IS THE CSTO TRADING DEMOCRACY FOR SECURITY?

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By

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INTRODUCTION

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional mutual defense alliance that consists of seven member states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The purpose of the CSTO is the collective defense of its members, where security for one is security for all. Many scholars and analysts agree, however, that the real purpose of the CSTO is to serve Russia’s strategic interests in Europe and Central Asia, particularly to prevent CSTO members from seeking alternative national security solutions, such as forming military alliances with third parties. Many observers argue that in the very unlikely event that Russia is attacked, it is capable of defending its borders without outside help from such weak states as the Kyrgyz Republic or Tajikistan. This paper agrees in principle with the latter statement. It is, therefore, not the purpose of this research to reveal Russia’s motivations for founding and leading the CSTO. This is not a paper about the CSTO as a military organization, but rather an attempt to identify commonalities in the motivations of CSTO member-states (other than Russia) to belong to this organization.

International organizations, journalists, civil society activists, and various other observers also agree that over time democratic reforms in the CSTO countries have stagnated. There is constant pressure on the media, civil society, and the judicial system by the state trying to take full control over those vital components of the democratic structure. Does the CSTO membership contribute in any way to the declining democratic profiles of the member states? The paper argues that the CSTO membership is an obstacle to the improvement of democratic practices in the member states. It elaborates on the political and economic motivations of the CSTO political elite to join the organization. Understanding the existing interdependencies between
the CSTO countries and Russia can have significant policy implications for the United States in its efforts to support the Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries in their transition to democracy

PRIOR RESEARCH

An initial literature review shows that CSTO has not been well studied, and what little research did exist was in Russian. However, the interest in the organization has increased significantly among scholars and analysts since Russia energized the organization by proposing the creation of the Collective Rapid Reaction Force (CRRF) in February 2009, a military establishment designed to conduct anti-terrorist activities, fight transnational crime (including drug trafficking), and repulse external military aggression.

Researchers and analysts offer different views on two matters: the value of the CSTO for its members, and the real objective of the organization. Some argue that the security threats facing these countries are so diverse that the organization is merely an artificial entity serving Russia’s political, economic and military interests. According to Roger McDermott (2005), Russia is offering CSTO as a viable alternative to NATO, thereby expanding its influence within Central Asia and the South Caucasus. By controlling CSTO, Russia limits NATO expansion to the region and would limit the involvement of the individual states with the Alliance.

On the other hand, A.L. Rekuta (2006) argues that the principal objective of the CSTO in the Central Asian region is to maintain stability and peace on the Eurasian continent under new post-Soviet geopolitical conditions. The CSTO is a tool to create a security regime in Central Asia by increasing the aggregate military capability of the allied states and safeguarding them against the negative impact of international terrorist organizations and the drug traffickers, which threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries in this region. The CSTO's
ultimate goal is to provide conditions for mutually advantageous economic development of the member states and their speedy integration into the global economy.

The uncertainty over the real objectives of the CSTO triggers discussions among scholars whether the military alliance can be used to address internal as well as external problems of the member states. According to Simon Saradzhyan (2010), the CSTO is explicit only about requiring a joint response to external aggression, and the organization’s charter only vaguely calls for consultations on joint response in case of other threats "to the security, territorial integrity or sovereignty" of its signatories. Saradzhyan argues that the CSTO is of little use when it comes to dealing with internal security threats, such as ethnic problems, separatism, and sectarian movements. Tolipov (2009), however, argues that the real reason for Uzbekistan to join the CSTO in 2006 was the threat of a color revolution in the country. He also argues that the creation of the CRRF added confusion to the role of the CSTO in Central Asia.

According to McFaul (2010), regional organizations such as the CSTO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are dominated by non-democracies and do not promote democracy. On the contrary, a resurgent and increasingly autocratic Russia has attempted to reinvigorate these regional institutions to counter Western democratic clubs.

This essay discusses the ways in which the CSTO membership affects the domestic (political) processes of the member states. The paper proposes that the political leaders of the member-states need the military alliance with Russia, the regional power, not only to counter external threats, but also to implement their domestic agendas. By entering the CSTO, the member-states seal a bargain with Russia. The terms of the bargain are simple: the member-state accepts being within Russia’s sphere of influence by not forging deals that would threaten
Russia’s strategic interests. In return, Russia offers packaged deals tailored to the needs of each country and its geostrategic importance. Energy policy, labor migration, customs unions and tax agreements are among the most discussed topics between Russia and the member-states.

However, perhaps the most important issue for the CSTO political elites is Russia’s ability to shield them from external pressures to reform their domestic political systems and institutions to comply with Western democratic principles. In other words, the political leaders of those states trade democracy for their own political security. The CSTO legitimizes their domestic power.

**THE GEO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 ended the Cold War and created 12 new independent political entities on the world map. The states inherited multi-ethnic and multi-religion populations, each identified with a single ethnic group that accounted for the majority of its populace. Although many of the new states had some sort of independence prior to becoming a part of the Soviet Union in the early 20th century, the seventy years of the Soviet rule erased all of their “sovereign institutional memory.” As a result, the leaders of the newly independent states had little experience building a democratic government based on a free market economy; in fact, most of the communist leaders of the FSU countries remained in power or returned to power shortly after independence. The international community, led by the US and EU, provided substantial assistance in building democracy in the FSU countries, as they believed that democracy and free markets would best ensure that the Cold War remains in its grave, a vital national security priority for the Western countries.

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1 The Baltic States declared independence one year earlier.
However, most of the FSU countries failed to complete the transition to democracy successfully. The stalled pace of reforms resulted in economies that are neither socialist nor capitalist. Despite the recent spike in the economic activity, mostly fueled by surging commodity prices, these countries still have high unemployment and income inequality. With a few exceptions, the political systems retain the main aspects of totalitarianism: gross human rights violations and repression. The state-level corruption and poor rule of law result in the alienation of the citizens and mass migration. Belarus, a CSTO member, where many political and economic vices of the past have endured until this day, is arguably the worst case.\(^2\)

The countries also inherited artificial borders, making the region susceptible to ethnic and territorial conflicts. In fact, almost half of the FSU countries have already experienced external and/or internal (ethnic) conflicts. In most of the conflicts, Russia either had a direct or indirect role. As a result, four de facto states - Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Transnistria - currently exist, none of which are recognized by the international community.\(^3\) Interestingly, of all the countries involved in post-Soviet conflicts, Armenia is the only CSTO member.

The impact of the post-Soviet conflicts on the political structures of the involved states is a subject for research on its own. The internal and external conflicts have served as sources of political stability in some states, and as agents of political change in others. The existence of conflicts is important in explaining a country’s motivations to form alliances. Since no peace agreement has so far been reached on any of the above-mentioned conflicts, the de facto states and the frozen conflicts remain the most important security concerns for CSTO member countries and the region in general. For example, in August 2008, after months of diplomatic

tensions between Russia and Georgia, a war broke out between Georgia and South Ossetia. The war lasted only a week; however, it allowed Russia to reinforce its positions in the South Caucasus by increasing its military presence in the region, making the Caucasus region even more unstable.4

In short, many factors make the FSU countries, including the CSTO member states, susceptible to a variety of internal and external conflicts. The proximity of Central Asia to Afghanistan risks a spillover of chaos and violence, plus transnational crime, through the entire region. If Iran is attacked, the Caucasus, being on its border and having many problems of its own, may become a time bomb of instability. The CSTO member states border China and are in close proximity to two other nuclear states, Pakistan and India. Last but not least, the region is rich in energy resources and vital transportation infrastructure corridors.

As mentioned above, the political systems of the FSU countries remain largely totalitarian. Unlike the Soviet Union, many of these countries do not have the natural resources and strong military to support their regimes without jeopardizing national security. At the same time, there are no viable alternatives for such countries: being largely non-democratic, they cannot be admitted to the military alliances led by the Western democracies. A defense alliance with China, another regional power, seems impossible, as the Central Asian countries view China as a national security threat, rather than a possible ally.

On the other hand, Russia retains strong political and economic, as well as cultural and linguistic, influence in these countries. Due to its enormous economic and political weight in the region, as well as the existence of regional unresolved conflicts, Russia has disproportionately large influence. Although the Cold War is over, Russia still considers the FSU its zone of influence, openly opposing affiliation of FSU countries with western structures of which Russia

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4 Ronald D. Asmus. A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West. 2010
is not a member of (e.g., NATO and EU). Despite the massive aid programs and transition efforts by the West, it is Russia who largely sets the standard for governance (as shown in the paper). As a result, the FSU countries tend to mimic or copy the Russian models of “democracy”, “capitalism”, and government.

**THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the newly independent countries had no full-fledged military force. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were home to sizable Soviet military forces and assets, including advanced equipment and weapon systems. All others began a process of forming military forces. The states engaged in ethnic conflicts (i.e., Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) were fighting and forming regular armies simultaneously. These circumstances required a common security framework that would fill the security gap precipitated by the Soviet disintegration. In May 1992, six countries signed the Collective Security Treaty (CST): Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus joined the treaty about six months later. The CST regarded aggression against one member as aggression against all, and banned the signatories from joining other military alliances.

However, not all the members found the CST best fit to their national interests. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan refused to renew their membership, effectively looking for other allies, possibly the United States and NATO. In the case of Azerbaijan and Georgia, the decision not to renew the membership was also a protest against Russia for its “support” of the ethnic separatist movements in the South Caucasus. Currently, the CSTO includes Armenia, Belarus,
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The map on Figure 1 shows the political map of the CSTO member-states.

**Figure 1: Political Map of the CSTO Member-States**


The CST was revamped into the CSTO in October 2002, and has positioned itself as an alternative to the US-led NATO in the region. According to the CSTO Charter, it does not pursue an aggressive policy towards any country, and is a purely defensive military organization. Should any of its members face a military threat or an act of aggression endangering their independence and territorial integrity, the CSTO will provide military support. In 2009, the CSTO members agreed to create a military unit, the rapid reaction forces (RRF), to deflect military aggression and combat international terrorism and drug trafficking. Each CSTO member would contribute a brigade to form the RRF. In 2007, an agreement to create a CSTO

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peacekeeping force was signed with a mandate within the CSTO boundaries, if the stability and internal security of any CSTO state are threatened. Moreover, the CSTO allowed the creation of peacekeeping brigades with international status to operate in any world trouble spot. To ensure preparedness to perform its duties, the CSTO periodically conducts military exercises, called Rubezh, in one of the member states. Last but not least, the CSTO members receive special discounts to purchase Russian weapons.

The CSTO became more active and sought after by its members as a wave of color revolutions swept the region: the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) and the Tulip Revolution in the Kyrgyz Republic (2005). The member states were wary of the color revolutions, allegedly backed by the United States. This fear created renewed motivation to improve relations with Russia. In 2006, for instance, Uzbekistan applied to restore its membership with the CSTO. This move followed a freeze in relations with the United States, who strongly criticized the Andijan massacres.

Uzbekistan’s return opened up some questions as to who is eligible to join the CSTO. The CSTO Charter sets no criteria for a country to qualify except a readiness to fulfil its membership obligations and share the principles of the organization. In 2007, the CSTO secretary-general suggested Iran could join the CSTO. Until the 2010 elections, it was difficult to imagine Ukraine joining the CSTO due to its NATO aspirations. However, the defeat of the pro-European and pro-NATO candidates in the 2010 presidential elections, and the election of pro-Russian leader Victor Yanukovich, signal a major potential shift in the country’s external policy. Therefore, Ukraine may yet become a CSTO member.

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8 The massacre of peaceful protesters in Andijan, Uzbekistan in May 2005, were according to various estimates several thousand people were killed by the government forces. Source: Human Rights Watch
9 Interview with Nicolay Bordyuzha, the CSTO Secretary-General. Found at: www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=5696
A major political change similar to Ukraine will be required in order for Georgia to consider joining any alliance with Russia, especially after the August 2008 war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia is hoping for NATO membership, and anti-Russian sentiments are strong in the country. A lot will depend on the results of the 2012 presidential elections in Georgia, as Mikheil Saakashvili’s final term nears its end.

Azerbaijan and Moldova, on the other hand, are still torn by the ethnic conflicts in Nagorno-Karabagh and Transdnistria, and as a result each has a break-away republic within its official borders. Both countries blame Russia for supporting the existing status quo. Moreover, there is no assurance that CSTO membership would result in Russia having a more favorable position in resolving these conflicts.

In addition to their CSTO membership, some countries are engaged in security cooperation with NATO and the United States, undermining their commitments to the CSTO. For example, Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic host the United States airbases in Karshi-Khanabad and Manas (the Kyrgyzs also host a Russian military base at Kant Airbase). After the political turmoil in the spring of 2010 jeopardized the extension of the contract with the United States for the Manas Air Base, the president of neighboring Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, proposed to President Obama during his visit to the United States that the Americans create a military base in Kazakhstan to replace the one in Manas.\textsuperscript{10} Armenia has been contributing to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq by sending non-combatant troops since 2005, and Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan have granted overflight and emergency landing rights to the U.S. Air Force.\textsuperscript{11} All the CSTO members, including Russia, are also members of the NATO’s Partnership

\textsuperscript{11} Peimani. P. 316
for Peace, actively participating in NATO military exercises. Many of the countries receive military assistance from the US each year, especially since 11 September 2001.

These examples call into question viability of the CSTO as a single military alliance that unites its members. So far the CSTO members have not had to chose between the CSTO and their defensive cooperation with other organizations and countries; however, should the relations between Russia and the West deteriorate, the CSTO members might face some difficult choices. If and when that happens, it would become a litmus test for its members’ commitments to the CSTO.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This paper proposes that the improvement of democratic practices is not a top priority for the political leaders of the CSTO member states. As a result, the CSTO has become a Russian led military alliance of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. Through the CSTO, the member-states want to leverage Russia’s military and political weight to ensure the sustainability of the existing regimes in the member-states. Therefore, CSTO membership is an obstacle to improving democratic practices in the CSTO member states.

The paper argues that over the last decade Russia has consistently supported friendly regimes during the elections in the CSTO member-states, legitimizing the non-democratic regimes, isolating them from the international community, and thereby forcing them to become closer to Russia. As a result, all the CSTO countries have shown a significant drop in their democratic profiles. By finding support in the Russia-led military alliance, the CSTO member-states have little motivation to implement democratic reforms. Moreover, Russia extended its hand when some of the CSTO countries experienced financial meltdowns after the 2008 global
financial crisis, when international institutions, such as the IMF, were imposing strict budgetary and reform pre-conditions before providing lending facilities to these states.

The leaders of the CSTO countries may have other motivations to remain in the organization. For example, if a country has an imminent national security threat, the motivation to be in a defensive alliance with Russia will not solely be driven by the regime’s sustainability. Additionally, if the CSTO membership offers exclusive economic benefits, discussed later, that too could be a good incentive to join the organization. However, it is highly unlikely for a state genuinely interested in democratization to halt democratic reforms indefinitely for the sake of joining the CSTO.

**KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

Several internationally recognized institutions periodically conduct assessments of the degree of democratization, economic freedom, corruption and human development around the world. The assessments used in this paper come from institutions that cover the FSU countries in detail, such as Freedom House, Transparency International, and the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). To minimize bias, at least two sources are used per category. For the purpose of this research, the degree of economic freedom is also regarded as an essential democratic parameter.

The level of democratization cannot be measured quantitatively. It is impossible to apply metrics in estimating the independence of media, and the transparency, efficiency and accountability of the national and local governance. However, there have been many attempts to assign democratization indices and rankings, such as the corruption perception index, or the

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12 Freedom House, founded in 1941, is an international watchdog organization to support expansion of democracy and freedom around the world. More information at www.freedomhouse.org

Transparency International, founded in 1993, is a global civil society organization helping local NGOs fight against corruption, raise awareness, and promote zero tolerance of corruption. More information at www.transparency.org

Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) - is the world's leading resource for economic and business research, forecasting and analysis. It is independent of all governing bodies and corporations. More at www.eiu.com.
degree of economic freedom index, that not only allow comparing the countries by certain
criteria, but apply a notional measurement to assess the dynamics of reforms over time. The term
“ranking” indicates a country’s standing by a certain measured criteria. The term “democratic
profile” denotes changes in democratic practices and their measurements under differing
parameters, such as time. The views on the democratic progress are “opposing” if contradicting
assessments and conclusions are derived on the same process, in this case presidential or
parliamentary elections. The terms authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes, free or partially
free media, internationally recognized standards, etc., are used as defined by the methodology of
the relevant watchdog or international non-government organization (NGO). The detailed
description of the terms can be found in Appendix A.

THE MAIN ARGUMENT

The political leaders of the CSTO use the weight and capabilities of the military alliance as a
protection from outside to ensure the sustainability of their authoritarian political system. In this
section, we argue that the CSTO membership is an obstacle to the improvement of democratic
practices in the member states.

In order to prove our argument, we look into a range of explanatory variables to make causal
inferences. We identify three explanatory variables:

a) The CSTO countries have similar political systems and democracy rankings
b) The democratic profiles of the CSTO countries possess similar dynamics since joining
   the organization

c) Russian-led election monitoring organizations consistently expressed views opposing
   those of the Western or international observers on the progress of democracy and
elections in the CSTO countries.
The sections below elaborate on each of these factors, using independent data sources and
easessments.

*The CSTO countries have similar political systems and democracy rankings.* This is an
important variable that demonstrates that the CSTO is not only an organization with the same
security goals, but also an organization that unites political leadership based on the same
governing principles and political aspirations.

There is no consensus on how to measure democracy, and there are many definitions of
democracy. For the purpose of this paper, the political systems and democratic rankings are
compared through various indexes and rankings assessed by independent sources. To minimize
bias, several comparable sources are considered to triangulate the findings.

Table 1 shows an excerpt from the results of a comprehensive comparative study of
democratic development conducted by the Freedom House, an influential international
independent watchdog monitoring democratic progress around the world. The study considers
seven categories to measure democracy: elections, civil society, media, local and national
governance, judicial system and corruption to derive the Democratic Score (DS) for each
country. The DS is an arithmetic average score of all the categories, and no category has a higher
weight. It is important to also note that the Freedom House rankings should be treated as relative
to other countries. For example, a country with a perfect score of 1.0 may not enjoy perfect
freedom, and also could have problems. However the score of 1.0 shows that the country has
comparably more freedom then others with a higher score.

Based on the DS, the Freedom House further classifies the countries as Free, Partly Free
or Not Free. The countries with average rating of 1.0 to 2.5 are considered “Free”, 3.0 to 5.0
“Partly Free”, and 5.5 to 7.0 “Not Free”.


It is clear from the table, that all the CSTO states have significant problems in all categories: six out of seven members are ranked “Not Free”. With the exception of Armenia, which is considered a semi-consolidated authoritarian system, all the CSTO member-states have “consolidated authoritarian regimes in which basic human rights standards, democratic norms, and the rule of law are absent”. However, although Armenia has a better than average score in all the categories, it is much closer to being classified “Not Free” than “Partly Free”, according to the Freedom house ranking metrics.

Table 1: Freedom House’s 2010 Study on Democratic Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member</th>
<th>Electoral Process</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
<th>Independent Media</th>
<th>National Democratic Governance</th>
<th>Local Democratic Governance</th>
<th>Judicial Framework &amp; Independence</th>
<th>Corruption</th>
<th>Democratic Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average: 6.5  5.6  6.4  6.5  6.2  6.2  6.3  6.2

Source: Freedom House

Note: the ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

In the interest of objectivity and plurality of sources, several other indicators from various international watchdogs are analyzed in addition to the Freedom House study on democratic development of the CSTO member states. Transparency International, the Economic Intelligence Unit, and Heritage Foundation are among most cited organizations that measure different aspects of democracy and market economy.

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The Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) Index of Democracy is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Countries are placed within one of four regime types, based on the calculated overall score: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. The results of the 2008 study are summarized in Table 2 below. The ranking was conducted among 167 countries, with the score ranging from 10 (high ranking) to 1 (low ranking) by categories. Countries are ranked “full democracies” if they score 8.0 to 10.0, “flawed democracies” from 6.0 to 7.9, “hybrid regimes” from 4.0 to 5.9, and “authoritarian” if the score is below 4.0.

**Table 2: The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member</th>
<th>Rank out of 167 Countries</th>
<th>Overall score</th>
<th>Electoral process and pluralism</th>
<th>Government functioning</th>
<th>Political participation</th>
<th>Political culture</th>
<th>Civil liberties</th>
<th>Regime Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Intelligence Unit

Note: the ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest.

The table shows, that according to EIU Index of Democracy, the best performing CSTO country, Russia, is only the 107th in the world, and has serious problems in all categories. The worst performing country, Uzbekistan, is the 164th, ahead of only Turkmenistan, Chad and North Korea. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan scored high on the political culture metric, and very poor on all
other categories, a clear indication that both countries are authoritarian, with the political leader holding absolute power.

The Transparency International (TI) - Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is also a solid measurement tool to measure public sector corruption perceptions in the country. Public sector corruption is important in measuring democracies because it shows the tolerance of the political system to non-democratic (corrupt) practices. If corruption exists, it tends to be multifaceted and spread in all areas of governance.

The TI-CPI has been tested and used widely by both scholars and analysts. The index ranges from 1 to 10, where the higher score represents more positive corruption perception. As in the case of the DS, the CPI is also a comparative tool, and it is created to compare one country relative to the others. The CPI score of 10 does not imply a country that has a perfect public sector free of any corruption. Table 3 shows the relative rankings and index distribution by the CSTO member-states. By this index, the CSTO member-states are among the worst countries in the CPI, ranging from 2.7, or the ranking of 120th in the world (Armenia and Kazakhstan share this ranking) to 1.7, or the 162nd (Uzbekistan).

**Table 3: The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member</th>
<th>Rank out of 180 Countries</th>
<th>CPI Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Transparency International*

*Note: the ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest.*
Based on the assessments and rankings detailed above, it is clear that the CSTO countries have political systems based on similar governing principles, and democracy rankings based on similar, non-democratic, ideological aspirations.

It is important not only to compare the democracy standing of the CSTO countries, but also understand how it has changed over the years, i.e., the dynamics of the democratic profiles of the CSTO countries since their membership to the organization.

The democracy indicators of the CSTO member-states suggest some common trends: all recorded a drop in democracy indicators during the last decade (refer to Figure 2). According to the Freedom House 2010 annual survey, Russia has experienced the biggest drop in democracy scores of all the member-states. In 2002, the year the CSTO was founded, Russia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Armenia were classified at “partly free”; and Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were at the borderline. In 2010 only Armenia has retained its original status. All countries (including Armenia) showed significant deterioration in their democracy rankings, and, as shown above, some of them, such as Uzbekistan, are ranked among the worst democracies in the world.

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14 Walker. P.3.
It is also important to compare the changes of the democratic profiles of the CSTO countries with those of the FSU countries that did not join the organization. Such comparison allows assessing if the membership to the organization had had any adverse impact on the democratic profile. For this comparison, we have chosen only Georgia and Ukraine. All other non-CSTO FSU countries are either very rich in natural resources, and thus do not need Russian political and economic support as much, and consider Russia an economic rival in the region (e.g., Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan). In case of Azerbaijan, it is also not joining the CSTO due to its on-going armed conflict with Armenia (a CSTO member) over the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic. Due to its problem with Russia (over Transnistria) and its aspiration to move closer to Romania and Europe, Moldova has not joined the CSTO. Despite some progress in recent years,
Moldova still struggles with its democratic reforms, and has been classified by Freedom House as a “Partly Free” state. The ratings of all the FSU states are listed in Table A-1 of the Appendix A.

Figure 3: The Democratic Profile of Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Bulgaria and Poland

As shown in Figure 3, Russia’s democratic progress was very similar to that of Ukraine and Georgia up until late 2002, when the CSTO was founded. The “color” revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine started to change the margin between the Russia on one side, and Georgia and

15 In 2010, 70 percent of Moldovans are in favor of joining the European Union, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Found at: www.carnegie.ru/events/?fa=2949
16 Almost all Western European states have a Freedom House Democracy Score of 1.

20
Ukraine on the other. So, if Russia’s democratic progress can be directly correlated to the CSTO member states, it is inversely correlated with that of Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, Georgia.

Interestingly, the former Warsaw Pact allies of Russia show significantly better democracy standings. Although Poland and Bulgaria experienced fluctuations in the democracy indexes over the last decade, their democracy standing exceeds that of Russia and the rest of the FSU countries by a large margin. Both countries are classified “Free” by Freedom House, although their indexes are worse than the average indexes for the EU members.

Other democracy and good governance indicators also favor Georgia and Ukraine over Russia and other CSTO member states. For example, the TI CPI ranking of Georgia improved from 124th in 2003 to 66th in 2009, while Russia’s ranking plummeted to 146th in 2009 from 86th in 2003. The TI CPI rankings of all the FSU states are listed in Table A-2 of the Appendix A.

Based on the analysis detailed above, it is clear that the CSTO countries have similar democratic profile dynamics especially since joining the organization at the end of 2002. Moreover, compared to Georgia and Ukraine (and Moldova to some extent), the CSTO countries have shown a significant deterioration in their democracy rankings, as a result of which two countries (Russia and Kyrgyz Republic) have changed their status from “Partly Free” to “Not Free”.

In order to complete the analysis that would lead to proving the paper’s main argument that CSTO membership is an obstacle to the improvement of democratic practices in the member states, it is necessary to find evidence that Russia or a Russia-led organization has consistently supported the CSTO political regimes, while the international organizations criticized them. The
most measurable and palpable example that contributes to the CSTO’s political system’s retention of power is the election process.

As shown in Table 1 and Table 2 above, electoral processes have been a problem in almost all of the CSTO countries. Not surprisingly, popular uprisings are common in the FSU countries in the aftermath of nation-wide parliamentary or presidential elections. Popular unrest is often based on international election observers’ assessments of the electoral processes in the country. The reasons for this are the following: First, there is no established tradition of power transfer in these countries. A loss in an election may result in the complete dissolution of a political party and persecution of the ruling elites by the victors. Corrupt government practices, as well as the lack of transparency and accountability create personal reasons for the governing elites to fear rotation of power. As a result, the political regimes use administrative resources to control the media and freedom of speech. The media coverage of the elections is usually one-sided, supporting the incumbent political leadership. Therefore, the public is deprived of the means to have impartial assessment of the elections, and the international election observation missions tend to fill that gap.

Second, civil society in most of the FSU is insufficiently developed to resist the return of authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{17} It is not organized and protected to conduct independent election observations. In some countries, the civil society is oppressed, biased, often forced to pick a side in the political battle. Therefore, international institutions, such as the ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), are still perceived in most of the FSU as unbiased organizations, devoted to the spread of democracy and freedom.

In the same month that the CSTO was formed, Russia embarked on the creation of an election observation organization comprising members of the CIS countries. The CIS Election Monitoring Organization (EMO) was formed by the heads of the CIS states by adopting the *Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights, and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Since its creation, the CIS-EMO has observed all elections of the CSTO countries, as well as other FSU states.

Right from the beginning, the CIS-EMO became an important tool for Russia to voice its support for friendly candidates in the CSTO states. It became a rival organization to the OSCE-ODIHR in the FSU countries, rarely agreeing on either the process or the outcome of the elections. Table 4 below shows country-by-country assessments of presidential elections since 2002. The elections were considered fair (denoted “1” in the table), if in their official election assessment statements the OSCE/ODIHR and the CIS-EMO concluded that the elections in the country met international standards. We denote the assessment as “1/2” if the organizations assessed that the elections fell short of international standards, but showed improvement, and “0” if the two assessed the elections fell short of international standards.

The analysis of the table reveals that the CIS-EMO assessed the elections to fall short of international standards only once, in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution of December 2004. In that instance, after days of non-violent demonstrations and marches, the Ukrainian Supreme Court annulled the official run-off results and ordered a repeat of the second round ballot, after which a pro-Western opposition candidate was proclaimed the winner. The OSCE/ODIHR assessed the elections in Ukraine met the international standards. Right after the elections,

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18 In some cases, parliamentary elections were held after 2002, resulting in bigger changes that the presidential elections. In those cases, the election observation results of the parliamentary elections were considered in the Table.
Ukraine declared its withdrawal from the CIS-EMO.\textsuperscript{19} Ukraine's refusal to take part in election monitoring dealt a serious blow to the organization. By contrast, in 2010 both OSCE/ODIHR and CIS-EMO assessed the elections in Ukraine as democratic; however, this time a pro-Russian opposition leader was proclaimed the winner.

In all other elections, the CIS-EMO assessed the elections at the CSTO states to be fair and democratic, while the OSCE/ODIHR called them either non-free or short of international standards. In countries with strong centralized power, the OSCE/ODIHR reports were downgraded by the governments as biased, while the CIS-EMO reports presented as non-biased, thus legitimizing the results of the elections. This was the case in the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, where the OSCE/ODIHR criticized the parliamentary elections, while the CIS-EMO declared the Kyrgyz vote "free and transparent". Large-scale violent demonstrations broke out throughout the country protesting what the opposition called a rigged parliamentary election. As a result of the “Tulip Revolution”, the Kyrgyz president fled the country and a new government was formed.

\textsuperscript{19} Roman Kupchinsky. CIS: Monitoring the Election Monitors. RFERL 2005. Found at: www.rferl.org/content/article/1058234.html
Table 4: Assessment of Elections OSCE vs. CIS-EMO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member</th>
<th>First Presidential Elections since 2002</th>
<th>Second Presidential Elections since 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSCE/ODIHR</td>
<td>CIS-EMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>not invited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>no records found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Election Fairness Metrics: Meets International Standards = 1, Fell short of International Standards, but showed improvement = 1/2, Fell short of International standards = 0*


Georgia and Ukraine are listed for comparison only: they are not CSTO members
* There were no Russian observers in the CIS-EMO mission to Georgia

Starting in 2007, Russia began challenging the right of any outsiders to judge the democratic quality of its elections, as it engaged in developing a 'sovereign democracy' of its own.²⁰ It set preconditions for the OSCE/ODIHR to observe the 2008 presidential elections, but none for the CIS-EMO. Russia first tried to limit the number of observers to only 70, while 400 observed the 2003 parliamentary elections. Second, it delayed the issuance of visas to the observers. As a result, OSCE/ODIHR boycotted the elections in Russia, while the CIS-EMO proclaimed the elections fair and free, fully meeting international standards.

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In the case of the Georgian presidential elections in 2008, Georgia insisted that the CIS-EMO could observe only if there were no Russian nationals in the group. The CIS-EMO criticized the elections, but failed to call it non-democratic.\textsuperscript{21}

It is clear that a Russia-led organization, CIS-EMO, consistently supported the results of elections in the CSTO member states, while international organizations criticized those same events. There were two rare instances when the assessments of the two missions were similar – the Ukraine in 2010 and Georgia in 2008. In the case of Ukraine, a candidate favoring Russia became a president, while in Georgia the CIS-EMO mission did not include any Russian nationals.

Based on the evidence presented above, we conclude that \textit{the CSTO membership is, indeed, an obstacle to the improvement of democratic practices in the member states.}

\textbf{Other Benefits of the CSTO Membership}

Russia’s political support in legitimizing fraudulent elections in the CSTO countries is a key, but not an exclusive membership benefit. The political leaders of the CSTO countries need economic stability to remain in power, and Russia can help them to achieve that goal.

First, Russia is a large export market that offers attractive trading opportunities. Russia has special or simplified customs regimes with the CSTO countries. In July 2010, for example, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus formed a Customs Union (CU), which effectively scrapped the existing customs borders between the three countries.\textsuperscript{22} Since the launch of the CU, Russia has been keen to include new members.

\textsuperscript{21} RiaNovosti article found at: en.rian.ru/world/20080522/108104571.html
\textsuperscript{22} RiaNovosti article found at: en.rian.ru/russia/20100924/160714406.html
Second, Russia hosts as many as 4 million illegal labor migrants, mostly from the CSTO countries. According to some estimates, for example, 20 percent of Tajikistan’s workforce is migratory, most of them working in Russia. The temporary workers send a portion of their income (remittances) to support their families back home. For many CSTO countries remittances from Russia constitute the largest source of financial inflows. Remittances account for up to 50 percent of Tajikistan’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Twenty percent of Armenia’s GDP, or about $2.5 billion, is formed by remittances, 80 percent of which come from Russia.

In the past, Russia has used the existence of labor migrants as a powerful tool to pressure the home countries. For example, after the freeze in the Russian-Georgian relations in 2006, the Russian government started taking actions against Georgia and Georgians living in Russia. By not allowing the Georgian workforce to enter Russia, and by deporting thousands of illegal immigrants, the Russian authorities tried to trigger political instability inside unfriendly Georgia.

Last but not least, Russia is a major energy power most of the CSTO countries depend on for their economic development. Energy dependency is arguably the most significant economic benefit of the CSTO membership. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the Russian Federation, adopted in 2009, describes energy as a power instrument, strengthening Moscow’s influence in the international arena and providing a resource to use as strategic deterrence. The NSS defined energy as a strategic security asset, and mentioned the Central Asia and the Caspian Sea (as well as the Arctic region) as a prime source of energy resources. Russia’s National

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23 Jeremy Bransten. Found at: www.rferl.org/content/article/1060920.html
Energy Strategy, adopted in 2003, declares that Russia views its fuel and energy resources as a foreign policy instrument.\textsuperscript{28}

As a result, over the past decade, Russia’s energy policy has become an integral part of its foreign policy. Russia used its status of a major supplier of energy resources to the FSU countries as a powerful tool to advance its political agenda. It has been acquiring the energy infrastructure (including electricity generation and distribution networks, as well as gas supply to businesses and residencies) in many FSU and European countries. Gazprom, the Russian state-owned energy giant, is the largest or second-largest shareholder in the gas utility companies of Armenia, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, and has been expanding into the gas distribution networks of Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and France.\textsuperscript{29}

For friendly countries, such as the CSTO states, Russia offers special discount on gas prices, while charging a full market price to others, including the unfriendly FSU regimes. Table 5 shows the Russian gas sales prices per thousand cubic meters to various countries in 2008. Armenia and Belarus, both CSTO members, paid only about 30 percent of the European market price of $370 per thousand cubic meters of gas. While other FSU countries listed in the table also paid relatively low prices, those were not nearly as low as the CSTO members. Moreover, in 2009 and 2010, the gas prices charged to the non-CSTO FSU countries were significantly increased, bringing closer to the European market prices. For example, in 2010 Ukraine paid $234 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas.\textsuperscript{30}

The above-mentioned economic benefits of the CSTO membership complement the political benefits, creating multi-layer dependencies from Russia. Therefore, by joining the CSTO the political leaders of the countries not only secure Russia’s military support in the event of aggression, but also obtain significant political and economic support vital for the existence of their political regimes.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that Russia has various leverages through which it is capable of influencing political and economic developments in the CSTO countries. Russia’s military power, size of its economy relative to most of its neighbors, and vast energy resources make it a strong economic and political power. Taking into account the role Russia plays in the region through the CSTO and other political organizations, it is essential to have Russia’s engagement in matters involving the CSTO states. At the same time, Russia’s tendency to support non-popular and autocratic regimes in the FSU countries has negatively impacted the process of democratization and development in newly independent states.
Overall, however, the foreign policies should be directed at engaging Russia and offering economic and military security alternatives to the CSTO countries. Russia is the driving force of the democratic or non-democratic culture, as shown in the analysis above, and that is why Russia’s democratization should be a top priority. I offer the following two policy recommendations:

**Offer security alternatives and real economic incentives to those CSTO members making significant progress in their democratic reforms.** The US should stress that the CSTO countries can have a place in the Euro-Atlantic family; however, serious structural reforms are required to fight corruption, ensure government accountability and transparency, free elections and civil liberties. Technical assistance, military training, and cooperation with NATO to improve country’s defense capabilities are just a few of the options the U.S. can consider in its policy towards the CSTO member states. At the same time, it should be clear for the states that democratic reforms have no alternatives for integration with the international community.

**Bring the CSTO and Russia deeper into the existing European treaties and institutions on terms that advance both Eurasian and transatlantic interests.** The United States and its allies should prioritize existing institutions and treaties as ways to advance relations with Russia, including recognizing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a vital Eurasian security framework, supporting the OSCE’s work on human rights and its democracy-promotion mechanisms.

Democratization of the FSU states is an important foreign policy objective. If the political leaders of the CSTO countries are in the defensive alliance for Russia’s political “protectionism” of non-democratic leaders, then the foreign policy should be directed at warning the CSTO
member states about the negative consequences of such actions. It should be clear that the Cold War practices are no longer acceptable in the modern world.
## Table A-1: Freedom House’s 2010 Study on Democratic Development – FSU States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member (non-shaded cells)</th>
<th>Electoral Process</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
<th>Independent Media</th>
<th>National Democratic Governance</th>
<th>Local Democratic Governance</th>
<th>Judicial Framework &amp; Independence</th>
<th>Corruption</th>
<th>Democratic Score</th>
<th>Country Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6.0</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<td>6.9</td>
<td>Not Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>Moldova</td>
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<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Partly Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Freedom House  
Note: the ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

## Table A-2: The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2003 vs.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSTO Member (non-shaded cells)</th>
<th>Rank out of 180 Countries</th>
<th>CPI Score 2003</th>
<th>CPI Score 2009</th>
<th>Rank out of 133 Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
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<td>158</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.4</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Transparency International  
Note: the ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest.
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