska, 2013: 23).

*Graph Three: NiT, FSU Democracy Scores (2003-2012)*

Graph three shows that FSU democracy scores have (except Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Georgia) become more authoritarian. Belarus started below Turkmenistan before rising in 2010. Kazakhstan started below Belarus. Before 2006 its score rose, but between 2006 and 2009 it levelled out. Since 2009 it rose to reach Belarus. Russia started at the same level as Armenia (2003), but has since risen to draw level as Tajikistan. Ukraine's score is rising. Graph three emphasises that democracy scores are becoming similar. Nine out of twelve states have high trends and are becoming more authoritarian. What is worrying is that Russia's score rose exponentially. This could predispose other FSU states to authoritarianism. Russia is the regional hegemon (Merkel, 2010: 21). Although the majority of regimes are close to one another (with the possible exception of Armenia) again Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are grouped together away from others. This further corroborates the contention that different classifications are needed, rather than one universal one.



*Graph Four: NiT, FSU Electoral Process Scores (2003-2012)*

Belarus rose to the same level as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but has fluctuated often. Kazakhstan's score was stable before rising in 2008, to below Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Russia by 2012 was at the same level as Kazakhstan. Again the three lowest states are Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Only Ukraine shifted between 2007 and 2008, before rising again. In graph four Moldova and Ukraine are closely aligned again, with Georgia as an outlier between them and the other FSU states. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, like Moldova and Ukraine are on their own, although Kyrgyzstan's electoral process is improving. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan show that their electoral process is more authoritarian. This points to the argument that a reduced number of states can only be included in each categorisation.

*Graph Five: NiT, FSU Civil Society Scores (2003-2012)*

Belarus became more authoritarian between 2003 and 2006. The regime limited civil society group's ability to function. Kazakhstan's score rose with a slight decrease from 2007-2008. Similarly, Russia's score rose, but since 2010 its score has decreased. Ukraine's score rose in 2004, before falling in 2006. Since then its score has levelled out. As shown only one state (Russia) has dropped. But, it still remains relatively high. Graph five shows Armenia joining Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with an improving civil society. Kyrgyzstan and Russia are more authoritarian. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan cluster together. Belarus has improved its civil society score. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are at the top. The graph points to something slightly different. Those states that remain consistently authoritarian and remain at the top of other graphs are spread out in graph five. Yet, there are similarities

between states. Kyrgystan and Russia are close together as are Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine near one another. A universal category like electoral authoritarianism could not explain all these states. It should be used to describe a few similar cases.

*Graph Six: NiT, FSU Independent Media Scores (2003-2012)*

According to graph six (independent media scores), Belarus started at the same level as Uzbekistan and has remained constant except for one dip in 2010. Russia's trend was upwards from 2007. Kazakhstan by 2006 was at the same level as Belarus, except for a slight decrease in 2009. Ukraine emphasises drastic changes. Georgia and Ukraine remain close with a more independent media than other FSU states. Moldova is an outlier. The other FSU states are close together within two distinctive factions on independent media scores. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan are in one group with a marginally freer media than Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This again points to treating states with similar scores in one category rather than one homogenous typology.

*Graph Seven: NiT, FSU Judicial Independence Scores (2003-2012)*

Graph seven emphasises variance among FSU states. Belarus remained relatively constant. Kazakhstan was mostly consistent too. Russia's score increased. In 2005 it levelled out, before rising again in 2008 and then somewhat precipitously until 2011, before decreasing in 2012. Like graph six Ukraine has the most dramatic score. In 2005 Ukraine was relatively low, but by 2012 it had risen dramatically. Georgia and Moldova are close. Armenia is an outlier. Ukraine with regards to judicial independence is close to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have

the least independent judiciary. This further substantiates the contention that regimes with similar characteristics should be placed in one typology, rather than in wider categorisations.

*Graph Eight: NiT, FSU Corruption Scores (2003-2012)*

Kazakhstan has been consistent remaining close to the authoritarian end of the spectrum pointing to a high level of regime corruption. Belarus's corruption level rose to the same level as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia started in the same place in 2003, but since then there is variance. Russia has consistently risen. Ukraine remained the same until 2012, when it rose. This graph shows corruption is prevalent. Armenia and Georgia are outliers, although Armenia is closer to other FSU states. Graph eight, like graph five, does not necessarily corroborate the argument for using different typologies. The majority of FSU states are close to one another.

*Graph Nine: NiT, FSU Governance Scores (2003-2012)*

By 2006 Belarus reached the same level as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Yet, in 2008 its score fell below the other two. Kazakhstan started in the same position as Uzbekistan, but increased gradually. It has since levelled out. Russia had an upward trend throughout the period. Ukraine fluctuated between 2003 and 2006, before climbing. Governance scores remain high (meaning a lack of democratic governance and thus increased authoritarianism), but Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have better scores than other states. This again points to putting similar states in one rubric rather than placing all states in a single typology.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter set out a number of hypotheses that I attempted to answer. The two hypotheses were: 'authoritarianism is increasing in the FSU' and 'there are differences between the FSU regimes in their authoritarian levels'. These hypotheses helped explain the 'why' and 'when' of the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?' Taking the first hypothesis the graphs clearly show increasing authoritarianism. All the FSU states are in the authoritarian spectrum. The graphs emphasise that these regimes are progressing to hegemonic authoritarianism. However, there are different levels of authoritarianism, which are clearly illustrated in the graphs.

The graphs emphasise that from 2003, authoritarianism increased. Hegemonic regimes mostly stabilised. Using evidence from chapter three on preventative counter revolution, I infer that this is a significant reason for the increase of FSU authoritarianism. Regimes fearing possible 'colour revolutions' became more authoritarian or maintained a high level of control. There has been a rapid authoritarian trend since 2004. It is slightly different for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These regimes espouse European values, but domestic institutions remain weak. Thus, these three states have become more authoritarian over time. The data suggests that after 2004 many FSU regimes started authoritarian consolidation. This answers (to an extent) the 'why' and 'when' of 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another?' It answers 'to what extent' too, as there are clear delineations between authoritarian regimes pointing to different authoritarian levels. Although statistics cannot offer qualitative explanation to why, they point to an explanation for 'to what extent'. This will be examined more in chapter five.

I wanted to investigate whether existing typologies used currently to explain all authoritarian regimes, could be used to describe only a few cases with shared similarities. The graphs show differences in each regimes authoritarian nature. Generally Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine can be categorised together as many graphs show similar scores for them. This is also true of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Russia is an outlier. In a few graphs Russia is close to Armenia and Kyrgyzstan (civil society); whilst in others it is much higher (governance). I contend that Russia is starting to leave Armenia and Kyrgyzstan and join other states like Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. This is worrying as Russia's political trend affects the FSU as a whole (Merkel, 2010: 21). Although I contend that Russia is not as authoritarian as the hegemonic authoritarian regimes it is progressing to this categorisation.

The graphs emphasise the problem with existing typologies and lack of individuality. When it comes to categorising regimes I have to engage in somewhat arbitrary placements. Existing typologies are unwieldy. However, I feel that when used with only a few cases they become better as classifications. There are issues with categorisations. But I feel I have shown significant differences in regime type. Existing categorisations can explain a few cases. I wanted to show that the FSU regimes cannot all be classified as, say electoral authoritarian. There are nuances between them, meaning only a few can be placed in each category. I argue that hegemonic authoritarian regimes are those where the incumbent receives over 70% of the vote. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan fall into this category. As the graphs show this is largely correct, although Kazakhstan is somewhat of an outlier. Electoral authoritarian regimes hold elections, but there is very little competition in them. This would account for Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The graphs show this to be true. But, Russia is (to an extent) an outlier, moving

closer to hegemonic authoritarianism. Whilst it is leaving the electoral authoritarian rubric, it has not become hegemonic authoritarian. Clearly Russia is not as authoritarian as Uzbekistan so it should not be excluded as electoral authoritarian here. The last authoritarian typology is competitive authoritarianism. In these regimes elections are competitive enough for the regime to plausibly lose control. I contend these are the weakest, most 'liberal' authoritarian regimes. As the graphs highlight Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine fit this rubric, although Ukraine is breaking away. Whilst, the typologies are not perfect and at times arbitrary, there are clear differences between FSU regimes. Classification of fewer regimes is a viable option for future studies.

Chapter four provided a longitudinal analysis of FSU authoritarianism between 1994 and 2012. Using Freedom House data I tracked authoritarian growth and different regional authoritarian levels. The study accounted for existing methodological issues with Freedom House data though I argue that the data provides an excellent longitudinal analysis. After all it is not just Freedom House that claims these states are authoritarian. The graphs aided the study in analysing two hypotheses, the first 'authoritarianism is increasing in the FSU' was shown to be the case, particularly after 2003 when regimes worked to overcome possible 'colour revolutions'. This corroborated evidence in chapters two and three for the sub-research question of 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another' providing answers to 'why' and 'when'. The second hypothesis 'there are differences between the FSU regimes in their authoritarian levels' analysed different FSU regimes attempting innovatively to categorise them. The graphs showed that FSU regimes have different authoritarian levels and so should be treated as such.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE LANGUAGE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

As mentioned in chapter three, I set out several hypotheses for chapter five. These will aid understanding to the main research question's first section 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate' and the second part of the first sub-research question 'to what extent do regimes learn from one another'. This will further emphasise why I am using discourse analysis and corroborate chapter three and four's argument that there are different types of FSU authoritarian regimes. The hypotheses are: 'the case studies have a similar discourse to one another', 'there is a learning process' and 'there are differences in language and tactics used by the Ukrainian regime'. Ukraine is a competitive authoritarian regime, so it is less authoritarian than the other cases. It would be interesting to ascertain the extent of the Ukrainian regimes discourse compared to the others. These hypotheses will provide greater comprehension of the discourse of the four case studies. I will offer further analysis of discourse analysis methodology, before providing a rationale for its use and why the chosen variables were selected.

### DISCOURSE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

In chapter one, I provided a brief comprehension of discourse analysis to understand the social context of a society and how it operates, allowing the researcher to make inferences (Schiffrin, 2001: 56; de Melo Resende, 2012: 3). Discourse analysis is the base for a comparative approach to comprehend different societies (Philips and Hardy, 2002: 3). Taking a comparative approach discourse analysis allows an issue to be interpreted and draws potential parallels between cases (Brinton, 2001: 139). Discourse analysis provides comprehension of how institutions operate and their affect on how a society functions.

Institutions are created by people, thus their language provides the researcher with clear comprehension of the analysed society being analysed (Heller, 2001: 254; Linde, 2001: 518). Nearly all discourse is elite driven. Elite use of discourse and relevant institutions, (the media and schools) shape how society thinks and thus makes sure that 'chosen' ideas are followed (Van Dijk, 2001: 355-356). I stated in chapter one that I would take a critical discourse analysis approach. This allows comprehension of processes elites use to shape society through disseminating 'chosen' ideas (Van Dijk, 2001: 356). Politicians are adept at using language to reinterpret an event in their favour (Orwell, 1969: 225), so critical discourse analysis allows researchers to take analytical approaches to studying discourse and reinterpret the meaning (Van Dijk, 2001: 356; 1996: 84; Wilson, 2001: 400). It allows researchers to use 'framing' devices to produce analytical variables that offer an overall synopsis of an issue (Myhill, 2001: 162; Gumperz, 2001: 217). To explain why I am use discourse analysis and to justify the variables I need to rationalise it as a research method.

#### JUSTIFICATION OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As mentioned, discourse analysis serves as a viable research method for comprehending institutions, how they affect society whilst being shaped to the elites chosen ends. If the cases have comparable discourse, talking about similar tactics and means of consolidation, as well as referring to examples and incidences from other cases, or previous events, one can determine that learning occurs. An analysis of language will bring this to the fore, allowing the study to categorically state that learning occurs. It would provide answers to parts of the research questions under investigation here: 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate' and 'to what extent do regimes learn from one



another' and further corroborate differences between FSU regimes in their level of authoritarianism. If the cases have comparable discourse, they will use similar tactics to maintain authoritarian stability. This would point to learning. The cases will not have taken ideas out of the blue. Discourse analysis will make greater inferences than the graphs in chapter three and help fuel the contention that learning occurs. Newspapers from the four case studies will be assessed to discern government discourse. I will use *Sovetskaya Belorussia* from Belarus, *Panorama* and *Vremiya* from Kazakhstan, *Rossiskaya Gazeta* and *Izvestiya* from Russia and *Uraydoviy Kurier* from Ukraine. These newspapers are close to the respective governments and will further understanding of authoritarian learning. These newspapers will use similar language to their respective regimes.

#### JUSTIFICATION OF VARIABLES

2010 was chosen as the start year. This is when all four of the present regime leaders came to power<sup>6</sup>. The study could have started in 1991, 1994 or 2000 when the other presidents gained power, but Yankovych only assumed power in 2010, so this year was the most pertinent to commence a discourse analysis. Whilst, Putin was not (constitutionally at least) president between 2008 and 2012, many contend that the Russian prime minister was the main authority in the Medvedev interregnum (Barry, 2011). To justify the variables used for authoritarian learning I employed a "framing device" (Gumperz, 2001: 217). In chapter two I analysed authoritarianism through various categories. These form the basis of the variables here. I chose eight variables: democracy, electoral system, civil society, opposition,

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<sup>6</sup> As mentioned previously, this study was written before Yanukovych fled and Ukraine began its months of protest and (possible partition) before a new regime was elected (under Petro Porshenko).

non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media, parliament and corruption. These fit existing literature. The variables follow work by Linz and Stepan (1996: 7-11) on the five arenas of democracy. Four of the five arenas are paralleled in variables here. These are: political society, civil society, rule of law and effective bureaucracy. Civil society refers to “self-organising groups, movements, and individuals...autonomous from the state”. It includes “social movements”, “civil associations” and citizens willing to demonstrate (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 7-8). Political society refers to people being able to contest elections. The third variable is rule of law and the fourth guarantees rights and freedoms (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 10-11).

Presidents as a variable have not been included as everything in the four case studies emanates from the president (Khazanov, 2011: 20). Often the incumbent has been in the elite since the Soviet Union’s collapse (Schmitter, 2010: 20). Nazarabayev was republican head of Kazakhstan during the Soviet Union. Lukashenka gained power soon after and Putin was anointed by Yeltsin. FSU presidents were, or became, the primary institution deciding policies (Blondel, 2012: 8). If a ‘president’ variable were included, it would not elevate the analysis. The other variables analysed allow the four presidents to express their views and for the reader to adequately comprehend the regimes (and by extension the president’s) discourse. Nor would a presidential variable aid analyse of authoritarianism, as these regimes are highly president-centric I use presidential speeches on variables that fit the five arenas of democracy. A presidential variable would analyse a range of irrelevant subjects.

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR CASES

*Democracy*

## Belarus

The Belarusian regime has a different discourse to that espoused by the Russian and Kazakh regimes. The Russian and Kazakh regimes talk of being democratic, but the Belarusian regime does not. Minsk's discourse is that the political system is not democratic. Lukashenka claims that Belarusians have had "so much so-called democracy that it has made Belarusians nauseated". He drew the conclusion that Belarus had "over-democratised" providing too many freedoms, resulting in the Minsk terrorist attacks (11<sup>th</sup> April, 2011) (Lukashenka, 2011b). During his 2005 National Assembly address, Lukashenka stated that the 'colour revolutions' were open banditry under the guise of democracy. Belarusians are (according to Lukashenka) "too intelligent to follow these "charlatans". Western money, according to Minsk, cannot destabilise the regime. The security services know how the money is being brought to Belarus and are tracking the perpetrators (the American embassy). The regime will stop this imposition of so-called 'democracy' (Lukashenka, 2005). Minsk has a different conceptualisation of democracy from other states and international organisations. For Lukashenka, the western democratic concept is "bourgeois". As western states have a different conceptualisation of democracy their criticism is unjustified. For instance, Belarus has many referendums (Lyul'ko, 2012). Lukashenka takes a similar line to Russia, that stability is mandatory. The current path should be maintained (Lukashenka, 2012a). According to Lukashenka, Belarus has the resources to build its own democratic political system, but the regime must be intolerant of

anarchy (Lukashenka, 2011b). He argues that the system modernises the state. It is a conservative system, with modernisation maintaining a Soviet style system, which benefits the Belarusian people (Shimov, 2012). Liliya Yermoshina (head of the central electoral commission) states that the political system is a “primary democracy”. Society is based on democratic lines (Romanova, 2012). Lukashenka has built a well managed society with people living in prosperity. People do not require democracy when they have wealth and peace. This is the official line. Russia has learnt from this model (Rostikov, 2010: 3). For Lukashenka (2005), only Belarusians can force the regime to concede power, but they support “the course of the county”.

#### Kazakhstan

Presidential adviser, Ermukhamet Ertysbaev, stipulates that Kazakhstan is democratic because it is written in the constitution. The kremlin has a similar discourse to this. Like in Kazakhstan, the Russian constitution says Russia is a democracy, so according to official regime discourse Russia is a democracy. In Kazakhstan the people elect representatives, except for governors and senators (Ghani, 2012). Nazarbayev speaks like Lukashenka and Putin, contending that stability is mandatory before reforms can occur, "stability and national security - these are the key terms" (Kononenko, 2013b). Stability permeates the Kazakh regime's discourse. Nazarbayev stated that nothing occurs unless the state remains stable (Kononenko, 2013). The battle against lawlessness, voiced by Lukashenka, is part of Nazarbayev's articulation too. Nazarbayev reiterated the need to maintain evolutionary change when faced with potential revolution (Nazarbayev, 2012a). He

argues that Kazakhstan is moving to democracy, “we believe that democracy and freedom...is the ultimate goal for us, not the beginning” (Sevast’yanova, 2013c).

## Russia

The regime uses extensive administrative resources to control elections to ensure its representatives maintain power (Tret’iakov, 2010: 6). Kremlin political technologists, bypass courts and organise mass demonstrations, with supporters being bussed in from outside Moscow. The regime coerces students and state workers to demonstrate and vote for the regime, or face losing university places, funding and jobs (Pavlikova, 2013: 6). The same tactic is used in Belarus and Kazakhstan. Democracy is the mantra used by each regime to mean unity, stability and regime preservation. The official line is similar to the Kazakh regimes. The Russian regime argues that as the constitution speaks of democracy and the rule of law and democratic institutions, Russia is a democracy (Petrov, 2012: 3). Dmitry Medvedev states that democracy is less stable than other forms of government. Only regime controlled institutions bring stability (Kuz’mín, 2010: 2). A strong state can protect people from threats. This is the Kremlin’s message. It is similar discourse to the Belarusian, Kazakh and even Ukrainian regimes that a strong state is paramount. The discourse of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia is centred on the notion that their political systems are different. Sergei Lavrov (Russian foreign minister) contends that “every state has its own civilisation...to choose their own path to establish their own institutions based on their civilisation, without other states or institutions telling them what to do” (Shkel’, 2012: 2). Vladislav Surkov (presidential aide) states, no country has ever truly been democratic. It is

up to Russia to forge its own path in achieving its own democracy (Chesnakov, 2012: 3). This is the official line and is similar to language in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

The wealthier a society, the likelier it will be democratic. Lipset's modernisation theory emphasises that economic development drives democratisation. States use market freedoms to develop democracy, not corral it (Lipset, 1959: 49-50). Przeworski *et al* (1996: 41) argue that when people attain an average wage of \$6,000 per annum, the state becomes stable and democratic. It is important to construct institutions to maintain democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006). As Kuvshinova (2011: 7) states, modernisation cannot create democracy alone. Yet, the Russian regime argues that modernisation will democratise the state, but until this occurs the state should maintain control of society and the political system (Medvedev, 2010: 11). This is the official regime line. Medvedev states he wants modernisation to consolidate democracy. Rapid modernisation will be unstable, which the regime considers bad. Consequently, it appears from the discourse that the regime is in a catch-22 situation (Sadchikov, 2010: 2). It cannot modernise for fear of instability, but without modernising it cannot become democratic. The Kremlin's type of 'democracy' is based on stability, which in turn preserves the regime. Russia will not follow other states and have a system where political parties change power. A political system that has opposition and where that opposition can win limits state power and increases elite disunity. Russia according to Putin will not follow this process. For Putin, Russia has not had a stable transition for over a century with the Bolsheviks coming to power in a revolution, the civil war and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the anarchy of the 1990s. It is up to the regime to bring gradual modernisation with democratisation (Tverdov and Samarina 2013: 1). Russia due to the Medvedev and Putin presidencies has two synopses of

democracy. Medvedev advocates that Russia is beginning a democratic transition (Medvedev, 2010: 11). Putin, like Lukashenka and Nazarbayev, contends that Russia is already democratic (Petrov, 2012b: 3). This created confusion, disappointing those who felt Medvedev was liberal (Litvinovich, 2011). With Putin as president the mantra that Russia is a democracy will become prominent again.

## Ukraine

Ukraine's official discourse is European orientated. Yanukovich states Ukraine is a European civilisation doing everything for EU integration. Political reforms are taken from European examples (Nagrebets'ka, 2011b). Yet, for all its talk of Europe, the regime mentions stability constantly. It has created a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, with no opposition input (Nagrebets'ka, 2011c). Belarus, Russia and Ukraine all equate bureaucratic growth with a lack of democratisation. Kiev will work towards democratisation by tackling bureaucracy (Tugluk, 2011). In contrast Russia and Belarus will overcome bureaucracy before democratising (Pilgin, 2010; Lukashenka, 2013a). But, according to Linz and Stepan (1996: 11) democracy needs effective bureaucracy. Only Kiev (Newsroom, 2013b) allows western representatives and international organisations, like the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to monitor elections (Alexanderov, 2012b; Sevost'yanova, 2012). Kiev wants to be a democratic society, according to official discourse (Yanukovich, 2013). The discourse from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia is that their systems are different and will evolve slowly to counter instability. Kiev is concerned about stability, but will work towards democracy, as democracy is the best

political system to overcome instability. This is the adverse contention to the discourses occurring in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

## Summary

In the 'democracy' variable stability is a recurring theme throughout all four cases and three competing discourses. Belarus stands alone in claiming that it is not a democracy, but that the regime should maintain power for the populace's benefit. Eventually, so the discourse goes, Belarus will become a democracy but for now the regime knows best and maintaining stability is paramount. By contrast, the Kazakh and Russian regimes share a discourse that they are already democratic. Like the Belarusian regime, both refuse to countenance outside help and advice for democratisation, seeing (particularly for the Kremlin) their own individual path to democratisation. It is interesting to note that the Kremlin has learnt from Minsk about creating wealth and stability among the populace which alleviates calls for democratisation. The Ukrainian regime shares the mantra about stability with the other three cases, but is, according to the discourse, determined to become democratic. Unlike the other three cases the Ukrainian regime is willing to learn from examples of democracy assistance. The 'democracy' variable has returned similarities and differences in the four cases discourse, further highlighting differences in regime type.

## *Parliament*

### Belarus

Parliament is considered by the regime to maintain the stability of the political system. Lukashenka contends it is the institution for "serious political reform" (Orgish,



2012a). He argues that “parliament plays a vital role in strengthening the state” bringing society together, rather than have opposition on the street (Lukashenka, 2012). Liliya Yermoshina mentioned the difficulty of finding interesting candidates for parliament “naturally we are worried that there is not enough competition for parliamentary seats”. She states that many candidates apply, but few are chosen due to inadequate documentation and understanding of Belarusian (Romanova, 2012). According to official discourse the government has liberalised the parliamentary candidate registration process leading “to a quantitative increase in candidates, but, unfortunately, this affects the quality of all...who participate in the elections” (Romanova, 2012). The opposition should not use “destructive measures” to counter state stability. Belarus’s parliament does not have political parties. It has created a parliament that supports the regime, candidates are chosen for political loyalty (Alexandrov, 2012b). The same is true in Kazakhstan, where Nur Otan dominates parliament. Russia’s State Duma consists of United Russia and the systemic and semi-systemic opposition. These parliaments help maintain stability, by not allowing other factions a voice. The Belarusian parliament is a regime mouthpiece, without the regime having to confront different views. This is very different to western notions of parliament.

#### Kazakhstan

Parliament will be stronger and more effective, once the regime has moulded it (Kuz’mín, 2011, p. 2). This is similar discourse to the Belarusian regime, Lukashenka (2011a) states that it is important to strengthen parliament and shape it to the regimes wishes. Igor Rogov, Chairman of the constitutional council contends that parliamentary legislation makes Kazakhstan stronger (Konenko, 2013a). Parliament prevents government from wilfully

changing the state's Basic Law (Konenko, 2013a). Division could lead to instability, so the regime limits opposition to maintain stability (Interfax-Kazakhstan and KazTag, 2011).

Razymov (2011) speaking about the Majilas (lower house) underlines that it is split into "two poles...that of Nur Otan...with its coalition satellites and the democratic opposition, the National Social Democratic party "Azat", the communist party and the "Alga" party". There are 107 deputies in the Majilas, 98 are members of Nur Otan (Interfax-Kazakhstan and KazTag, 2011). Kazakhstan's parliament, like Belarus's consists of regime supporters.

## Russia

As shown in the authoritarian literature on parliaments, the Russian parliament is dominated by one party (United Russia) which is similar to Belarus and Kazakhstan. Journalists view the State Duma as tamed, beholden to the government (Sokolov, 2013). The State Duma passes legislation regardless of whether it violates the constitution (Mishina, 2013). The regime has created a systemic opposition to control parliament more effectively. The second party (A Just Russia) sees itself in opposition to United Russia, but not the regime (Podosenov, 2013b: 3). The creation of the All-Russia People's Front could bring together all systemic opposition in the State Duma, allowing the public to identify the regime with stability (Tsoi, 2011: 2). The regime hopes the Popular Front and United Russia will act in opposition to one another, but support the Kremlin (Tsoi, 2011: 2). However, this will make parliament obsolete (Rubin and Tropkina, 2012: 1). The authorities want to divide the State Duma between both parties, excluding the opposition (Novikova, 2011: 3). As Naryshkin (2012: 3) contends, Russian parliamentarians should be united, adhering to regime policies. This discourse is similar to Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine in terms of

parliamentary unity. United Russia controls parliament, but the Kremlin wants further control and so has created a loyal opposition.

## Ukraine

Yanukovych speaks of parliament needing to listen to all political voices, regardless of affiliation (Newsroom, 2012). Working with the opposition is difficult as Yanukovych claims a small cadre of them are against the state, “it’s not opposition to the government. It’s actually opposition to the people” (Newsroom, 2012b). The opposition are viewed as uncooperative. Yanukovych speaks of “compromise” yet it is only the regimes view that is on the table and the opposition must accept it (Gorchinskaya, 2012). Ukrainian political parties are weak. Deputies are often bought, creating a disunited opposition. This is the start of the authoritarian path and it has already been taken by the other cases. In Ukraine parliament is not controlled by the government, but the opposition are bought off. The Ukrainian parliament is reminiscent of the Russian State Duma during Putin’s first presidency (Motyl, 2012c). The Ukrainian prime minister, Mykola Azarov stated that no politician should confront the government. Parliament, according to official discourse, is representative, working towards European integration. But, the reality is that opposition is usurped (Protsishin, 2013a). This is the first step towards higher authoritarianism and is a trend Putin followed upon taking power in 2000.

## Summary

The discourse on parliaments shows certain trends amongst the four cases studies, though Ukraine’s discourse is less pronounced than the others. Belarus’s, Kazakhstan’s and

Russia's parliaments operate under regime control and are thus corralled institutions passing legislation and creating a democratic facade. For these three states, parliament is a way for the regime to maintain stability and keep itself in power. It is enlightening how the Kazakh regime speaks of parliament as an institution that will become effective once the regime has constructed it. These parliaments do not bring the regimes to account, as existing democracy literature contends. In Ukraine stability is viewed by the regime as paramount, but it has not been able to corral parliament as in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. Rather it relies on coercion and bribery. This is a characteristic of the State Duma under Yeltsin and in the early years of Putin's regime. All four regime's discourse on parliamentary opposition is negative with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia creating institutions without alternative opposition to the regime. In Ukraine the regime argues that the opposition should follow its wishes. The discourse is largely similar, but there are significant differences in regime type among the cases.

### *Electoral System*

#### Belarus

Belarus holds elections in the middle of winter (like Russia) to stop potential protests (Rostikov, 2010: 3). The Belarusian regime believes it less likely that people will willingly protest in sub-zero temperatures. Correspondingly the regime thinks that the opposition will be unable to maintain protests (Shraibman, 2013). The same argument is made by the Kremlin to putting elections in winter (Kofman, 2011). The official discourse of the Belarusian regime is that elections do not have much purpose, "elections are divisive...it always leads to a vociferous minority and elections do not bring absolute satisfaction, it is

not up to elections to reconcile society” (Elfimov, 2012). It is up to the elite “to identify the...prevailing mood of society”. The president and central electoral commission choose “who...to represent” (Elfimov, 2012). According to Lukashenka (2012), Belarus has developed elections befitting its constitutional framework, ensuring a “transparent...open environment for elections”. Lukashenka (2010a) argues elections are democratic because the “balance of power, percentages of the vote, have always responded to our alignment of democratic forces”. In 1996 there was a referendum to approve the current constitution and, according to Lukashenka, the referendum’s passing emphasised public support for the regime, which no longer needs to be tested (Kryatov, 2012c). Like Medvedev in Russia, (Volodin, 2010: 4), Lukashenka believes that Belarusian democracy is different to western standards because it represents people (Kryatov, 2012b). Yet, the Belarusian discourse is different to that of Russia’s. The Russian regime views elections as the people’s will, whereas Belarus does not.

The Belarusian central electoral commission has a similar discourse to its Russian counterpart. Both are geared to regime consolidation. Six representatives are chosen by the president and six are selected by the Council of the Republic. The head of the central electoral commission is hand-picked by the president (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2010). According to official discourse, the regime changes laws allowing the easier registration of candidates (Alexanderov, 2012a). Voters can vote provided they show valid identification (Belta, 2012b). They can access booths and they can vote “against all”. The system is majoritarian, allowing elections to be won if 50% of each constituency’s electorate vote. Yet, this rosy picture of an independent central electoral commission and electoral system is tainted by other parts of the discourse. Yermoshina states “we wanted to democratise, but

it turned out that democracy complicates the life of the central electoral commission” (Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus, 2011). Lukashenka announced the electoral code would be changed. This has not happened (Shraibman, 2013). According to official discourse Belarus, like Russia, has difficulty with new candidates unable to follow procedure, thus leading the authorities to reject their candidature (Andreychenko, 2011).

Both Belarus and Russia claim that there is no use of administrative resources at elections. Igor Slesarenko (member of the Belarusian central electoral commission) contends that in Belarus there are no black-PR technologies. According to official discourse the ballot paper is legible, allowing Belarusians to make educated choices during elections (BelTa, 2010b). Lukashenka upholds that the government listens to international observers when implementing electoral legislation, but that change will be gradual (Kryatov, 2013). Belarus, according to official discourse, engages with OSCE recommendations making reforms to electoral legislation by funding political party’s campaign materials. Lukashenka in the official discourse states that the opposition did not take this opportunity. This is detrimental to the public as they only learn about candidates on Election Day. Official discourse argues that Lukashenka is transferring funds to the central electoral commission to publish documents informing the public of all political factions (Kryatov, 2013). The regime through legislation does not allow any candidate to demand an election boycott. This was the opposition’s main tactic. Candidates must have private funds rather than rely on the state, affecting how the opposition operates. Election funding is heavily monitored. Consequently, few people will donate to the opposition for fear of reprisals (Shraibman, 2013). Yermoshina argues “let them establish their own funding; they will not do it, but it is for the sake of democracy...we will implement OSCE recommendations *in part*” (my italics).

The regime portrays itself as concerned with democracy. In reality this is a facade (Shraibman, 2013). The regime claims that Belarusians know Lukashenka provides wealth, employment, prosperity and stability, so it is not surprising that 79.65% voted for him in the 2010 presidential election. The 20.35% who did not emphasises that Belarus is a plural society according to the official discourse. Another aspect of Belarus's electoral system is that Lukashenka has ended term limits allowing him to run for as long as his health holds (Buhovets, 2011).

## Kazakhstan

Nazarbayev asserts that the government and Nur Otan should control the electoral process (Ivanov, 2011). This fits, like the discourse in Belarus and Russia, succinctly into Schedler's (2009b: 264) "menu of manipulation", where the regime "may choose a number of tactics to...carve the democratic heart out of electoral contests". This discourse highlights the authoritarian nature of these regimes. Although elections are held, there is little competition (Schedler, 2009: 268). Kazakhstan, like Belarus has a language law. The central electoral commission chooses candidates through thorough examination (Atasova, 2011). In the last presidential election (2012) it barred eleven of twenty-two candidates for lack of Kazakh language skills (Sevast'yanova, 2013a). Existing legislation allows the central electoral commission to dither on registering political parties (Sevast'yanova, 2011b). Most regional electoral commissions are headed by, or composed of, members of Nur Otan (Sevast'yanova, 2011b). Electoral legislation allows the security service to disperse demonstrations. The authorities believe laws on demonstrations and political activity fit international covenants on human rights (Sevast'yanova, 2011b). Moscow and Minsk deal

with the opposition akin to the Kazakh regime. The central electoral commissions in Kazakhstan and Belarus know that the public want the incumbent, so they create electoral legislation for this. The Kazakh parliament has ended presidential term limits because it is 'known' to be popular (Sevast'yanova, 2011a).

## Russia

Following the announcement of his presidential return, Putin stated that the ensuing protests were democratic provided they remained legal. Putin is proud that society votes "objectively" (Putin, 2012a: 1). Society should be free to vote, but not vote for those who use "hypnosis" (Putin, 2011: 2). Elections restore the sovereignty of the people, creating a genuine source of democracy (Putin, 2012a: 1). They maintain the legitimacy of the regime and help provide wealth, accountability and a better life, whilst the system remains stable and democratic (Putin, 2012a: 1; Volodin, 2010: 4). The central electoral commission head Vladimir Churov argues that registering parties makes Russia a multi-party democracy (Mironov, 2012: 3). All of the above is official discourse. But the central electoral commission discounts party registration documents "claiming documents as forgeries" (Shkel', 2009). It controls election funding for all parties. Vladimir Churov sees the opposition as "losers". His remit is to maintain the current political system (Novikov, 2012).

The regime's discourse is about maintaining stability, whilst implementing gradual reform to the electoral system. State Duma deputy, Vladimir Pilgin, has stated that, "the state should not lose control. The state will reform slowly...set standards for the future" (Shkel', 2010: 13). This is the official discourse. Polls by the Levada Centre show that the public thinks the authorities use the electoral system to repress opposition (Goble, 2013).



The Kremlin has developed a system of limited and controlled pluralism, providing voters with a choice, but only to Kremlin approved parties (Golosov, 2013). Sergei Naryshkin states that the electoral system will change over the next five years, but the regime will control the process (Interfax, 2013a). Proposed changes (2012) will return the electoral system to a mixed system, allowing independents to stand. These candidates will be unable to survive on meagre budgets provided by the electoral commission, forcing them to affiliate to a party. As United Russia has the most resources, it stands to make the most gains in controlling independents (Winning, 2013). United Russia does not even speak to voters, or provide a party manifesto. It exists for the regime to remain in power (Travin, 2013). This is similar to the role played by Nur Otan in Kazakhstan.

## Ukraine

Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia claim their political systems are democratic and different. But, according to official regime discourse, Ukraine has been praised for its elections (Vlasenko, 2012). Yanukovich contends that elections “are held in compliance with all democratic procedures” (Matsegora, 2012a). This is different to the Russian regime’s discourse, as Vladimir Churov contends the OSCE’s analysis of the Russian presidential election was “politically motivated” (Petrov, 2012a: 2). Ukraine allows international observers to monitor elections. This official discourse is accurate Ukrainian authorities used OSCE recommendations from 2010, in the 2012 elections (Turner, 2012b). Elections may be clean, but the government pays off independents and smaller parties to gain a majority (Motyl, 2012b).

In the 2012 parliamentary elections there were a significant number of invalid ballots. Consequently, the law was changed and the election rerun in five constituencies (Nagrebts'ka, 2012b; 2012a). Furthermore, the central electoral commission embarked on a 'crusade' against bribery. Those caught were imprisoned (Central Electoral Commission, 2012). This is the official discourse. Yanukovych has changed electoral legislation, allowing elections to be run on mixed electoral lines. Half of all deputies will be voted in by majoritarian vote, thus making it easier for the regime to coerce deputies to change affiliation and join the Party of Regions (Faryna, 2012). Ukraine is changing its electoral law and looking to Russia for implementation strategies. Furthermore, Yanukovych in 2012 imposed his supporter on the Ukrainian central electoral commission (Tuchynska, 2013). This is similar to what has occurred in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, where central electoral commissioners ensure that the regime wins. The discourse in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia is that the central electoral commission is a regime institution. They exist to make sure that elections go the regime's way. Ukraine espouses an official discourse of Europe, but the regime's actions are inclined towards closer integration with the other three cases.

## Summary

The discourse on elections returns some interesting results. In Belarus, elections are not considered overly important. The regime argues that elections create instability, so it should choose electoral candidates to be confirmed by the electorate. Although the Kazakh and Russian regimes state that elections are important, their individual discourse argues that elections have little impact other than confirming regime candidates. The Kremlin is

vocal on the importance of elections, but this is lessened by its discourse about the central electoral commission. It works to preserve the regime and counter possible opposition. The Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian regimes dislike other states and organisations (like the OSCE) offering advice to improve elections. Belarus makes limited changes only to consolidate the regime. Astana and Moscow reject out of hand any recommendations, claiming their political systems are different. Ukraine's discourse is different. Officially the regime listens to outside recommendations, but in reality Yanukovych has copied Russian electoral laws and its political system to consolidate power. By putting a placeman in the central electoral commission it remains to be seen if this institution becomes subservient as have its equivalent institutions in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. Although less authoritarian in its discourse than the other cases, in reality Kiev is becoming more authoritarian taking ideas from the other cases.

### *Civil Society*

#### Belarus

The regime has made it easier to form civil society organisations. Consequently, it has increased the number by 245%, according to a member of the Ministry of Justice (Elena Kirchenko) (Rud, 2010). For Lukashenka civil society should follow "traditional values", where organisations discuss matters in a civilised way, whilst adhering to the law (Ponomarev and Kirilenko, 2013). Belarus's civil society should support the state, operating where the state cannot (Kirilenko, 2012). This is a similar discourse to the Russian regime. Lukashenka (2010b) claims that the state can fulfil most duties, leaving little leeway for civil society. In the official discourse Belarusian civil society will be different. It will not damage

peace and stability (Lukashenka, 2010c). Civil society will help build democracy, but it should “comply with applicable laws and not allow...their organisations to play political games that instigate individuals calling on election-day for illegal actions” (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus, 2010).

#### Kazakhstan

The activities of civil society organisations have declined in Kazakhstan. This is good according to Serik Seiduanov (Deputy Mayor of Almaty), because it means people are less political (Burdin, 2012), which is the official line. The state has pushed civil society to the margins (Kozachko, 2012). Nazarbayev advocated that the government would build and fund civil society (Nazarbayev, 2012b). This is similar discourse to the Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian regimes. A significant part of civil society building is the creating of youth parliaments, allowing people to take an interest in politics under regime auspices (Sevast'yanova, 2011c). Before Kazakhstan builds civil society it must have a strong economy. The regime should limit reliance on government support (Razymov, 2012a). The discourse is similar on civil society. All cases advocate that civil society should be state created as this will lead to democracy. In Kazakhstan and Belarus, the regimes view civil society as marginal believing that the state can perform all roles of civil society. Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia have created a state funded civil society.

#### Russia

According to official discourse civil society needs to be created. Once constructed it should follow government requirements (Novikov, 2011: 2). The public needs to know more

about civil society, so the government will provide finance for public television, to promote civil society's work (Maksimov, 2012: 9). Civil society organisations keep the public away from politics (Maksimov, 2012: 9). With increasing internet usage, civil society keeps people informed about government policy (Chesnakov, 2013: 3). It is important the Kremlin builds civil society, as it gives the regime more legitimacy (Markelov, 2011: 5; Putin, 2012b: 1). This is official regime discourse. People feel disenfranchised so civil organisations gives them opportunities to discuss pertinent issues. Yet, people should also remember that the regime brought stability and wealth. Thus, they should not cause instability and undermine the state. According to Putin it is parliamentary deputies who will build civil society (Beluza *et al*, 2011: 1). A regime created public chamber was introduced after the Beslan disaster, to enable civil society organisations to work together. Yet, the authorities rejected tabled amendments, "leaving the would-be watchdog practically toothless" (Abdullaev, 2005: 1). The president appoints 42 members they choose another 42 members from NGOs. The 84 members choose another 42 members from regional NGOs. This leads to regime control of the public chamber (Abdullaev, 2005: 1). According to Oleg Shein (opposition activist), "this is not a public but a presidential chamber...it will be used as a cloak...it can be claimed that this or that bill was discussed with society" (Abdullaev, 2005: 1). The Federal Security Bureau (FSB) monitors the public chamber and members, emphasising that it is mere window-dressing (Bratersky, 2012b: 3).

## Ukraine

Yanukovich argues that the government should build a civil society to advance democratisation (Newsroom, 2013c). He has initiated a Coordinating Council for Civil Society

Development, which will publish annual plans on constructing civil society (Litkevich, 2012). It is similar to the Russian public chamber. Yanukovych argues that civil society aids modernisation, promoting methods of “transparency and accountability” (Yanukovych, 2013). This remains official discourse. The Ukrainian government is building its own civil society groups whilst marginalising others (Higgins, 2012). The Ukrainian parliament passed a law “On the Promotion of Civil Society Development in Ukraine”, but according to Marina Staviinchuk (Head of the Main Department of the Ukrainian Presidential Administration), it failed to define civil society. If, as the government advocates, they want a stronger state, then they need a robust civil society. Yet, this would curb regime power, so civil society remains weak (Matsegora, 2012b).

## Summary

All four cases have a discourse on the importance of civil society for democratisation. Yet, even in official discourse each regime wants to control civil society. The Ukrainian regime may in its discourse, mention European integration but it has copied the Russian public chamber, promoting a civil society that the regime can control. In reality it shares similarities with other states discourse, of building a regime controlled civil society.

## NGOs

### Belarus

NGOs must adhere to the constitution. The state can intervene if the attorney-general believes it necessary. The Ministry of Justice controls all NGO financing (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2011a). NGOs, according to former-Foreign Minister Sergei

Martynov, will work in sectors deemed applicable by the state (BelTa, 2009a). The regime has funded NGOs in other states. As Olga Stuzhinskaya (director of the Office for a Democratic Belarus) (BelTa, 2009b) challenges, they provide training courses and workshops to promote NGO competence in Europe. This is similar to the Kremlin controlled NGO (the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation), which assesses American and European democracies reporting on how to improve their political systems. The official discourse is that it is now easier to register a new NGO. Silitski (2010: 4) agrees, but only if the NGO is regime affiliated. Belarusian NGO law is convoluted with complicated “barriers to entry...from high minimum membership requirements to long decision-making processes...even the successful passing... does not guarantee...registration” (Firsava, 2013). Unregistered NGOs are quickly closed. New laws make receiving money from or having assets abroad (Wydarzenia, 2011) illegal. Non-approved public events are dispersed (Vialichka, 2012: 2). NGO registration is similar to Russian legislation, although Belarus’s system is not as stringent as Russia’s.

## Kazakhstan

No NGO can receive foreign funding (Akhmatova, 2012a). This would allow foreign interests to have ascendancy in the state (Dzhalilova, 2013a). This is official discourse. Kazakhstan’s largest democracy NGO closed after the government withdrew funding (Jalilov, 2013). The regime has not defined what an NGO is, so it is difficult for organisations to operate (Aimbetova, 2012b). Aimbetova (2012b) argues that it is the state and not NGOs that work effectively in a healthy society. NGOs are opaque, whereas state institutions are accountable. This is official discourse. The government

allows NGOs to spend 30% of their budget, but it fines them if they exceed that limit. NGO's must provide annual tax reports to get an operation certificate (Aimbetova, 2012b). The mantra remains that a strong state works effectively by itself. The government passed new legislation reducing NGO funding, but it also wants to build a strong state to help society (Pavlovskaya, 2013). This highlights the stability notion, which is a recurring mantra in the discourse.

## Russia

NGOs must register according to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation providing details of their organisation. In the documentation they must identify their purpose, location, area of expertise "and number of foreign staff". The Ministry often changes the tax code forcing NGOs to change accountancy practices and it uses unscheduled checks to monitor NGOs (Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, 2012a: 10). Article 37 provides an exhaustive list of stipulations for registering and closing NGOs. Another law centres on administrative issues and monitoring (Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, 2012b: 24). Article 6 sets out guidelines for financial document monitoring and the regulations for NGO compliance.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the State Duma passed a law forcing foreign funded NGOs to register as 'foreign agents'. According to Chapter 24, Article 1, any organisation using data from NGOs deemed 'foreign agents' must indicate the source, or it too will be classified as a 'foreign agent'. 'Foreign agent' NGOs will face checks and unscheduled inspections. NGOs not registered as 'foreign agents' will face suspension (Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, 2013). According to Putin, the Kremlin will set-up an



organisation to monitor human rights groups regardless of whether they receive foreign funding or not (Interfax, 2013c). The 'Orange revolution' created 'Orange paranoia' in the Kremlin, making NGO persecution extensive. Since 2001 the regime has curbed NGO independence (Dzhibladze, 2013). Yury Chaika (Russian Prosecutor General) contends that NGOs regardless of being 'foreign agents' or not should face stiffer regulation. Their independence leads to instability (Arutunyan, 2013). At a meeting with security personnel, Putin argued that NGOs should be carefully monitored, so they do not engage in "destructive purposes" (Putin, 2014).

Russia's human rights ombudsman does not differentiate between political and social NGOs, so all NGOs must register (Interfax, 2013f). The Russian Justice Minister, Alexander Kononov, considers that it is impossible to force NGOs to register as there is no legal requirement for them to do so (Interfax, 2013e). The 'foreign agents' law is not restrictive enough only disenfranchising NGOs opposed to the regime (Interfax, 2013b). This is official discourse. Kononov contends that Russia needs tougher NGO laws. A new Bill "broadens the...grounds for such inspections...In our opinion, the number of grounds can certainly be expanded" (Interfax, 2013d). The official line is that NGO laws in other states are as restricted. NGO legislation will not change, as it could lead to instability (Gorbachev and Samarin, 2013: 3; Bocharova and Biryukova, 2013: 2).

## Ukraine

Ukraine originally had an NGO law based on Soviet law. Since a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2013, the government recognised the law as

“grossly violating...associations, establishing discriminatory procedures for such associations” (Nagrebetska, 2013). The new law based on European recommendations makes it easier to register an NGO. The Ministry of Justice no longer monitors NGOs. This, according to Marina Staviinchuk, will increase the number of NGOs and help build civil society (Nagrebetska, 2013). According to official discourse, the new NGO law will further democracy, allowing the government to pass legislation for a democratic political system. Now there is no government interference in how NGOs operate and what role they play in society (Newsroom, 2013d). This is the official discourse. The government is, however, limiting foreign funding to NGOs, like in the other cases. If foreign funding is denied, NGOs are reliant on state funding and likely to become subservient to the regime (Lutsevych, 2013: 5). Kiev’s discourse, however, is closer to Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

## Summary

All four cases have a discourse where NGOs help build democracy and civil society. Ukraine’s discourse is different to that of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The latter three have curbed NGO abilities to operate, limited funding and forced reliance on the state. The Belarusian and Russian regimes have created official NGOs which are used to build a controlled civil society. Although the Ukrainian regime’s discourse is different, in reality it has infringed on the ability of NGOs to operate. This is seen in the regime limiting NGO access to foreign funding, thus forcing NGOs to rely on the state.

## *Opposition*

### Belarus

According to changes in the 1994 'Law on Political Parties' (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2011b) a political party must have a thousand members spread across most regions with head offices in Minsk. The Ministry of Justice can refuse registration if documentation is deemed inadequate. Political parties cannot be funded externally. Minsk views opposition as "ineffective". The regime should protect people from opposition ideas in case they permeate society (Orgish, 2012b). The opposition should support the government. Lukashenka has said he will build an opposition to operate in the regime's interest, preserving the political system (Orgish, 2010). The regime wants a systemic opposition similar to Russia. A Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia serve as regime-sanctioned alternatives to United Russia, without reducing regime control and Minsk wants to emulate this (Orgish, 2012b). However, the party that was created (Belarusian Social Democratic Party-Hramada) did not gain public support (Orgish, 2012b). If the opposition wishes to be relevant, they should integrate into the political system, as now they are "bandits" and a "fifth column" (Lukashenka, 2011a). This is official discourse. The regime uses violence, sudden arrests, beatings and unexplained disappearances against opposition groups, whilst claiming to maintain stability. Russian security forces also use these tactics (Arutunyan, 2006: 1).

## Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, like Russia, has a systemic opposition. This supports the government by acting as a conduit for disaffected groups from the regime. Nur Otan, the dominant party, splits both the systemic and non-systemic opposition (Jalilov, 2011). Parts of the opposition engage in dialogue, supporting the regime and hoping they can instigate reforms (Razymov, 2012). After the Zhanaozen protests, the government cracked down on opposition leaders. When the opposition notifies the authorities of a demonstration, the protest location will be used on the day for pro-government rallies (Aimbetova, 2012c). This is similar in Russia. In all cases the regimes contend that it is difficult to talk with the opposition. Yet, each regime will not consider dialogue with the opposition, unless on their terms. The Ukrainian regime speaks of co-operation, providing the opposition agrees to its terms. The opposition in Belarus is referred to as a “fifth column” by Lukashenka. Russia and Kazakhstan fear instability, creating a systemic opposition to incorporate society around the regime.

## Russia

The Russian regime discourse promotes the idea that the opposition are western controlled and determined to overturn the regime. Georgian Deputy, Givi Targamadze, has been accused of organising and training opposition (Kozlova, 2012: 2). This fear of opposition has led to the arrests of Sergei Udaltsov and Leonid Razvozzhaev on charges of starting a revolution and the publication of documents on a potential ‘colour revolutions’ by gay rights activists (Kozlova, 2012: 2; Podosenov, 2013). The government has spoken about using party blocs in the political system (Sybbotina and Sivkova, 2013). It is considering making the All-Russia People’s Front a bloc partner with United Russia to dominate

parliament (Bashlikova, 2013). However, Alexei Mukhin (Centre for Political Information) asserts that liberalisation would create smaller parties, making political blocs harder to form, thus splintering opposition. He believes the regime will use blocs to create opposition ruptures (Mazaeva, 2012: 3). For Yershov *et al* (2011: 3) the opposition are only interested in violence. The regime has to maintain stability. This is official discourse. Putin contends that any opposition party is unfit to govern. It is important the regime keeps power, but it should admit mistakes and learn from the dissatisfaction against United Russia in the 2011 parliamentary elections (Putin, 2011). As United Russia still dominates elections it proves that society wants the regime. Demonstrations that occurred after parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011 and 2012 were not in support of the opposition, but disappointment at regime excess (Putin, 2011). To maintain stability the authorities should disenfranchise the opposition (Grachlev, 2013: 3). This is official discourse. Since the 'Orange revolution', the regime has not permitted large demonstrations in Moscow (Bratersky, 2011: 1). The police and OMON have a zero-tolerance policy towards protests, therefore, forcing opposition to demonstrate without authorisation (Seliger, 2008: 3). The Kremlin hacks social media networks, (like Twitter, V-Kontakte, Skype and Facebook) to monitor opposition. During opposition elections to the coordination council hacking was used to disrupt the vote (Kravtsova, 2012a: 1). The opposition are seen as foreign stooges bent on destabilising Russia (Bratersky, 2012a: 1). This is similar rhetoric to the Belarusian and Kazakh regimes.

## Ukraine

Prime Minister Azarov has stated, that the government is prepared to work with opposition, “our government is essentially set for constructive cooperation with the...opposition...After all, where there is no teamwork, there is no result” (Medyhntsya, 2013b). He states that Ukraine does not need “contenders for power”, but rather unity. Currently, part of the opposition wants to destabilise the state with “lies, demagoguery and populism” (Medyhntsya, 2013a). Yanukovych states that he will work with the opposition “wherever there is a desire to cooperate” providing that the government and opposition “maintain stability in the future” (Newsroom, 2013a; Newsroom, 2012a). This is official discourse. Parliament passed legislation making it illegal for state employees and students to attend protests. This is similar to Minsk (Protsishin, 2013b). A new law allows security forces to disperse unapproved protests. Demonstration leaders must provide exact numbers of participants (Skyba, 2013). This law is similar to ones in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. It is impossible to know in advance the number of protestors making dispersal certain.

## Summary

Again Kiev’s discourse has both different and similar components to the other cases. This irreconcilable contrast is evident in the Ukrainian discourse where the regime works with the opposition. The regime is open to dialogue with the opposition, but, it will maintain stability and the opposition should cooperate. This is similar discourse to the other three cases where stability and unity are sacrosanct. The Ukrainian regime follows a discourse comparable to the Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian regimes arguing that opposition is intent on regime destabilisation. This is seen with Lukashenka’s continual rhetoric of the “fifth

column". The Kazakh and Russian regimes have created systemic oppositions to curb alternative opposition. The systemic opposition permits these regimes to claim that opposition exists, whilst allowing each regime to coax disaffected voters and control the political process. The Belarusian regime uses coercion to a greater extent, but all four cases have a discourse summarised as the opposition should work within regime's perimeters.

### *Corruption*

#### Belarus

Lukashenka argues that corruption needs to be brought under control but law enforcement does not do enough. Corruption is less in Belarus than elsewhere (Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus, 2013c). Lukashenka promises the fight against corruption will continue. Any state-worker accused of corruption will be fired (Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus, 2013b). Lukashenka elucidates corruption only occurs in capitalist economies with privatised industries. So, Belarus's economy will remain in state hands. However, he agrees that corruption occurs less in democratic political systems. So Belarus's political system will be reformed, but evolve slowly (BelTa, 2010a). This is official discourse. Minsk is dealing with corruption, viewing it as "the main threat to the state". The media often claim that corruption is low and worse in other states like Poland and Lithuania (Borowska, 2013b). The Russian regime also claims that corruption is worse in other states (particularly the Baltic States) (Grigas, 2012: 2). Corruption cases are used selectively to eliminate rivals. By FSU standards corruption is low (BelTa, 2013b), but "the authorities do not respect

the rule of law, courts are not independent and underpaid officials will...supplement their salaries with bribes" (Borowska, 2012).

## Kazakhstan

Corruption is a permanent problem in Kazakhstan with Nazarbayev complaining that ministries never adhere to budgets. Omarkhan Oxikbayev, (Majilas Deputy), exposed ministries for siphoning budget money (Basarova, 2012b). However, this is partly because the law is unclear as to allowances for public procurement (Sevost'yanova, 2013b). Nazarbayev acknowledges that if Kazakhstan is to become a consolidated democracy, it needs to tackle corruption (Aimbetova, 2011). He spoke of the need to "*learn from other countries*" (my italics) on corruption (Nazarbayev, 2012b). All four cases view corruption as a significant concern in cementing democracy. As will be shown (with the partial exception of Ukraine), the discourse of the four cases is that the regimes will tackle corruption before beginning a democratic transition.

## Russia

The Kremlin's discourse is that the regime is fighting corruption. The State Duma has created a commission to monitor wealth, incomes and properties of Duma Deputies and their families (Shadina, 2012: 4). However, Kulikov (2010: 1) argues the fight against corruption cannot be sustained, as the Ministry of Justice's independent monitors are not providing the necessary information on corruption. Pavlikova (2013: 6) contends that corruption is pervasive. To register and stand for election, a candidate must pay the regional electoral commission. Vladislav Surkov (Beluza, 2011: 2) states



that corruption is universal in society. No legislation will stop it. All that can be done is to set an example (Rogozin, 2011: 4). The state shows society how to be corrupt. It has been part of centuries of state building, constraining “a free economy, a vibrant civil society and a transparent state”. The regime has ratified anti-corruption legislation, but has failed to follow it. Whilst, this will not end corruption, it would help (Deliagin, 2011: 6). The regime uses convoluted language for corruption, making it difficult for it to be accused, but easier for it to accuse and charge others (Zlotin, 2012: 9).

## Ukraine

The Ukrainian regime tackles corruption by using European examples. It joined the Partnership for Open Government in 2011, which makes public administration transparent, provide access to government resources, create anti-corruption legislation, provide quality administrative services and build e-government and e-democracy (Newsroom, 2013e). The Ukrainian government knows corruption affects people’s perceptions of democracy. It has implemented three laws which stop state interference in people’s lives. Yanukovich said the best way to tackle corruption and build a democratic system is to create trust in government, coordinate between institutions, improve the investment environment and observe human rights and the rule of law (Zhuravs’ky, 2011). As the government has a database of corrupt civil-servants, they cannot find a public sector job again (Bodnya, 2013). Yanukovich contends that corruption is rampant regionally, affecting the government’s ability to build democracy (Koval, 2013). Yanukovich admits it will be a long fight (Matsegora, 2011). Ukraine has left tackling corruption to NGOs. This is official discourse. Local government and central

government ministries have curbed the remit of NGOs (Khmara, 2013) affecting anti-corruption measures. Whilst Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia wish to solve corruption alone, Ukraine seeks help from Europe.

## Summary

The corruption variable provides competing discourses amongst the four cases. The Belarusian regime like its Russian and Kazakh counterparts claims that corruption is prevalent, but uses rhetoric that it is no worse than other places, so it does not need to tackle it. At the same time Minsk is reluctant to give up control of the economy (which is largely state controlled) nor make radical reforms to the political system. The Kazakh regime claims it will tackle corruption as it is an effective barrier to consolidating democracy. This is a similar discourse to the Ukrainian regime. Kiev argues that to become democratic, corruption must firstly be tackled. This is in contrast to Moscow which refuses to acknowledge the prevalence of corruption, claiming it is a part of Russian life so cannot be tackled. The Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian regimes often use selective corruption charges to oust rivals and limit effective opposition. The discourse of the Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian regimes is that they can tackle corruption alone. This is different to the Ukrainian discourse where Kiev will use EU help on confronting corruption.

## *Media*

### Belarus

If a foreign media company wants to operate in Belarus, they have to provide the personal information of all Belarusian employees (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2008). Media must disseminate correct information and publish state material. Television and radio programmes are cut to allow for government statements if and when necessary (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2008). Oleg Proleskovsky (Minister of Information) states “the impact of...media is enormous”, but the media should maintain stability and preserve cultural identity (Bibikov, 2013). Lukashenka (2013b) contends that he wants a privatised media in the future, but currently the media is weak and relies on state funding. There are 1,071 privately owned newspapers, but it is weak and relies on state funding. The state controls 175 of 225 electronic media sources, but only two out of nine television channels. This is official discourse. All media has to follow state ideology and rely on funding. This contravenes the law ‘On Mass Media’. Media should not be state controlled, nor should the state have a monopoly. Lukashenka does not need to appear on television, as channels show his speeches. Consequently, he is continually in people’s minds (Arutunyan, 2006: 1). The government controls printing and distribution, affecting how the opposition disseminates information (Arutunyan, 2006: 3). This is similar to Kazakhstan. A new law in Belarus on the installation of television antennae requires that people have planning permission first, in order to be able to erect them. Existing antenna need a permit (Law of the Republic of Belarus,

2013). The process is time-consuming, thus limiting people's access to satellite television and foreign media. Again this is similar to Kazakhstan.

Media is changing. Sergei Nesterovich (Deputy Minister of Information) argues that the internet is replacing 'old' media. It is a "unique platform to exchange ideas" (Korbut, 2012). According to official discourse, the internet allows paedophiles, "depraved literature", the entertainment and retail industries to divert people's interests (Parton, 2013). A new specialised unit (Operational and Analytical Centre - OAC) monitors the internet to protect citizens. Social media and networking sites are tracked (Parton, 2013). All companies must store citizens' data on website hits and give access to the authorities (BelTa, 2010). This is official discourse. Protection is important. Hackers target and attack government websites (Kozlovich, 2013). According to official discourse the OAC monitors the internet, using collected information to build civil society (BelTa, 2013a). The OAC has created a Belarusian version of the internet ('ByNet'), like Kazakhstan's 'KazNet' and Russia's 'RuNet'. This according to official discourse protects Belarusians from dangerous material, whilst preventing them accessing other parts of the web (Pasiyak, 2012). BelaPan monitors the internet, allowing it to observe, follow and terminate internet services (BelaPan, 2010). This is official discourse, to protect people and end "anarchy" (Bortnik, 2010). The reality is somewhat different. BelaPan "works to find ways to control the internet" (Andreev, 2013). The OAC and BelaPan control all Belarusian websites. If a person views 'illegal' material, the OAC terminates their internet access (Bortnik, 2010). Opposition websites are often blocked. The OAC has the technology to listen to Skype conversations. Whilst, security services cannot monitor everyone "they are certainly not constrained by

Belarusian laws or human rights concerns” (Kryvoi, 2012). The authorities block vkontakte and Facebook (social media sites) before and after protests. Fake websites are set-up to confuse opposition groups. These take the computer information of those that visit the website to secure KGB servers. New technology enables the authorities to find bloggers (Kryvoi, 2011). The authorities, fearful of an ‘Orange revolution’ and viewing the internet as a vehicle to promote demonstrations, have many ways to monitor it (Charnysh, 2011). These technologies are also used in other FSU states (Kryvoi, 2012).

#### Kazakhstan

According to official discourse Kazakhstan has a free media. Sections are owned by private enterprises (Akhmatova, 2012b). It is important that freedom of speech is defined by the regime, as media articles could create instability (Basarova, 2012a). Like Belarus, Kazakhstan’s media must devote space to government announcements. Radio and television must stop broadcasting, if the government makes emergency statements (Interfax-Kazakhstan, 2012). This is official discourse. Most media is government funded so they practice self-censorship. Journalists can face defamation charges further contributing to self-censorship (Dzhailova, 2013b). The government has increased control of broadcast and internet media by buying private media (Kenji, 2012). The law ‘On National Security’ allows the regime to close media companies on charges of extremism, without defining what extremism is (Dzhaililova, 2013b). Another law ‘On Personal Data’, stipulates that all persons mentioned in an article must have their individual details included (Dzhaililova, 2013). Consequently,

journalists no longer use sources. Journalists face penalties for mentioning politicians in an unflattering light (Dzhalilova, 2010a). ArRukhKhak (a pollster), found that 52% of newspaper articles and 29% of television broadcasts in 2010 were dedicated to Nur Otan (Drozdov, 2011). The regime has made digital television mandatory. It controls broadcasting codes, so can control what people watch. Foreign media must register before they can broadcast (Jalilov, 2010b).

Nazarbayev views the internet as detrimental to humanity's interests "instead of spreading knowledge" it promotes lies, hatred and vice (Nazarbayev, 2012a). Kazakhstan, like Belarus and Russia has its own section of the internet 'KazNet', which "will fight illegal content viruses, online fraud and zombie networks...combat pornography, terrorist and extremist views" (Jalilov, 2010c). The Majilas has passed legislation limiting 'destructive' websites; though the Ministry of Justice has not defined what "a destructive website" is (Jalilov, 2010a). 'KazNet' allows the regime to put newspapers online, allows ease of access according to official discourse and limiting the need to view foreign news websites (Dzhalilova, 2010). For Shaternikova (2012), the government's interest in the internet has been beneficial, as it allows dialogue between public and regime, promoting e-democracy and e-society. This is official discourse.

## Russia

Russia's media laws allow organisations to register new newspapers and other media if they disclose information and personal details of participants (Prokof'ev and Fomchenkov, 2011: 12). This is similar to Belarus and Kazakhstan. The extremism law stifles media, as Roskomnadzor (Federal Agency for Supervision of Communications,

Information Technology and Mass Media) censors articles. If an article is rejected it is pulled, hence leading to self-censorship. This has been used against liberal outlets (Lyalyakina, 2013). Russian media relies on state funding, thus curbing innovation. Official discourse is that although media is state-controlled it does not detract from Russia's democracy. The media keeps citizens informed (Shadrina, 2010: 6). If media were privately funded, it would serve private interests and not the state's which creates instability (Grigor'ev, 2010: 6). Public television must provide news and build civil society without allowing politics into debates (Maksimov, 2012: 9). Moscow's official discourse is similar to Minsk and Astana's. The regime claims media is free, but self-censorship exists (Arutunyan, 2009: 65-66). Official discourse contends that free speech is good, but it does not make the media free. The media would become dependent on private interests (Arutunyan, 2009: 77). Thus, the authorities keep "overall control of the sphere and clamp down on...news outlets" whilst using "techniques to maintain a...grip on the media, detaining...critics, closing down media outlets and blogs, and bringing libel or defamation suits against journalists" (Moscow Times, 2012a: 3). Newspapers have been targeted by government raids. The authorities have brought the last independent vestiges under control (Bratersky, 2010: 3). This is similar to Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Blogging makes the government look weak, as it allows "faceless" criticism (Novoselova and Iakovleva, 2010: 12). Ministers have been instructed not to blog. It can lead to misunderstandings and scandals as the diatribe against Moskovsky Komsomolets (a newspaper) by Andrey Isayev illustrated (Kozlov, 2013: 2). The Kremlin copies Chinese internet law. This allows authorities to block websites without explaining why (Revich, 2013: 6). The police browse social media for inappropriate content. Accused websites

have 24 hours to remove data, or face closure. Like Belarus and Kazakhstan, the Kremlin wants to control the internet as it realises that Russians can access other uncontrolled media. This is official discourse. Blogging and social media have been affected. The regime uses anti-piracy and anti-extremism laws to bring bloggers to trial (Eremenko, 2013). It has closed websites for 'extremist' material, forcing opposition sites to get domains abroad. However, the Kremlin claims that the extremism law is overzealously interpreted by regions. Yet, it is unlikely that the city authorities of Komsomolsk-on-Amur (for example) tried to ban YouTube without Kremlin support and knowledge (Krainova, 2011: 3).

## Ukraine

The official discourse in Kiev is that the media can educate Ukrainian citizens to think and raise issues. Yet, the media is too weak for this (Korkiv, 2012). According to Viktor Pshonka (Prosecutor General), the state will do all it can to protect journalists and their property (Bittner, 2011). In reality, Ukraine's media has become less free and Kiev has not made promised reforms (Vlachenko, 2011). There are 2,266 media companies. 700 are owned by the government and more are subsidised. To promote free speech, Kiev needs to end subsidies. Until media is privatised it will have to accept criticism (Ylovits'ka *et al*, 2013). The government needs to end leases on property leading to another form of censorship. Media companies face eviction if they criticise the government (Ylovits'ka *et al*, 2013). The government has instigated laws allowing "media access to information from the government...not deemed a security issue". As Andrei Shevchenko (Chairman of the Freedom of Expression and Information



Committee) (Nagrebets'ka, 2011a) argues "our people need to know...all information of government", but he also admits that not all information will be available to the public "we are not talking about draft decisions, and...approved documents. There are statutory exceptions...secret information. But open to all is information on expenditure". All other documents can be deemed draft decisions. The government buys newspapers, if it is unable to buy the newspaper the papers owners are taken to court for tax fraud (Motyl, 2012a). The regime uses ties with media to induce self-censorship (Turner, 2012a). All four cases follow a similar pattern having a difficulty with freedom of speech.

The concept of online government occurs in official discourse. The government recognises that people should have access to information and it needs an online presence. The regime believes that there are issues with providing public information and improving citizen awareness, whilst not undermining stability (Sosnin, 2013). The state must juggle e-governance and protect citizens from the internet's darker side. The government's focus on internet protection provides "protection from...aggressive "entrepreneurs" (Sosnin, 2013). Whilst, the internet has benefits (curbing state bureaucracy), it allows anonymity which is dangerous (Sosnin, 2013). The government uses similar tactics to Russia and Belarus to block websites (Turner, 2012a). All four cases emphasise the internet's downside. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have built individual internet areas to control what people see. Ukraine is following this trend.

## Summary

The discourse on media provides a clear analysis of authoritarianism in the four cases. Throughout, there are continual references to maintaining stability. This is

particularly so regarding the internet. The four regimes view the internet as a hazard. Astana, Minsk and Moscow have set up national parts of the internet, making it difficult to gain access to foreign websites. The Ukrainian regime uses Russian and Belarusian tactics to block websites and compile data on users. More traditional media (newspapers, radio and television) have become state controlled, or owned by organisations close to the state. Media reliance on state funding allows all four regimes to impose media censorship. Control of printing presses and leasing of office space expands censorships remit. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have limited foreign funding of media outlets. The poorly worded extremism laws in Kazakhstan and Russia limits media independence further. Whereas Belarus and Kazakhstan's discourse is that eventually the media will be free (without setting a time for it), for the Russian regime the media is already free and censorship is beneficial. The Ukrainian regime is copying the other three (especially Belarus and Russia) in formulating media controls. All four cases advocate that media should help preserve regime stability.

## **Conclusion**

I do not contend that discourse analysis will show that authoritarian learning occurs. It is something that cannot be definitely emphasised, but only hinted at. However, tactics cannot occur from nothing. It is unlikely that four cases simultaneously use comparable gambits when speaking about their political systems. Statistical data corroborates that the FSU states are authoritarian. Discourse analysis goes further showing that three of the cases use very similar language, even sharing tactics. This can be seen in the similarities between Russia and Kazakhstan's extremism law. Other

examples include how the Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian regimes use poorly worded corruption legislation to oust opponents. All four states view the opposition as a cause of instability. The Ukrainian regime in its official discourse is moving towards Europe, but in reality is also taking ideas from the other cases. For example, Kiev has started to impose new legislation limiting NGO access to foreign funding. Whilst, it is not possible to emphasise that learning is definite, it is difficult to believe that four regimes with close affinity to one another, would not engage in learning and dialogue with each other. Future investigations would expose further nuances. I assessed eight variables to determine authoritarian learning. By using variables fitting succinctly in the democracy literature I emphasised how authoritarian the cases are. I maintain the belief that there are different types of authoritarian regime in the FSU.

Whilst, conducting discourse analysis I teased out similarities on the cases discourse. Throughout, the issues of stability and unity were contrasted with civil liberties. Stability in the discourse was paramount. The state must remain strong and vigilant to deal with instability. Yet, it is the regime that interprets stability, viewing potential challenges as dangerous. Throughout the four case's discourse, the state protects citizens from threats to maintain stability. It is the regime that determines what a threat is. Democracy is the chosen word of all four cases, to mean stability and regime preservation. For all four cases stability and state control are important.

The Belarusian model of stability and well-managed society is one that Russia recognises and takes ideas from. The stability mantra is one that permeates the discourse of both regimes. The Kremlin (as was seen in chapter three) took ideas from

the Belarusian regime in stopping 'colour revolutions'. Lukashenka had by 1998 eradicated all viable opposition and continually purges any that appear. I argue that the Kremlin used Minsk's example in dealing with the opposition. Whilst it is not possible to prove learning succinctly, it can be inferred that it is the most likely contention for explaining how regimes operate in similar ways. Similar ideas permeate the Kazakh regime's discourse. All three states use similar rubrics to discuss their political systems, claiming they are democratic, but different to the West. Parliament is a variable all four have similarities on, although Ukraine less so. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have modelled parliament to serve the regime. Kazakhstan and Russia have created facade democracies. Both use political parties acting in opposition to one another, but, supportive of the regime. Belarus has tried to create a systemic opposition, like Kazakhstan and Russia, but has found other ways to exclude the opposition. The Belarusian parliament consists of regime supporters with no party affiliation. The regime views political parties as causing instability. Russia and Kazakhstan use pseudo-parties to fragment opposition and co-opt marginally independent parties as 'opposition'. Ukraine has not gone as far, but the regime isolates the opposition. The central electoral commission in three cases serves to maintain a democratic facade, whilst allowing regime control of the electoral process. Although the Ukrainian regime's language is different the fact the head of the central electoral commission is an ally of Yanukovych does not bode well for its independence.

Belarus and Russia hold elections in the depths of winter to stop potential protests. This was the regimes attempt to deal with a possible domestic 'colour revolution'. By holding elections during the coldest month of the year (mid December to

mid January) the Belarusian and Russian regimes believe that protestors, even if willing to demonstrate, will be unwilling to maintain demonstrations over a long period. That both regimes took this aspect from the 'colour revolutions' and used it does not prove learning, but it does significantly infer that learning and dialogue occur. Belarus's electoral system and central election commission, like Kazakhstan's, makes elections a side-show. Ukraine's new electoral system has made it easier for Party of Regions to coerce deputies from smaller parties. Nur Otan, Party of Regions and United Russia use administrative resources to co-opt opposition deputies. All four cases have discourse on building a state controlled civil society. Russia and Ukraine have created chosen civil society groups. Yet, all four cases perceive civil society as a threat.

Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia do not tolerate opposition other than their created systemic opposition. All four regimes monitor internet websites. Whilst, the opposition are able to use the internet (and do), regular blocking and limiting of websites makes the opposition's ability to operate and get views across largely ineffective. Each has created draconian protest laws with the Ukrainian regime following the example of the other three. Again Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have limited NGO operations, creating laws circumscribing their remit and access to funding. The Ukrainian regime has not passed similar legislation, but has limited NGO access to foreign funding and as NGOs rely on state funding, this will make them reliant on the government. Corruption discourse varies across the four cases. Belarus and Russia claim corruption is lower than the west, so they will not worry. The Kazakh regime's discourse is that the government will work alone to end corruption. This is different to Ukraine where the language speaks of tackling corruption using European examples. The media

variable tells a similar story. Television in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia is devoted to portraying leaders in a positive light. Russia and Belarus have copied China in harsh internet legislation. This is occurring in Ukraine. Kiev blocks and monitors the internet. As the media is subsidised by each regime, newspapers use self-censorship.

By referring back to the hypotheses at the beginning of this chapter, I showed that discourse analysis provides comprehensive understanding of the research questions under investigation. Having offered analysis of aspects of the research questions in previous chapters, I set-out to answer 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate' and 'to what extent do regimes learn from one another'. I analysed three hypotheses: 'Do the case studies speak a similar language?', 'Do we ascertain a learning process?' and 'Do we see a difference in language and tactics that the Ukrainian regime uses?' I found that three case studies have very similar language, with the Ukrainian regime as an outlier. Yet, in parts, its discourse corresponds to the other three cases. I contend that it is possible to see a learning process. Whilst, it is difficult to prove that learning occurs, the laws and tactics used by the four cases make a strong inference that learning and dialogue occur. The cases discourse espouses similar tactics and institutions used in consolidating their regimes. The dialogue of consolidation emphasises a process of comparison, dialogue and learning between them. Similarly, I argue that there are differences in the language of the Ukrainian regime. However, the tactics the regime uses are comparable to what occurred previously in the other regimes. The discourse emphasises that Kiev is copying and being taught authoritarian tendencies by the other cases. Another issue is the corroboration that the regimes are different in terms of authoritarianism. Academics should treat these nuances with consideration when analysing FSU regimes.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

To be able to assess the process of authoritarian learning the reader needs to use deductions. It remains difficult (if not impossible) to comprehensively prove the occurrence of learning. However, I feel that by using longitudinal and discourse analysis I made significant conjectures that learning occurs. Longitudinal analysis showed that the cases have become more authoritarian. Discourse analysis emphasised that the regimes had similar discourse. In analysing the cases political systems, opposition, corruption and NGOs I have shown significant likelihood of learning. It is unlikely that similar discourses, examples, tactics and institutions exist separately in four closely affiliated states without the probability of learning. Although learning cannot be categorically proven, it is highly plausible that states do learn examples from each other.

Chapter one set out research questions for analysis. The main research question was 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' and there were two sub-research questions 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another' and 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?' These research questions systematically provide analysis of authoritarian learning.

Chapter two provided in-depth analysis of authoritarianism allowing the study to assert that existing typologies (electoral, competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism) should only explain a few cases. It was necessary to investigate how authoritarian regimes use similar institutions. Authoritarian regimes twist democratic institutions for consolidation. I contend that the main reason these regimes use

democratic institutions is not mainly for democratic benefit, but because institutions allow regimes to bestow rents on supporters. This keeps regime supporters onside and consolidates the regime.

In chapter three to comprehend authoritarian learning further I investigated diffusion, linkage and leverage and soft power. I prefer to use linkage and leverage when analysing how regimes learn. I argue that diffusion uses inferences and counts these as scientific fact. It narrowly focuses on understanding events that lead to a culminating incident. Diffusion scholars have failed to adequately clarify past issues in the states which could explain regime instability leading to democratic protests prevailing. Diffusion scholars after the 2004 'Orange revolution' did not assess domestic events that led to the weakening of the Kuchma. Linkage and leverage provides clearer analysis. It is not based on conjecture.

A wider analysis of Russian soft power and its linkage and leverage with other FSU states points to (partial) answers to the research questions. Chapter three provided an answer to the sub-research question 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?' Russia offers an authoritarian model for other states to copy. They take examples of tactics and institutions from Russia for domestic authoritarian consolidation. However, the Kremlin has taken examples of preventative counter revolution from Belarus primarily, but also from Armenia and Uzbekistan. How the Belarusian regime dispersed the 2006 demonstrations in Minsk was keenly watched by the Kremlin. It ascertained tactics to be used should protests occur in Russia. Institutionally, the Kremlin took ideas from Belarus and Kazakhstan,



such as, copying the example of Nur Otan. Although the Kazakh regime copied United Russia in building Nur Otan, the Kremlin has copied Kazakh tactics in building a party of power to control institutions. Belarus is a testing ground for authoritarian tactics, institutions and regime consolidation. I argue that the process of instigating learning techniques for authoritarian consolidation is multilinear. With regards the other research questions I could only make partial claims in proving them. In comprehending the main research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' I showed, through analysing FSU regional institutions that these allow for elite dialogue and potential learning. However, this can only be inferred and further study needs to occur. Similarly, as I contended, learning is difficult to categorically prove. I can only make strong deductions from existing data rather than scientific conclusions. I surmise that these regimes learn to consolidate authoritarianism through dialogue. This could be for future study too. I provided comprehension to the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another'. Astana, Minsk and Moscow feared domestic 'colour revolutions' and so started authoritarian consolidation and learning from one another, which partially answers the 'why' and 'when' of this sub-research question.

The longitudinal analysis of the study investigated two arguments in chapter four. The first was that FSU regimes are becoming more authoritarian and the second was that there are different categories of authoritarian regime in the FSU. I gave two hypotheses to aid explanation of the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another'? The two hypotheses were: 'authoritarianism is increasing in the FSU' and 'there are differences in authoritarian

levels between the FSU regimes'. Although there are issues with arbitrability, ideological concerns and the compilation of data, I contend that Freedom House comprehensively supplies conclusive data on growing FSU authoritarianism. I contended that FSU regimes are becoming more authoritarian and that existing rubrics should explain a few cases, rather than explaining all authoritarian regimes in-toto. The graphs mostly emphasised that FSU regimes are becoming more authoritarian, but also showed that they do not all homogeneously fit one rubric. This corroborates my belief that existing typologies should only explain a few cases, rather than be universal rubrics. Chapter four gave an answer to the sub-research question 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another' supporting the assertion that FSU regimes became more authoritarian after the 'colour revolutions'. The graphs pointed to an explanation of 'why' and 'when'. Regimes became more authoritarian, due to their fear of potential 'colour revolutions' particularly after the last 'revolution' in 2004. The graphs supplied a partial explanation of 'to what extent'. Regimes do not have similar authoritarian levels and the graphs depicted the extent of individual regime authoritarianism. Chapter four could only provide partial explanations of 'why' and 'to what extent' due to statistical limitations of answering largely qualitative questions. However, it provides explanation to the 'when' section and answers the two hypotheses.

Chapter five investigated the sections 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate' and 'to what extent do regimes learn from one another' of the research questions. I used three hypotheses: 'the case studies have a similar discourse to one another', 'there is a learning process' and 'there are differences in language and tactics used by the Ukrainian regime'. Analysing regime discourse offers in-depth analysis of

how regimes learn to consolidate, whether they learn from one another or not and if the Ukrainian regime has a different discourse. The findings made strong inference that learning occurs. If four cases have similar language on ideas, tactics and consolidation, then learning is probable if not proven. All the cases have similar discourse about stability. Analysis shows cases of copying and similar language. With regards electoral laws the Ukrainian regime has copied Russia's electoral legislation. All four share similarities with discourse on civil society, media, corruption, NGOs and opposition. For instance, all argue that the regimes should build civil society and they believe that opposition and NGOs destabilise the state. Minsk wishes to copy Kazakhstan and Russia's systemic opposition. NGOs should be monitored and reliant on state funding. However, Kiev is less vociferous than the others. Kazakhstan and Ukraine have similar discourse on corruption. They will tackle corruption to become democratic. The Kremlin and Minsk in contrast, contend that domestic corruption is lower than in the west and so changes are not required. With regards to media, all four states state that it should be controlled and operate in the state's interests.

What I infer from the discourse is that (excluding the Kazakh corruption discourse), the Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian regimes have similar discourse. The Ukrainian regime has different discourse on some issues. However, Kiev has similar discourse to the others on a number of issues namely stability, opposition and media. Kiev's actions also belie the discourse undermining pro-democratic claims. The language may be different but chapter five showed that Kiev copies other states examples. The discourse analysis highlighted that the four regimes have different levels of authoritarianism, pointing to the contention of placing a small number of similar states

in one rubric. In analysing the hypotheses there is a learning process. Three cases have similar discourse and Ukraine's actions do not correspond to its discourse. I strongly infer that there is a learning process. I argue that 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate' can be answered by stating that regimes are in dialogue with one another. This supposition is not strong, but as all four regimes have similar discourse on many variables, I believe that dialogue occurs. However, this could be analysed further.

I set out to confirm authoritarian learning through investigating the cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. The research questions provided strong inferences that this process occurs. The main research question 'how do authoritarian regimes learn to consolidate and if so, do they learn from other examples in their region' allowed the study to analyse if learning occurs and how regimes learn from one another. Learning cannot categorically be proven beyond measurable doubt. It is after all a slippery concept. Yet, through longitudinal analysis, discourse analysis, case studies and in-depth literature reviews there are strong suppositions that learning between regimes occurs. I assessed two sub-research questions. The first was 'does the regional hegemon instigate learning techniques, or is the process multi-linear?' In answering this I teased out that whilst the Kremlin provides an authoritarian model for other states it also learns from others. As seen with the preventative counter revolution, the Kremlin learnt tactics from Armenia, Uzbekistan and especially Belarus. I argue that learning is multilinear and techniques shared. The second sub-research question asked 'why, when and to what extent do regimes learn from one another'? Authoritarian learning was prevalent after 2004 when other FSU regimes feared domestic 'colour revolutions' and started to consolidate authoritarianism. This explains the why and when of the sub-

research question. I argue that it can be deduced that regimes learn, but, because they fit different authoritarian typologies there are different levels of authoritarianism.

Further investigation is needed on two aspects of authoritarian learning. These are the wider authoritarian literature and the concept of authoritarian learning. Further expansion and critiquing of the wider authoritarian literature is required. A wealth of democratisation literature exists, but authoritarian literature remains underdeveloped. Pertinently, there are only a few case studies on authoritarianism. What exists regarding the FSU is limited to Russia. Authoritarian learning and the concepts behind it have so far received negligible academic attention. One study (Ambrosio, 2009) analyses Russia, but more needs to be done to expand the literature. I have expanded authoritarian learning literature through more cases. But, additional literature could ascertain how authoritarian learning occurs in other regions like the Middle East, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Authoritarian linkage and leverage was an important aspect of this study. Although there is growing literature on this, more research needs to be done. I raised the possibility of studying the FSU's regional institutions. I feel these regional institutions allow for dialogue. It is plausible that FSU regimes use these to promote authoritarianism, learn tactics and shape authoritarian institutions. I provided salient arguments to an underdeveloped literature and understanding of authoritarian learning. I have brought new conceptualisations to existing FSU political systems. I investigated how authoritarian regimes consolidate and learn from each other. I have expanded the literature on this important topic. Future work will enlarge this literature providing new comprehension on authoritarian learning, consolidation and the current FSU political systems.

What can be said with certainty is that the FSU regimes will continue to learn from one another, consolidating their control and undermining protest. The FSU regimes consistently work with one another to strengthen authoritarianism through dialogue, institution building, learning and sharing tactics. This helps undermine democratic openings, limiting opposition avenues not controlled by the state, resulting in authoritarian reinforcement. Ukraine could plausibly integrate with Europe. But it is more likely to combine closer with other FSU states as authoritarian tactics and historical burdens of dictatorship remain. The FSU is likely to become more authoritarian with regimes usurping democracy for their own ends. Change is likely to be internal within the regimes. However, as Lukshenka, Nazarbayev and Putin are unwilling to step down, there is the possibility that should they become incapacitated infighting will occur. Such a circumstance is possible, but the Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian regimes are stable. The likelihood of regime collapse is wishful thinking. It is unlikely that in the short and medium term these regimes will collapse.

Understanding authoritarian learning is an integral aspect of conceptualising the FSU regimes. It is paramount that scholars, governments and international organisations better comprehend the intricacies of the political systems of FSU states. To do this an understanding of authoritarian learning is required. It allows comprehension of how regimes learn tactics, institutions building and consolidation techniques as well as counteracting external democracy initiatives. Authoritarian learning is thus an important topic of research. I feel that I have commenced a synopsis on a topic that will increasingly grow in importance as academics, governments and international organisations begin to try to understand growing FSU authoritarianism and

the political systems that have consolidated this phenomenon. More however needs to be done, but I have provided areas for future studies to tackle and begin an investigation on what will become a pertinent literature.

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