

Belarus Tajikistan
Latvia Estonia
Uzbekistan Moldova Armenia

STRATEG EAST
WESTERNIZATION
INDEX
2022

Azerbaijan Georgia
Turkmenistan Kazakhstan
Ukraine Lithuania
Kyrgyzstan

Belarus Tajikistan
Latvia **Estonia**
Uzbekistan Moldova Armenia

STRATEGEAST
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Kyrgyzstan

ABOUT STRATEG EAST



StrategEast Center for a New Economy has the mission to reinforce the values of the rule of law and private property protection in Eurasian and Baltic countries through the transition from natural resource based to knowledge-driven economies.

Our work is focused on the 14 countries that proclaimed or restored their independence following the collapse of the USSR: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

StrategEast is a registered 501(c)3 organization based in the United States with the regional offices in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

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INTRODUCTION



Photo by Alexander Kozachenko

I am delighted to present the third edition of the StrategEast Westernization Index – a unique biannual study providing a comprehensive snapshot of Westernization in post-Soviet Eurasia.

Over the past four years, the Index has become a useful tool for international financial institutions, global development agencies, governments, and think tanks, both in Eurasian region and in the West.

This year, the Index is being released under extraordinary and tragic circumstances. On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a

full-scale war against Ukraine, the largest military conflict seen in Europe since World War II. The war's impact went well beyond Ukraine, affecting nearly all the countries of Eurasian region that we study in our Index.

Russian troops launched attacks on Ukraine from Belarusian territory. Moldova is facing a direct threat of invasion. The Kremlin has issued intimidating statements against the Baltic states, which provide Ukraine with significant support. Russia continues to drag Eurasian countries that are members in the pro-Russian CSTO military alliance into the conflict, as well.

Sanctions imposed by Western countries have significantly changed the structure of the Belarusian economy, completely altered the supply chains of goods, and impacted the movement of people living in countries of the region. Refugees from Belarus, and in some cases the entire staff of IT companies, have fled to Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other countries of the region. These countries have also accepted substantial numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

As for Ukraine, the indicators measured in our Index underwent unprecedented changes in a matter of days: the European Parliament voted to

grant Ukraine EU candidate country status; half the Ukrainian economy disappeared overnight; and changes were made to a significant number of laws and regulations.

Needless to say, current events will inevitably have a significant impact on Westernization levels in most Eurasian countries, but we cannot estimate what indicators were affected until a ceasefire is in place. This study reflects on the state of Eurasian countries as of December 31, 2021.

We had finished our work in mid-February and were about to publish the Index, just days after the war broke out. What happened next forced us to make a tough decision: should we update the Index accordingly, wait for the end of the war, or cancel this year's publication altogether?

Eventually, we decided to publish the Index in its initial form, which did not consider the fallout from the war. We made that choice for the sake of both the past and the future. By preserving how the region looked immediately prior to so many drastic changes as we release our next Index after the war, we will be able to compare these indicators and see exactly how the war between Russia and Ukraine has affected Eurasia's Westernization.

Sincerely,
Anatoly Motkin,
President of StrategEast



INDEX METHODOLOGY

HOW THE SCORE IS DETERMINED

Westernization is a process of social change whereby societies adopt Western patterns of political development, legal functioning, economic relations, cultural discourse, and lifestyle. The Westernization Index is a tool aimed at measuring the level to which post-Soviet countries and societies, with the exception of the Russian Federation, have adopted, accepted, or were permeated by Western culture in all key areas for each country. The Index is based on a series of elements and benchmarks that helped us assess the adoption and implementation of the Western model by looking at five key areas:

1. Political Westernization.
2. Economic Westernization.
3. Legal Westernization.
4. Language and cultural Westernization.
5. Lifestyle Westernization.

We limited the Index to the five areas we believe are most critical to examine, although we accept that we could have expanded this to include even more areas for a more robust analysis. Each area (which has multiple sub-areas) is weighted differently within the Index to capture the relative importance of each sector to the overall Western transition. The weight of each of the first three areas is 25%, the fourth 15%, and the fifth 10%. The maximum possible score is 100%, which represents full Westernization.

The Index is based on two complementary types of analysis. First, we rely on qualitative expert assessments provided by our researchers, and second, on quantitative data publicly available from open sources. These two methodologies are combined in order to reflect countries' complete Westernization status. Our organization partnered with local experts in each country who authored the qualitative assessments, and a local research think tank, the New Europe Center, which compiled the data used.

In order to ensure that the experts' analysis is consistent across countries, common guidelines and data sources are used in reports and evaluations. Based on these guidelines and the combined quantitative and qualitative data, experts assigned scores within each sub-area. These scores were then reviewed in two steps: first by the project coordination team, and then by the third-party expert. The two-tier review is meant to decrease the likelihood of subjectivity and to ensure that the data are comparable.

Scoring was carried out through a multistage process which included analytical contributions from different research teams to ensure a balanced scoring process. The experts preparing country profiles calculated and suggested preliminary scores according to strict indicators. The proposed points were reviewed and adjusted independently by two research teams in the New Europe Center and StrategEast. This made it possible to unbundle the research and scoring process and calibrate and weight scores in order to avoid any possible bias from the country experts.

The scoring process is based on the tested methodology used in the Nations in Transit Report by Freedom House and the Bertelsmann Transformation Index by Bertelsmann Foundation. The scores reflect the consensus of each section's author, the StrategEast research team, the New Europe Center research team, and reviewers and academic advisers. In cases when consensus was not reached, the score was decided by the New Europe Center and StrategEast.

The overall process was organized into four phases, beginning with data collection and experts' assessment. Second, the data and qualitative analysis are subjected to the two-step review. Third, changes are made to each country profile to ensure that the data and the scores are comparable. Fourth, the data and the assessment are analyzed and compared across all countries and sectors to ensure that all trends, similarities, and differentiations are identified.

The Westernization Index was developed by a team of over 20 people, including experts from the countries studied and the project management group.

WESTERNIZATION INDEX SCORING RUBRIC

POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION, 25 POINTS

DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM, 10 PTS

High: 8–10 | Mid: 3–7 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (8–10) indicates:

- Free and fair elections
- High levels of media and press freedom
- No restrictions to new political party formation/registration

PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN THE PARLIAMENT, 8 PTS

High: 6–8 | Mid: 3–5 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (6–8) indicates:

- Parliamentary parties support European integration
- Parliamentary parties support NATO integration
- Parliamentary parties support trade with Western powers

PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, 7 PTS

High: 6–7 | Mid: 3–5 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (6–7) indicates:

- Public opinion polls indicate high support for EU integration
- Public opinion polls indicate high support for NATO
- Public opinion favors strong alliances with Western powers

LEGAL WESTERNIZATION, 25 POINTS

CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- High level of compliance with the Venice Commission’s international standards
- Close cooperation and engagement with the Venice Commission and its recommendations

INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS, 7 PTS

High: 6–7 | Mid: 3–5 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (6–7) indicates:

- A strong, independent judiciary system with little corruption or external pressure from political actors
- A high ranking on the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index

HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- Legislation protecting human rights
- Enforcement of legal human rights protections
- Favorable reviews from human rights organizations

NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (6–7) indicates:

- Judges display a willingness to conflict with prior prosecutions in appropriate situations, rather than simply duplicating indictments

ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION, 25 POINTS

EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION, 7 PTS

High: 6–7 | Mid: 3–5 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (6–7) indicates:

- Membership in the European Union
- Membership in the World Trade Organization

EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- High ranking on the Index of Economic Freedom
- High ranking on the Corruption Perception Index

WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- Major trading partner with Western nations and the EU

WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY’S ECONOMY, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- Support for Western foreign direct investment (FDI)
- Western FDI contributes a major portion of total FDI

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION, 15 POINTS

USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE, 2 PTS

High: 2 | Mid: 1 | Low: 0

A “High” score (2) indicates:

- The country’s native language uses a Latin script
- English signage is frequently used in public

PROFICIENCY IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST, 6 PTS

High: 5–6 | Mid: 2–4 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (5–6) indicates:

- Proportion of the population proficient in the most common languages of the West (English, German, French, Spanish)
- Government promotes the study of foreign languages

SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION’S MOVIE THEATRES AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER), 7 PTS

High: 6–7 | Mid: 3–5 | Low: 0–2

A “High” score (6–7) indicates:

- Western TV dominates airtime
- Western movies dominate cinema showings
- Widespread use of Western social media channels like Facebook
- Western social media is not blocked by the government

LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION, 10 POINTS

PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES, 5 PTS

High: 4–5 | Mid: 2–3 | Low: 0–1

A “High” score (4–5) indicates:

- High share of the population has traveled to the West
- High share traveling abroad for business or education
- High share traveling abroad for vacation

PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES, 3 PTS

High: 3 | Mid: 1–2 | Low: 0

A “High” score (3) indicates:

- Strong presence of Western restaurants and fast-food chains
- Strong presence of Western supermarket chains
- Strong presence of Western clothing brands

MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE, 2 PTS

High: 2 | Mid: 1 | Low: 0

A “High” score (2) indicates:

- A high share of the country has smartphones
- A high share regularly access Internet on their phone

WHY THIS STUDY DOES NOT INCLUDE RUSSIA

While academic and research interest in Russia has always been significant, such interest in other former Soviet states has been limited. By focusing on all other post-Soviet countries with the exception of Russia, StrategEast's Westernization Index is intended to help generate balanced and multi-faceted attention on the region. By excluding Russia, we do not assume that Russia is more or less Westernized than other post-Soviet states and societies. Rather, the objective is to draw attention to all other former Soviet countries and to the development they have undergone since the collapse of the USSR.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Every Index, including this one, has certain methodological limitations which are inevitable and derive from the difficulties described below. However, the goal is not to cover every possible aspect of Westernization in the countries of the former USSR, but rather to analyze major trends and create a propitious foundation for robust and in-depth research in the future. Further, the report aims to create a more informed basis for policy debate about how to support the transition in the post-Soviet countries and increase attention to the region. We encourage readers to use this Index with these points in mind.

While writing this report, the research team identified several issues that posed challenges to comparing certain data and trends. These include the following:

YEAR/PERIOD COVERED BY THE DATA

Certain authors proposed data covering all of 2020; others gave figures for the first half or first quarter of 2021. For example, this inconsistency is visible in the data on investments, trade, and other areas that require concrete data. Thus, it should be noted that the report does not provide data for the entirety of 2021, since the data were not yet released at the time of analysis. While the authors focus their analysis primarily on the trends of recent years, they also cover the effects of Westernization which were caused by events that took place much earlier (for example, in the 1990s).

DATA ON FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) BY ORIGIN

Although the authors refer to the official data provided by statistics offices, this data does not specify when FDI is actually the result of domestic money reinvested through countries with a special fiscal regime such as Cyprus, the Netherlands, or Austria. This may explain the high levels of FDI in certain countries, and the experts give their own perspective on the (re-invested) FDI in the report.

LACK OF DATA ON CERTAIN CRITERIA

There is no data from certain countries, e.g., Turkmenistan, on knowledge of foreign languages. Therefore, the author for Turkmenistan had to rely on observations and other related trends in the country. For the other countries, the English Proficiency Index provides data on foreign language skills.

LACK OF DATA FOR ALL COUNTRIES

Some data used in the Index comes from sources that do not include all 14 countries in the post-Soviet region. For example, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan were not included in the 2021 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index and therefore the authors had to rely on other data.

DIFFERENT SOURCES OF PUBLIC OPINION DATA

We encountered a similar problem when measuring public opinion of Western civilization. While all the authors have provided data about citizens' attitudes towards the West, these data are derived from different types of surveys. Moreover, the questions are often asked differently from one country to the next. Since there is no survey that covers the entire post-Soviet region and uses the same methodology, we had to use the most appropriate source for each country.

LACK OF EXTERNAL SOURCES

Several authors could not cite external sources for data in the entertainment field (for example, the number of US or European films in cinemas or on TV). The markets in these countries may be too small to be analyzed by monitoring media/communications companies. In these situations, we chose to rely on the observations made by local authors who are deeply familiar with the situations in their home countries.

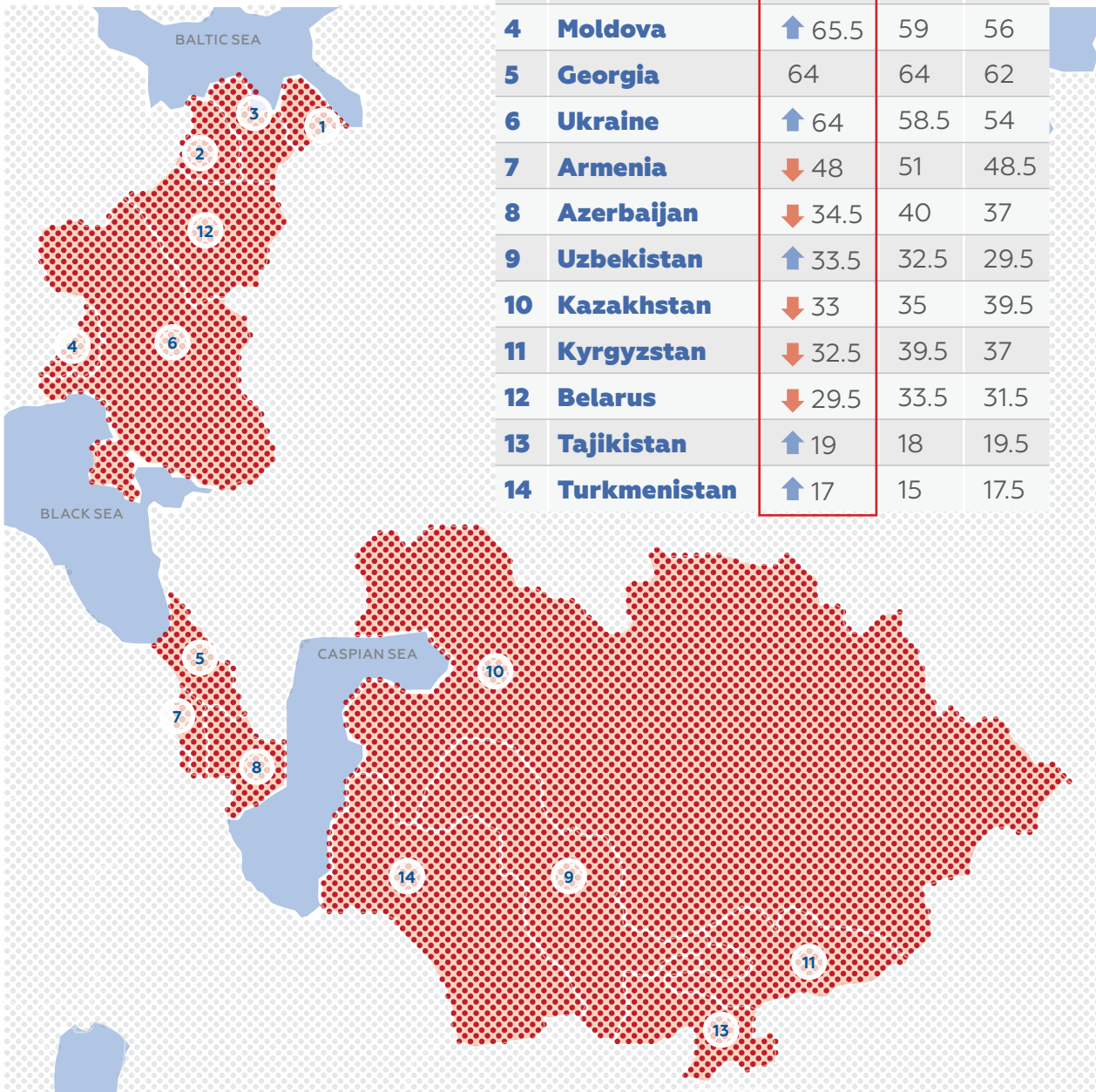
In some very rare and exceptional cases, the authors obtained information from informal discussions with officials, but they are not able to refer to the data since there was no agreement on citation. Moreover, in some cases it is difficult to cite a source for a certain observation or phenomenon. Countries like Ukraine or Lithuania benefit from various news sources and a diverse media environment. In the case of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, however, there are fewer sources providing reliable data on a daily basis.

QUANTIFICATION OF TRAVEL TO WESTERN COUNTRIES

Producing consistent data on Western travel represents another methodology issue. Considering that a large number of travelers use air transportation, and the majority of them use multiple connecting flights, there is no reliable data regarding travelers' final destinations. Many people from the post-Soviet region travel for work and not necessarily for tourism. Also, the figures provided might include multiple trips by the same person, which could be misleading.

SUMMARY OF 2022 EDITION

SCORES
(BASED ON A 1-100 SCALE)



WESTERNIZATION INDEX,
BY CATEGORY, POINTS

		Political out of 25	Legal out of 25	Economic out of 25	Language and Cultural out of 15	Lifestyle out of 10
1	Estonia	22.5	23	25	13.5	9
2	Lithuania	22.5	20	25	13.5	8.5
3	Latvia	21.5	20.5	24.5	13.5	9
4	Moldova	18.5	13.5	16.5	10.5	6.5
5	Georgia	18.5	14	17	9.5	5
6	Ukraine	18.5	13	15	10.5	7
7	Armenia	11.5	11.5	12	9	4
8	Azerbaijan	5	4	12	9	4.5
9	Uzbekistan	6	8,5	7	7	5,5
10	Kazakhstan	4.5	5.5	12.5	6.5	4
11	Kyrgyzstan	7.5	8	8	6	3
12	Belarus	4.5	4	8	7.5	5.5
13	Tajikistan	4	3	5	4.5	2.5
14	Turkmenistan	2.5	3	4	5	2.5



CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS

REGIONAL MEGATRENDS

An imaginary “Westernization border” is emerging across the region. The dividing lines are growing as some countries become more closed off and limit freedoms in order to preserve their power. Others, on the contrary, have relaxed their regimes to support economic development. The region is more unstable than it was two years ago. Today, Belarus is deeply divided as it faces a political crisis. Armenia and Azerbaijan recently went to war, which resulted in redrawing of borders. Kyrgyzstan underwent yet another revolution, which followed with the concentration of power in the hands of just one person. Tajikistan is more vulnerable than it was, due to the regime change in Afghanistan. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia still face Russian-sponsored conflicts on their soil. Only the Baltic states represent an island of stability and democracy. However, in addition to instability, if we zoom out and analyze the region as the whole, one could notice several megatrends that are either new developments or changes that have become more intense than they were just a few years earlier. It goes without saying that developments in the region were above all marked by the **Covid-19 pandemic**, which is in itself a **crosscutting megatrend**. In turn, Covid-19 resulted in megatrends such as (1) shrinking trade and investments, (2) reduced mobility, (3) increased digitalization, and (4) a decline in democracy.

SHRINKING TRADE AND INVESTMENTS

The rapid spread of Covid-19 resulted in a pandemic with serious consequences for the entire region. For many countries, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were more harming than the economic crisis in the late 2000s. Many businesses suffered from the pandemic, and some even closed. The low rate of business activity is also illustrated by the lower trade turnover in almost all countries of the region, including Ukraine, Tajikistan, and Moldova, to name just a few.

Trade patterns were widely replicated in investment volume. Foreign direct investments (FDI) dropped in most countries. There was a threefold

decrease of FDI in Azerbaijan,¹ a 50% decrease in Tajikistan,² and a tenfold decrease of investments in Moldova.³

It is interesting that highly democratic and digitalized countries such as Estonia managed to keep FDI high despite the pandemic. Investment rates in Estonia are likely connected with the digital sector, which has been on the rise while most traditional sectors suffered during the pandemic.

In order to alleviate the economic impact of the pandemic, countries with authoritarian regimes have tended to make steps towards liberalizing certain economic activities. These countries, among others, include Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. The first two have made efforts for several years to be economically attractive despite their democratic shortcomings, while Tajikistan is a newcomer, having opened a single window registration system for investors (although in reality this proved to not really be a single window). Even Turkmenistan, which is traditionally a frosty neutralist that studiously avoids any alliances, declared it was willing to join the WTO. Therefore, the drop in trade and investments is prompting certain reforms, even in some of the region’s most closed-off countries.

REDUCED MOBILITY

All countries have experienced a sharp drop in mobility due to the pandemic, which curtailed international travel. Planes were grounded and borders were closed in most of the countries, until they were able to partially reopen and enforce testing and vaccine rules. For most countries of the region, access to the best vaccines against Covid-19 was very challenging, with the exception of the Baltic countries, which bought vaccines through the EU, especially during the early stages of the vaccine rollout. Most countries of the region were able to access free vaccines through COVAX. Additionally, the EU has been financially supporting most countries from the region with funds to overcome the consequences of the pandemic. Despite the relative access to the vaccines, most countries of the region, with the exception of the Baltic countries, are way below the EU/US average in terms of vaccination rates.

Reduced mobility also seriously disrupted the tourism industry. Both domestic tourism and tourist companies offering travel abroad were severely impacted. For example, the number of tourists coming to Azerbaijan was almost six times smaller than it was prior to the pandemic; Latvians traveled 71.5% less in 2020 than they did in 2019. All countries have shown negative trends in this area.

INCREASED DIGITALIZATION

Although it might seem that Covid-19 has only brought negative impacts, in fact there are also positive developments. Digitalization is one of the industries to experience accelerated growth due to Covid-19. All countries report high access to mobile services, including Internet access, though not all the countries use the full potential of connectivity and Internet access for public services. Traditionally, Estonia is leading digitalization in the region. However, if we were to choose an example to study, Ukraine would be the most suitable case study. It was the first country in the region to digitalize many services such as driver's licenses, car insurance, student ID cards, and the ability to pay taxes, fines, etc. Ukraine is also the first country in the world to introduce a digital ID which is equivalent to the traditional physical ID card. Covid-19 hit the traditional economy but increased e-commerce, in countries such as Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, to name just a few. E-commerce transformed many businesses as they moved online and reduced the burden of being physically tied to a certain place. But technology is also giving a serious headache to authoritarian leaders. Because the Internet is facilitating pluralism and weakens state control over information flows, some states are increasingly worried about controlling information flows and social networks. Some countries, such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, allegedly used the infamous Pegasus spyware to spy on members of the opposition, journalists, and activists. In order to tighten control, more than half of countries studied here are implementing various restrictions on the use of certain Internet sources and social networks, which only expand the freedom of speech by representing a platform for both debate and information. One recent example of this is Uz-

bekistan. The Freedom on the Net 2021 rating estimates⁴ that 75% of the world's Internet users live in countries where individuals have been arrested or imprisoned for posting content on political, social or religious issues.

Social networks are a fascinating area of digitalization. Currently, Western social networks notably dominate in all countries. Four years ago, Russian social networks competed on equal footing with Western networks in most of the countries in this study. Today, however, Russian networks are almost marginalized. For example, just four years ago, Odnoklassniki had twice as many users as Facebook in Moldova – these days, that Russian network has lost its relevance. The only social network capable of competing with Western networks is China's TikTok, which is on the rise.

DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY

Participation in democratic processes has decreased in part due to Covid-19. In some countries that have held elections, there was a drop in voter turnout. In the latest parliamentary elections in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, and Moldova, turnout was below 50% in all the four cases. Some countries, however, did not experience this phenomenon, while others, such as Lithuania, tried to address this issue by introducing e-voting.

The pandemic also represented an instrument to limit the freedoms across countries. In Azerbaijan, the pandemic was used as an excuse to further limit the opposition from being politically active, as protests and other political activities were banned. Other countries, such as Kazakhstan and Belarus followed. A very "innovative" approach was put in motion by the authorities of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, which for some time continued to deny the existence of Covid-19 in their countries. This turned into harassment intimidation of doctors and medical personnel who insisted otherwise.

Overall, the region's decline of democracy mirrors international trends cited by Freedom House⁵, namely that more states are becoming not free. In 2020, the number of "not free" countries increased to 54 (from 45 in 2005), while the number of "free" countries decreased to 82 (from 89 in 2005).

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION

POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION, POINTS OUT OF 25

Estonia	22.5
Lithuania	22.5
Latvia	21.5
Georgia	18.5
Moldova	18.5
Ukraine	18.5
Armenia	11.5
Kyrgyzstan	7.5
Uzbekistan	6
Azerbaijan	5
Belarus	4.5
Kazakhstan	4.5
Tajikistan	4
Turkmenistan	2.5

1.1 DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM

The region has witnessed a turbulent political environment over the last two years. Some countries, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Moldova held preterm parliamentary elections. Serious concerns about free and fair elections were raised in the case of Azerbaijan, and to some extent, in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, Armenian elections saw increased polarization, while the elections in Moldova were assessed as being widely in line with legislation and democratic practice.

In terms of regular elections, Belarus requires special attention, since the presidential elections were considered fraudulent and were followed by extreme polarization, mass protests, and political persecution. The 2020 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan were peaceful but serious doubts have been raised about these elections. Out of the seven parties that entered parliament in Tajikistan, none represent the opposition. To the same extent, the presidential elections in Uzbekistan were criticized for lacking any real alternative for voters. At the same time, authorities mimicked a pluralist environment by allowing other candidates to participate in the debates. The multiparty system often exists only on paper in the region, despite being envisaged in legislation.

Within the region, Estonia, along with Latvia and Lithuania, held onto their leading positions, as in previous editions of the Index. As of now, only these three countries have managed to prove their political system is healthy, competitive, and sustainable, despite having some small issues here and there. These include keeping high democracy standards, although all three countries also face difficulties with certain populist parties. However, it is important that these issues are managed within a democratic process that does give the impression of limitations on political freedoms.

Lower levels of political freedom are recorded in countries such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, which traditionally are located between the best and worst performers. All the free countries experience some limitation on political freedoms, but in general, elections are free and fair, an opposition exists, and it has the tools it needs to act, while the media enjoy a certain degree of pluralism despite often politically

TABLE 1.1
Degree of Political Freedom
Points, out of 10

Estonia	9.5
Latvia	8.5
Lithuania	8.5
Moldova	7
Ukraine	7
Armenia	6
Georgia	6
Kyrgyzstan	3.5
Uzbekistan	2
Kazakhstan	1.5
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	0.5

exposed ownership. Ukraine managed to keep its score at 7 points, Moldova saw a slight improvement from 6.5 points to 7 points, while Georgia went down by 1 point (from 7 to 6) due to the political turmoil that Tbilisi has faced over the last two years.

Additionally, scores dropped to a certain degree in Armenia, and more significantly in Kyrgyzstan. The case of Armenia is directly related to the consequences of the war with Azerbaijan. The election campaign became very polarized and emotional, with increasingly inflammatory rhetoric and personal attacks, which hindered the policy debate.

More serious issues were noted in Kyrgyzstan, which scored significantly lower than two years ago. The change is related to the violent protests, the annulment of the parliamentary elections, and the concentration of power by the incumbent president, who seized power and transformed the country into a full-fledged presidential republic.

Turkmenistan, where all kind of political freedoms were suppressed, had the lowest score overall. Moreover, the Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov was elected as an MP (which is legally prohibited) and then also became the Speaker of Parliament – thereby concentrating all power in his own hands.

Compared to two years ago, the level of political freedom has dropped and more countries are now vulnerable.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT

The most stable quasi majority of pro-Western parties in parliament is observed in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. This is no big surprise, since all the three countries are members of the EU and NATO. Currently, the pro-Western majority has been unbreakable and even populist parties that have tried to portray themselves as neutral have been unable to change that situation. Still, some separate opinions on the West do exist in Estonia, with the EKRE party, which often criticized the EU for federalist tendencies and intervention in Estonia's domestic affairs. In Latvia, the Harmony party has 23 out of 100 seats in parliament and is known for having ties with Russia. Lately, Harmony has made great efforts to rid itself of this image, and in public discourse portrays itself as neither anti-EU, nor anti-Western. We can confidently say that Lithuania has the highest pro-Western concertation in parliament. The 2020 parliamentary elections were a fiasco for various nationalist and Eurosceptic parties.

The Associated Trio countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – are very close to the Baltic states, and have well-de-

TABLE 1.2
Pro-Western Parties in the Parliament
Points, out of 8

Lithuania	7.5
Estonia	7
Latvia	7
Georgia	6.5
Moldova	6.5
Ukraine	6.5
Armenia	2.5
Kyrgyzstan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Kazakhstan	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	1

veloped and close relations with the West, in addition to being associated with the EU following the signing of Association Agreements. The pro-Western MPs in these three countries hold a comfortable majority in parliament, although, as recent experience shows, having a pro-Western majority in parliament has proven to be insufficient for implementing genuine reforms. Of the three countries, Georgia is showing signs that its pro-Western majority is subject to political conjuncture, since it was reported that some of members of the ruling party were engaged in anti-Western propaganda. In Ukraine, on the contrary, the ruling party and parliament appear to be more united around pro-Western ideas, specifically membership in NATO and EU, than they were two years ago. The only significant actor that spoils the pro-Western image of Ukraine is the Opposition Platform party, which is partially led by Viktor Medvedchuk, a close ally of Vladimir Putin. Unlike Ukraine and Georgia, which had scored high even in the previous Indices, Moldova only saw high scores in this year's Index. The reason is the snap parliamentary elections held in July 2021, in which parliament got a solid pro-Western majority with the victory of the Party of Action and Solidarity, which is informally led by Maia Sandu.

In the remaining countries, pro-Western voices in parliaments are either singular or do not exist. The mood in some countries is palpably anti-Western.

Armenia, which is at the significant distance from the leaders, has a parliamentary majority formed by the Civic Contract party. That party has a high propensity towards rapprochement with the West. At the same time, in practice, as we saw from its predecessor party, My Step, there is little reason to label this party as a pro-Western party. There are some sympathies towards the West, but these are also constrained by the security context in which Armenia finds itself.

In case of the other countries, the vast majority of parliaments echo pro-Russian narratives and anti-Western messages. On top of this, Azerbaijan often accuses Western institutions of interfering in its domestic affairs. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are aligned with Russia and are members of the Eurasian Economic Union, which also implies loyalty towards Kremlin policy. Countries like Uzbekistan have a greater interest towards some Western cooperation, especially when it comes to the economy. But in practice, the parliament is widely dependent on a political leadership that made the decision to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union.

The parliaments of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan traditionally exist in their own bubble and are certainly not pro-Western, although they also do not express any anti-Western attitudes. Belarus falls in the same group, though lately it has become highly toxic towards the West.

TABLE 1.3
Public Opinion of Western Civilization
Points, out of 7

Lithuania	6.5
Estonia	6
Georgia	6
Latvia	6
Moldova	5
Ukraine	5
Armenia	3
Azerbaijan	3
Belarus	2.5
Kazakhstan	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Tajikistan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Turkmenistan	1

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Public opinion in these countries perceives the West quite positively and often more positively than citizens' own governments. Although the West is also seen as a political actor, it is above all viewed as an economic power, which explains the region's sympathy towards the West despite diverging views on political issues and big power politics.

For such countries as Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Ukraine the West is the most trusted partner and tops public opinion sympathies. In these countries, there is majority support for the EU, with support for the EU at 83% and for NATO at 78% in countries like Georgia. It is difficult to find such support even within the EU, with the exception of Lithuania, which supports NATO by 84%. Quite often, support for the West and support for Russia are mutually exclusive, therefore, public opinion of Russia is not high in these countries.

In Armenia and Belarus, public opinion towards the West is sympathetic, despite a lack of any integration ambitions. To a lesser extent, there is some sympathy in Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan; this trend is also emerging in Uzbekistan. But in all these countries, the West does not even come close among the public's first preferences. Kazakhstan is rather neutral to anti-Western rhetoric when it comes to public opinion and there is a notable economic interest in the West.

Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are two countries where the opinion polls on the perception of the West are not carried out. Therefore, it is difficult to give an evidence-based assessment of the image of the West in these countries.

Aside from the West and Russia, the country that continually appears among the sympathies of the public opinion in these countries is China. This is mainly the case of the Central Asian countries and some countries of the South Caucasus. This year, China was not mentioned as often as two years ago, however, there is no clear-cut evidence that China is lower among the preferences.

A new country which is being mentioned more frequently among the preferences this year is Turkey. The emergence of Turkey as a regional power is felt in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine, to name just a few.

One observation from comparing perception in public opinion and states' foreign policy preferences is that in countries with higher democracy scores, government foreign policy activities are to a greater extent in line with public opinion, whereas in authoritarian countries, these two categories are often disconnected.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION

LEGAL WESTERNIZATION, POINTS OUT OF 25

Estonia	23
Latvia	20.5
Lithuania	20
Georgia	14
Moldova	13.5
Ukraine	13
Armenia	11.5
Uzbekistan	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	8
Kazakhstan	5.5
Azerbaijan	4
Belarus	4
Tajikistan	3
Turkmenistan	3

2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION

The Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – have kept a steady lead when it comes to legal Westernization. The situation in these states significantly exceeds the rest of the post-Soviet countries in several legal indicators. Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova represent an intermediate camp – on the one hand, they are decisively struggling with shortcomings in human rights and judicial independence, though this struggle is not bringing about quick and desired results.

Kyrgyzstan stands out as the most progressive country in Central Asia, according to many indicators. In Eastern Europe, Belarus has drawn a lot of attention as its legal Westernization rating slipped following controversial presidential elections.

According to the cooperation with the Venice Commission indicator, countries of the post-Soviet region can be divided into several groups. The first group is the Baltic states, which generally do not have fundamental problems in their dialogue with the Venice Commission. Another group includes countries that value the opinion of foreign experts but are not always ready to listen to external advice (Georgia, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova). Several countries demonstratively ignore advice from the Venice Commission, though cooperation between the authorities and this institution still continues (Kyrgyzstan, Belarus). Finally, there are countries that avoid any contact with the Venice Commission at all (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan).

Recently, introducing new amendments to national constitutions has become a trend in the post-Soviet region. However, the countries that decide to change their constitutions do not always heed the advice of the Venice Commission. In some cases, Venice Commission experts have pointed out that the authorities' opponents were excluded from the process of drawing up a new constitution. At the same time, some governments have attempted to legitimize this constitutional process by holding a referendum. In these cases, the opinions of foreign experts (including those of the Venice Commission) were blatantly ignored.

Over the past two years, four countries have decided to change their constitutions – Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and

TABLE 2.1
Constitutional Compliance with the
Requirements of the Venice Commission
Points, out of 6

Estonia	6
Lithuania	6
Latvia	5.5
Armenia	5
Ukraine	5
Moldova	4.5
Georgia	3
Kyrgyzstan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Kazakhstan	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	1

TABLE 2.2
Independence of the courts
Points, out of 7

Estonia	7
Lithuania	6.5
Latvia	5.5
Georgia	3.5
Moldova	3
Ukraine	3
Kazakhstan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Armenia	1.5
Kyrgyzstan	1.5
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Tajikistan	0.5
Turkmenistan	0.5

Kyrgyzstan. In 2021, a special commission on constitutional reform was created in Armenia. The Belarusian authorities have been working on a new Constitution throughout 2021, and they view this effort as a way to resolve the current domestic political crisis in that country (a referendum on this issue is expected in early 2022). A new constitution emerged in Kyrgyzstan following revolutionary events of 2020. Finally, Georgia also revised its constitution in 2021.

The authorities do not always consider the entire spectrum of opinions during the process of amending the constitution. For example, in Belarus, democratic forces that intensely oppose the rule of Alexander Lukashenko were excluded from the discussion. Moreover, the Venice Commission also drew attention to the fact that the Georgian authorities excluded opposition parties from the process of preparing constitutional amendments. Sometimes, the role of the Venice Commission in assessing constitutional amendments was perceived extremely harshly by local politicians. In Kyrgyzstan, pro-governmental politicians stated that all problems with the texts in previous versions of the constitution and laws in that country were in fact due to the advice of foreign experts, and therefore, this time, they maintained that it was necessary to rely on their own political culture. In April 2021, Kyrgyzstan held its eleventh constitutional referendum.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS

Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia remain the undisputed leaders in independence of the courts. Meanwhile, identical problems are noted in most other countries of the region – trust in the judicial system among the population is extremely low in post-Soviet countries; politicians continue to influence the courts; corruption remains an inherent part of a judge’s work. In Georgia, which previously carried out serious judicial reforms, the situation deteriorated in 2021. Government interference in the process of judges’ appointments provoked incisive criticism from the EU and the US, and the EU has even suspended financial assistance. The governments of Moldova and Ukraine have declared their interest in carrying out successful judicial reform. Western partners (EU, USA) provide these countries with assistance in this matter, but the reform efforts carried out have not yet brought any significant success. Citizens of Moldova and Ukraine also continue to experience high levels of mistrust in the judicial system. The situation in Kazakhstan remains ambiguous, however, in previous years, certain steps

TABLE 2.3
Human Rights Legislation
Points, out of 6

Latvia	5.5
Estonia	5
Lithuania	4.5
Ukraine	4
Georgia	3.5
Moldova	3.5
Armenia	3
Kyrgyzstan	2.5
Uzbekistan	2.5
Kazakhstan	1.5
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	1

were taken in the judicial sphere, particularly with a view toward improving the country’s investment attractiveness. Nevertheless, the executive branch still retains significant control over the judiciary. Observers note that the judiciary has deteriorated in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. The judicial branch in both Tajikistan and Turkmenistan remains completely dependent on the executive, specifically the president.

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Most countries in the region face difficulties when it comes to protecting human rights. Though in the Baltic countries these issues were mainly limited to cases of discrimination against members of national minority groups (Roma) or the LGBTQI community, in Central Asian countries, there is rampant discrimination against the ability to express one’s political views in general. Human rights activists have also drawn attention to the problem of political prisoners in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. This problem was particularly acute in Belarus, where authorities tried to stop the protests that followed the controversial 2020 presidential elections. Thousands of protesters in Belarus who ended up behind bars reported being tortured and suffering from cruel forms of punishment. Belarus also remains the only post-Soviet country to still have the death penalty.

A number of positive changes were noted in Kazakhstan – in particular, the president signed a decree providing for a number of measures aimed at improving human rights protections. The Kazakh authorities reacted to criticism from the West, insisting that Kazakhstan has begun implementing large-scale reforms in this area. Meanwhile, in its 2021 resolution, the European Parliament noted “a worrying deterioration in the overall human rights situation”. In this regard, Westernization plays a decisive role – it is clear that the post-Soviet governments are trying to establish a dialogue with their Western colleagues and taking steps to protect human rights. A similar situation was observed in post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan, where the new leadership promises positive changes in human rights protection, though both local non-governmental organizations and international observers have sounded the alarm on the situation in that country.

In addition to the previously existing human rights concerns, the Covid-19 pandemic also poses new quarantine challenges. In many post-Soviet countries, observers have

TABLE 2.4
Number of acquittals
Points, out of 6

Estonia	5
Georgia	4
Latvia	4
Lithuania	3
Moldova	2.5
Armenia	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
Kazakhstan	1
Ukraine	1
Tajikistan	0.5
Turkmenistan	0.5

noted a worsening situation. In Moldova, the health crisis has severely exacerbated the problem of poverty and inequality, along with discrimination. In Ukraine, quarantine restrictions have led to an exploding numbers of domestic violence – a 30% increase in the number of the known cases.

2.4 NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS

The issue of acquittals remains one of the most important and also among the least discussed problems in the post-Soviet countries. The acquittal rate throughout the region tends to be extremely low. At the same time, almost half of the countries analyzed in the Westernization Index do not systematically or regularly record the percentage of acquittals. In many cases, analysts have had to rely on alternative estimates that may not reflect the entire reality. Even among countries that do track such statistics, this information does not attract any interest in public discourse. Belarus has one of the lowest acquittal rates in the region – 0.3% (in 2020). According to some data, in Kazakhstan, this indicator is nearly zero – 0.05% (2018), and the situation in Ukraine is somewhat similar. Georgia has seen positive trends in this area – in 2020, the level of acquittals in criminal cases reached 8.3%.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION

ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION, POINTS, OUT OF 25

Estonia	25
Lithuania	25
Latvia	24.5
Georgia	17
Moldova	16.5
Ukraine	15
Kazakhstan	12.5
Armenia	12
Azerbaijan	12
Belarus	8
Kyrgyzstan	8
Uzbekistan	7
Tajikistan	5
Turkmenistan	4

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION

This indicator defines economic Westernization as multi-leveled and multi-layered. Thus, 10 countries are members of the WTO, three countries are members of the EU, three countries prefer to deepen their relations with the EU (all the way to membership), and some are developing cooperation primarily with Russia and some other post-Soviet countries. The only exception is Turkmenistan, which adheres to a policy of neutrality and, therefore, avoids any integration associations. Moreover, Western institutions distance themselves from cooperation with the Turkmen authorities due to the serious human rights problems in that country. However, to a certain extent, 2021 has become historic for Ashgabat, since Turkmenistan has now declared its desire to join the WTO.

Most of post-Soviet countries decided on their vectors of foreign policy development some time ago, considering both internal and external circumstances. Therefore, any changes that have been made in this regard over the last two years have only confirmed countries' long-held strategic lines of development. For example, in 2021, Belarus once again decided to deepen integration within the framework of the Union State with Russia, a path that Minsk had already attempted earlier. Therefore, there is nothing new in the fact that the Belarusian authorities have once again come into conflict with the European Union. Aleksandr Lukashenko's desire to retain power is beating down the economic Westernization of that country.

The main results for this indicator are as follows. Only three countries received the maximum score of seven points, since they are members of both the European Union and the WTO – these are Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Six post-Soviet countries are included in the EU's Eastern Partnership policy, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. At the same time, such association into a single partnership policy is determined more by geography than politics or economy. Three out of six countries have more advanced relations with the EU: Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova have signed Association Agreements, and citizens of these countries have the right to travel to EU countries without visas. Moreover, in 2021, Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chisinau launched a new regional format Associated Trio, which aims to exchange experiences and develop partnerships for future EU membership.

TABLE 3.1
EU and WTO Membership or Association
Points, out of 7

Estonia	7
Lithuania	7
Latvia	7
Georgia	4.5
Moldova	4.5
Ukraine	4.5
Armenia	3
Kazakhstan	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Tajikistan	2
Azerbaijan	1.5
Uzbekistan	1.5
Belarus	1
Turkmenistan	1

Armenia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan, which are also members of the Eastern Partnership, have their own features when it comes to relations with the European Union. Thus, the dialogue between Baku and the EU is still limited to the 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Armenia has invented a kind of replacement for the Association Agreement known as the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (fully effective since March 2021). At the same time, Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, where Russia plays the main role. Belarus suspended its participation in the Eastern Partnership in 2021 due to the tough EU sanctions policy. Belarus is also a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, and moreover, Minsk and Moscow are the region's closest allies, as the two states signed the Treaty on the Union of Belarus and Russia back in 1997. In 2021, both countries took active steps within that supranational entity to carry out new integration initiatives.

The Eurasian Economic Union also includes Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, Kazakhstan and the EU have signed the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (fully effective since 2020). Kyrgyzstan, like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, benefits from access to the EU markets due to the Generalized Scheme of Preferences.

As mentioned above, most post-Soviet countries are members of the WTO. Only four countries have so far failed to join this organization, namely Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and Azerbaijan. At the same time, Turkmenistan declared its desire to join, while Uzbekistan also stepped up its efforts aimed at accession. Belarus had hoped to become a member of the WTO in 2021 but this did not materialize.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS

Quarantine restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic were a decisive factor that influenced the entire planet's economic situation, and most of the countries in the post-Soviet region were especially vulnerable. Companies were forced to shutter, and investors who were already scared of financing post-Soviet countries have been fleeing the affected markets. Observers note that the pandemic is arguably the biggest economic blow to Central Asia since the difficult first decade following independence.⁶ The consequences for the economies of the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Armenia) were serious – the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises was especially heavy due to the sharp decline in demand for services.⁷ Inter-

TABLE 3.2
Ease and Transparency of Doing Business
Points, out of 6

Estonia	6
Georgia	6
Lithuania	6
Latvia	5.5
Armenia	4
Azerbaijan	3.5
Kazakhstan	3.5
Moldova	3
Ukraine	3
Belarus	2.5
Kyrgyzstan	2.5
Uzbekistan	2.5
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	0.5

national organizations, including the European Union, helped the region cope with the crisis. For example, the EU has hitherto mobilized more than € 2.5 billion to help these countries, both to support their health systems and to recover social and economic stability.⁸ The Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom notes that the significant impact of restrictions on freedom of doing business would be felt over the next several years.⁹ According to this rating, seven post-Soviet countries are classified as “mostly free” (Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan); while three countries were in the “moderately free” group (Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Belarus). Thus, most countries are still classified as free economies. Four states were in a less attractive categories: “mostly unfree” (Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Tajikistan) and “repressed” (Turkmenistan).

Most countries in the region also face serious problems related to corruption, which particularly affects their investment attractiveness. According to the Corruption Perception Index, only four post-Soviet countries were included in the rating’s top 50 countries – Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Georgia (accordingly, the corruption component is also less present in these countries). The next 100 countries ranked on the Index include Eastern European countries both seeking EU integration and Central Asian countries that prefer to develop a closed society: Moldova (115th place), Ukraine (117th place), Kyrgyzstan (124th place), Azerbaijan (129th place), Uzbekistan (146th), Tajikistan (149), and Turkmenistan (165).¹⁰ Thus, corruption remains a common post-Soviet challenge.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS

Quarantine regulations affected the trade sector of all post-Soviet countries – there was a significant drop in the share of foreign trade, though the pandemic did not affect the trade structure as a whole. Other factors continued to influence the change in the share of foreign trade – dependence on relations with Russia, and China’s active trade policy. The EU, however, remained the most important trading partner for many post-Soviet states. In four countries – the three EU member states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and Moldova, more than 50% of the share of trade was accounted for by the EU. In 2020, Moldova exported 66.7% of its goods to the EU, while imports from the EU accounted for 45.6%. The EU remained the main trading partner for Ukraine as well, accounting for 40.7% of trade by the end of 2020. A new trend in recent years for Ukraine is growing trade with China. In the midst of the 2020 pandemic, Georgian foreign trade saw the share

TABLE 3.3
Western Share in the Sales of Goods
Points, out of 6

Estonia	6
Latvia	6
Lithuania	6
Moldova	5
Azerbaijan	4
Ukraine	4
Kazakhstan	3
Georgia	2.5
Armenia	2
Belarus	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Uzbekistan	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	1

from CIS countries increase slightly – from 33.7% to 34.4%. At the same time, trade with the EU fell slightly (from 24.2% to 23.2%). Since Armenia refused to sign an Association Agreement with the EU (which included the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) there has been a drop in the EU’s share of trade noted with each passing year. Thus, in 2014, the EU accounted for 26.6% of turnover, meanwhile, in 2020, it had already declined to 18%. At the same time, the volume of trade between Armenia and the four Eurasian Economic Union partners was 32% in 2020 (about 96% of that volume was in Russia). Russia has always prevailed in the Belarusian trade market – in 2020 it accounted for 48.3% in all. All EU countries as a whole are Minsk’s second-largest trade partner, representing 19.6% of external trade. EU sanctions are likely to lead to a further decrease in the Western share in that country’s trade. The EU is a key trade partner for Azerbaijan with a share of 36.7% (while the parties are still cooperating on the basis of the 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement). The EU is also the second-largest trading partner of Kazakhstan – with a share of 23.6% in 2020¹¹. The United Kingdom is the main export destination for Kyrgyzstan, and its share accounted for 55.7% (gold sales). In the rest of Central Asia, the EU is absent from the top trading partners. The top 3 foreign trade partners of Uzbekistan are China, Russia, and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan trades mostly with Russia, Kazakhstan, and Switzerland. The top three trading partners of Turkmenistan are Turkey, UAE, and Japan.¹² Despite that, we can see the West is still present – it is represented by Switzerland in the case of Tajikistan, and Japan, which is in fact an example of Westernization in Asia, in the case of Turkmenistan.

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRIES’ ECONOMIES

Global foreign direct investment has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictive measures slowed down investment projects that were already underway. Investments fell by one-third to \$1 trillion in 2020, which is far below the negative peak they felt during the global financial crisis a decade ago.¹³ In addition to the impact of the pandemic itself, other factors forced investors to reconsider their plans. Thus, the military events of 2020 also defined the situation in Armenia, and a significant part of the investment programs in Armenia could not be properly implemented. In Belarus, investors observed the political events and protests following the elections in August 2020 with dismay. The Western policies of sanctions increase the risks for foreign investors present on the Belarusian mar-

TABLE 3.4
Western Investment
in the Countries' Economies
Points, out of 6

Estonia	6
Latvia	6
Lithuania	6
Georgia	4
Moldova	4
Kazakhstan	4
Ukraine	3.5
Armenia	3
Azerbaijan	3
Belarus	2.5
Uzbekistan	2
Kyrgyzstan	1.5
Turkmenistan	1.5
Tajikistan	1

ket. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has stopped financing new projects in that country, and the World Bank has limited its activities there, as well. Investments from Russia, Cyprus, and the Netherlands still occupy the leading positions in Belarus. Financing sources from the two latter countries most likely are post-Soviet businessmen hiding behind the companies they have registered there. This situation is typical for many countries of the former Soviet Union. Thus, Cyprus is also the main investor in Ukraine.

As previously stated, the Baltic countries remain the regional leaders in terms of receiving Western investment. For example, the indicator for Latvia exceeded 83%. The top 3 Lithuanian investors are Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands (for first quarter of 2021). In Estonia, 75% of investments were made by Luxembourg and Germany. In addition to the EU countries and the European Economic Area, Ukraine also entered the top ten key investors in Estonia. Besides the Baltic countries, Georgia and Moldova show a high level of investments from Europe. In Moldova, the share accounted for by EU investors exceeds 80%. The main investors in Georgia are the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (respectively, these countries account for 50% and 28% of the total volume of foreign direct investment).

Countries possessing deposits of oil, gas, and other stocks still attract Western investors despite any obstacles. Thus, the main investors in Azerbaijan in 2020 were the UK (37.1%), Turkey (12.8%), and the United States (10.5%). According to statistical data for the first half of 2021, the main investors in Kazakhstan are the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Belgium. The largest volume of investments in that country has traditionally been observed in the mining industry. Kyrgyzstan is also of interest to investors, primarily in the deposits development sector. Its main investors are Canada, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

Tajikistan's investment dynamics are peculiar. Thus, three-quarters of foreign investments in that country are of Chinese origin. China is also one of the main investors in Uzbekistan. According to Turkmen statistics, Japan (almost 50%) and South Korea (19%) provide most investment volumes there.¹⁴

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION, POINTS OUT OF 15

Estonia	13.5
Latvia	13.5
Lithuania	13.5
Moldova	10.5
Ukraine	10.5
Georgia	9.5
Armenia	9
Azerbaijan	9
Belarus	7.5
Uzbekistan	7
Kazakhstan	6.5
Kyrgyzstan	6
Turkmenistan	5
Tajikistan	4.5

4.1 USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE

Most of the countries studied have shown a growing interest in transitioning to the Latin alphabet. In some countries, this is already happening at the official level thanks to previously adopted government decisions. This group includes Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which attempted to regulate the use of the Latin alphabet at the official level during the reporting period. Thus, in December 2019, Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the “State Program for the Implementation of Language Policy in Kazakhstan for the Years 2020-2025”, which, among other things, is aimed at modernizing the Kazakh language by introducing the Latin alphabet. As a part of this program, each region of Kazakhstan should provide a detailed report on progress in the use of the Latin script in official communication and on the number of informational and educational events held in this regard. In July 2021, Uzbekistan’s government adopted a decision with the aim of accelerating the full transition to the Latin script at the governmental level. At its meeting in September 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Latin alphabet for the Crimean Tatar language. Education conducted in the Crimean Tatar language will be changed over to the Latin alphabet by September 1, 2025.

It is noteworthy that for all these countries, the decision to accelerate the transition to the Latin alphabet either at the national level or at the level of a certain national minority is in fact a resumption of decisions made earlier, in some cases, as long ago as the early 1990s. For example, in 1993, the Uzbek parliament approved the “Law on the Introduction of the Uzbek Alphabet Based on the Latin Script”, abandoning Cyrillic transcription, but the implementation process faced constant setbacks. A similar decision was made by the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar People in 1992.

In some countries, there are ongoing discussions about completely transitioning the official language to the Latin script. Ukraine is one such example: in 2021 the Secretary of the National Security Council made a statement about the need for such a transition. There is no such discussion in

TABLE 4.1
Use of the Latin Alphabet
in the Native Language
Points, out of 2

Azerbaijan	2
Estonia	2
Latvia	2
Lithuania	2
Moldova	2
Turkmenistan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Armenia	1
Belarus	1
Georgia	1
Kazakhstan	1.5
Ukraine	1
Kyrgyzstan	0.5
Tajikistan	0.5

other states, however, the use of the Latin alphabet is more frequent and widespread than before. Belarus in particular is one example of how the Latin alphabet is gaining more and more use in the public space – it is used for the names of cafes, shops, various brands, as well as the duplication of street names, stations, and geographical names; but there are no moderated discussions regarding transitioning the language into “Belarusian Lacinka” (the Belarusian Latin alphabet). Even countries with where the native language is based on their own alphabet, such as Armenian (from the 4th century AD) and Georgian, English is actively used in naming in the public space. At the same time, due to the increase in tourism from Russia, Georgia increasingly uses Russian in public spaces. In many of the countries studied, Latin is becoming more and more popular due to the prevalence of social media.

Although ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking residents of the countries studied here oppose the transition to the Latin language, in countries where an active discussion regarding the issue is underway, transitioning to the Latin alphabet does not always actually contribute to Westernization. For example, Turkmenistan has completely switched to the use of Latin, but this has not led to an increase in Western influence. In fact, to a certain extent, the change contributed to the mass migration of the population to Turkey, where similar lettering is used.

It is noteworthy that in some countries, the Latin alphabet was previously used throughout history (including during the USSR). This was the case in Kyrgyzstan from 1920 to 1940, and in Tajikistan from 1936 to 1939. In both countries, however, there is currently no serious debate over whether to return to Latin characters.

4.2 PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH)

According to the English Proficiency Index 2021, the surveyed countries are rather clearly divided into three categories – countries with low proficiency in English, countries with intermediate proficiency, and countries with high proficiency in English.¹⁵ A high level of proficiency is recorded in the Baltic countries in particular. The top five countries with the highest rankings – though this list also includes countries with an

TABLE 4.2
 Proportion of the Population Proficient in
 the Most Common Languages of the West
 (English, French, German, and Spanish)
Points, out of 6

Estonia	5
Latvia	5
Lithuania	5
Georgia	3.5
Moldova	3.5
Ukraine	3.5
Armenia	3
Belarus	3
Azerbaijan	2
Uzbekistan	2
Kazakhstan	1.5
Kyrgyzstan	1.5
Turkmenistan	1
Tajikistan	1

intermediate level of proficiency – also include Moldova and, perhaps, quite unexpectedly, Belarus. Ukraine and Georgia are also in the intermediate proficiency category. There are also some surprises among the countries with the lowest rankings, for example, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

There are also nuances regarding the ranking leaders – in Estonia, 2020 was the first year during which Estonian-speaking citizens used English more frequently than Russian for work or study. In Latvia, for example, Russian is in demand in business, since more than 30% of the country’s population speaks it as their mother tongue. In 2021, the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, even had to publicly urge employers not to use Russian language proficiency as a requirement for hiring. And in Belarus, despite a fairly high level of English proficiency compared to other countries in the region, at the same time, the position of the Russian language is very strong: out of 7.9 million citizens who identify themselves as Belarusians by nationality, around 6 million usually speak Russian at home.

Overall, English proficiency scores are improving in the vast majority of the Index countries. Motivation remains an important element – in those countries where much of the population is considering studying or working in the West, the language indicators are completely different. Lithuania and Moldova, where a large number of citizens work abroad, are important examples in this regard. Moreover, in the case of Lithuania, those who work abroad often head to English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland. Also, in many countries, there are clear divisions between urban and rural populations, with city dwellers demonstrating much higher English proficiency levels.

4.3 SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN NATIONS’ MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS; THE SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND TWITTER)

As in previous years, an empirical assessment of the market allows us to conclude that films made in the United States have a noticeable advantage in cinemas in the countries surveyed. Another consideration is that during the reporting period, the pandemic led to significant adjustments in the way that movie theaters operate in the post-Soviet world. In Kazakhstan, for

TABLE 4.3

Share of Western Products in the Nation's Movie Theaters and on TV Channels; Share of Western Internet Sites and Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)

Points, out of 7

Estonia	6.5
Latvia	6.5
Lithuania	6.5
Ukraine	6
Armenia	5
Azerbaijan	5
Georgia	5
Moldova	5
Kyrgyzstan	4
Belarus	3.5
Kazakhstan	3.5
Tajikistan	3
Uzbekistan	3
Turkmenistan	2

example, cinemas were among the businesses that suffered the most due to quarantine regulations, and many have even gone bankrupt. In Tajikistan, the government has closed all cinemas altogether. In some countries, this market was not developed even before the pandemic – cinemas were located mainly in the capital and very rarely in regional centers, and in many cases, they were already relatively unpopular due to high ticket prices (Turkmenistan).

Thus, populations in the countries studied began to consume more entertainment on their television sets at home, especially as television series. Hence, a new trend has emerged – while cinemas, which have become less accessible to residents in many countries due to quarantine regulations and the high cost of tickets, show mainly Western films, the the situation is slightly different for television series, which may be Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish, or Korean.

The situation in Belarus illustrates this rather well. While film distribution is dominated by Western films – from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Germany (a total of 8 films in November 2021), the most popular TV channels of the country mainly broadcast films from Russia and Ukraine. On the main state TV channel “Belarus 1”, out of 26 TV series shown in November 2021, 15 were produced in Russia, 10 in Ukraine, and 1 in Belarus.

The gap between films and TV series is even more indicative in Georgia. Meanwhile, the cinemas’ repertoires are completely dominated by Western, mainly American, movies; out of 18 TV series shown on the three most popular channels (“Imedi”, “Public Broadcaster”, and “Rustavi 2”) in October 2021, there was only one British series, 2 Ukrainian, 12 Turkish, 2 Indian, and 1 Georgian.

In some countries, the decline in the share of Western productions is associated with new rules on dubbing. For example, in Azerbaijan, after the introduction of the rule to dub all films into the national language in 2014, the number of Western (Hollywood) films has seriously decreased. Currently, more locally produced films and Turkish films are being broadcast than previously.

The language of film dubbing is still an interesting phenomenon in cinemas. In some of the countries surveyed, they are dubbed into the national language (Ukraine, Georgia), but in some countries they are still being shown in Russian. The most illustrative case here may be Moldova, where 80% of the population speaks Romanian as

their mother tongue, but only the most popular films are dubbed into Romanian in cinemas.

One notable trend seen in many individual countries is the increasing use of Western streaming platforms, primarily Netflix.

As for the use of Western social networks, there is a growing trend of Western social networks, namely Facebook and Instagram, which is clearly visible in most countries, while Russian-based Odnoklassniki and VKontakte have lost or are losing users in several of countries surveyed. One of the exceptions is Belarus, where Odnoklassniki and Vkontakte still are the top three most visited social media sites, along with Instagram. In terms of growth dynamics, in many countries, Tik Tok is leading the pack. One feature of the post-Soviet countries is that Facebook is considered to be a rather politicized platform – it is actively used by politicians and those who are interested in politics.

In Turkmenistan, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and all other Western social networks are banned.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION

LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION, POINTS OUT OF 10

Estonia	9
Latvia	9
Lithuania	8.5
Ukraine	7
Moldova	6.5
Belarus	5.5
Georgia	5
Uzbekistan	5
Azerbaijan	4.5
Armenia	4
Kazakhstan	4
Kyrgyzstan	3
Tajikistan	2.5
Turkmenistan	2.5

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES

The three main reasons why people from the surveyed countries visit Western countries are tourism, education, and work. Due to the pandemic quarantine regulations impacting tourism and freedom of movement, opportunities to visit Western countries for these three reasons were significantly limited for those living in post-Soviet countries. Some countries saw a drop in tourism of 90% compared to the same periods in 2021 and 2019.

Even in mid-2021, when many Western destinations have once again become accessible, most people from the surveyed countries preferred to visit the countries that abandoned strict anti-Covid measures and offered affordable vacation options, including direct charter flights. Essentially, this includes Egypt, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Albania, and Montenegro. Many flights to the West departing from the surveyed countries were simply canceled. Over the past two years, departures from Turkmenistan have generally been prohibited due to the strict lockdown, though the country had previously experienced widespread emigration, mainly to work in Turkey and for permanent residence in Russia.

Nevertheless, the pandemic did not seriously affect long-term plans related to study and emigration to Western countries. Thus, 42% of young Kazakhs aged 15 to 29 are planning to travel abroad for education or permanent residence. In Turkmenistan, there has been a strong increase in applications for obtaining green cards in the United States.

As of the second half of 2021, the travel market to European Union countries has undergone a sort of revival. In October, the low-cost airline Wizz Air announced the launch of 26 new flights to EU countries from four Ukrainian cities.

5.2 PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES

The representation of Western franchise companies in the countries surveyed mainly depends on two factors: the size of the market and the population's level of purchasing power. Therefore, in Kyrgyzstan, for example, there are still only two Western fast foods – KFC and Papa John's Pizza.

TABLE 5.1
Percentage of the Population who have Visited Western Countries
Points, out of 5

Estonia	4.5
Latvia	4.5
Lithuania	4.0
Moldova	3.5
Ukraine	3
Georgia	2
Belarus	1.5
Armenia	1
Kazakhstan	1
Kyrgyzstan	1
Tajikistan	1
Uzbekistan	1
Azerbaijan	0.5
Turkmenistan	0.5

TABLE 5.2
Presence of Western Franchise Companies
Points, out of 3

Estonia	2.5
Latvia	2.5
Lithuania	2.5
Ukraine	2.5
Azerbaijan	2
Belarus	2
Uzbekistan	2
Georgia	1.5
Kazakhstan	1.5
Moldova	1.5
Armenia	1
Kyrgyzstan	1
Turkmenistan	1
Tajikistan	0.5

We must also consider the impact of the pandemic on Western franchise companies – many shopping centers in which certain Western brands were represented were closed for months due to quarantine regulations. Additionally, some Western companies have changed their plans of entering a new market or expanding their presence in a particular country.

Nevertheless, there are still some positive shifts. The first IKEA store has finally opened in Ukraine, albeit in the city store format. KFC opened a fast-food restaurant in Tajikistan, in Dushanbe, in September 2021. The first Domino's Pizza was opened in Lithuania. IKEA also announced the opening of a store in Estonia in the first half of 2022 (as did the German retailer Lidl). In the second quarter of 2022, Armenia will become the fourth former USSR country to host the Hard Rock Cafe franchise.

Some countries have seen the arrival of new Western hotel brands during this period. In Kyrgyzstan, Ramada and Novotel have been added to the Hyatt Regency, which for a long time was the only Western hotel in that country. In addition to Radisson Blue, Marriot and Ibis have appeared in Moldova.

Belarus is an interesting case. Despite the political tension in political relations with Poland, Polish brands entering the Belarusian market are experiencing a boom there, particularly, Polish clothing manufacturer LPP SA, representing such brands as Reserved, House, Cropp, Mohito and Sinsay, opened four stores in Belarus 2020, and another 10 in the first half of 2021. The famous French construction retailer Leroy Merlin has suspended the construction of its hypermarket in Belarus, which was supposed to open in 2021, though the official reason cited was the Covid-19 pandemic. A study by human rights organization Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights showed that two out of three commercials broadcasted on the state television of Belarus were on behalf of large corporations from Europe and the United States¹⁶.

One of the results of Covid-19 has been the explosive growth of e-commerce in some countries. For example, in Georgia in 2020, e-commerce grew by 3.2 times compared to the previous year.

5.3 MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE

In general, the pandemic has favorably contributed to the increase in the number of Internet users and the number of smartphone owners in many of the surveyed countries. In 2021, there were 4.3 million mobile phone users in

TABLE 5.3
Mobile Internet Coverage,
Smartphone Usage
points, out of 2

Azerbaijan	2
Estonia	2
Latvia	2
Lithuania	2
Moldova	1.5
Armenia	2
Belarus	2
Uzbekistan	2
Georgia	1.5
Kazakhstan	1.5
Ukraine	1.5
Kyrgyzstan	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkmenistan	1

Moldova, which is more than the population of the republic itself (3.6 million).

Mobile Internet usage shares vary, but the numbers are growing. In Belarus, the volume is already more than 60%. In Moldova, this figure is about 50%. In Estonia, more than 90% (94.4%) of the population uses smartphones to access social networks, despite the fact that the prices for high-speed Internet connections there are 4-5 times higher than in neighboring countries, which is also a great concern for users.

In Ukraine, digitalization has become one of the state priorities under the presidency of Volodymyr Zelensky. More than 11 million Ukrainians use the application “Diia” (Action) through their smartphones. This app “stores” all of Ukrainians’ official documents in a digital format. Ukraine has become the first country in the world to introduce a digital citizen passport.

In Turkmenistan, political and ideological censorship of the Internet remains a significant and limiting factor.



WESTERNIZATION INDEX OF POST-SOVIET STATES

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF	Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
		11.5/25	11.5/25	12/25	9/15

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 11.5/25

1.1 DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 6/10

The political processes in Armenia continue to bear the burden of a heavy defeat in the 44-day war against Azerbaijan from October 27 to November 9, 2020. The last year’s events created an extremely tense atmosphere in domestic political life and public relations, which forced the authorities to hold yet another snap parliamentary election on June 20, 2021.

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on June 21, the International Elections Observation Mission of the Organization of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) concluded that the elections “were competitive and generally well-managed within a short timeframe. However, they were characterized by intense po-

larization and marred by increasingly inflammatory rhetoric among key contestants. The legal framework is generally comprehensive, but the fact that amendments were adopted so close to the elections caused some legal uncertainty. The election administration conducted its work in a transparent, collegial, and professional manner and enjoyed electoral stakeholders’ confidence. Voters were provided with a broad range of options, and fundamental rights and freedoms were generally respected, with contestants being able to campaign freely. However, the negative tone and the personality-driven nature of the campaign hindered a policy-focused debate... Election day, including the vote count, was assessed positively overall.”¹⁷

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 2.5/8

Three political forces that entered the National Assembly (Parliament) of the Republic of Armenia (RA) as a result of the elections on June 20, 2021 (the “Civil Contract” party, “Armenia”, and “I Have Honor” blocs) had similar priorities regarding foreign policy in their program documents. All of them emphasized the particular importance of bilateral relations with the Russian Federation and membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective

Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The “Civil Contract” party has a convincing majority of seats in the National Assembly (71). Though the party seems to be the one that is most inclined towards rapprochement with the West from the point of view of the Armenian and foreign public, in real life, its policy does not give reasons for such a conclusion, neither did that of its parliamentary predecessor of the previous convocation, the “My Step” bloc.

At the same time, the content of the informational election campaign does not align with the fact that the pro-Russian forces dominate the Armenian political scene. In particular, the Russian Federation

was frequently mentioned by political forces on Facebook, which is the most popular social network in Armenia; the proportion of references is: 36% – positive opinions, 15% – neutral, and 49% negative.¹⁸

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 3/7

After the 44-day war, the issues of civilizational choice became significantly inferior to the problems of social security, stability, and security in the eyes of the Armenian public. Within the framework of a sociological survey conducted in February 2021, the majority of respondents, answering the question, “What is the most important problem that our country is facing today?” responded: “Economy — unemployment, corruption”, “Political instability”, “The need for military reform”, “Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”, “Poor work of the Armenian Government”, “Return of captives and missing persons”, and “Physical security, military attack”¹⁹.

This factor also affected the perception of foreign states by Armenian citizens – the assessment rate of all of them within the same survey decreased compared to 2019. At the same time, the ratio of sympathies for certain key representatives of the outside world generally remained the same. In particular, respondents rated relations with France: 19% as very good, 60% as good, and 6% as bad or very bad. Relations with Russia were assessed by

10% as very good, by 60% as good, and by 15% as bad or very bad. Relations with the USA were rated by 6% as very good, by 59% as good, and by 15% as bad or very bad.²⁰

It is noteworthy that the change in perceptions is obvious not only from comparing the results of surveys from 2019 and 2021, but also during and following the war in the fall of 2020. In this context, we can see interesting results from the polls of the Russian online news site Caucasian Knot, which repeatedly asked same questions: “On whom can Armenia count in a difficult situation? From where can Armenia expect military and political assistance?”

Having peaked on October 30, 2020 (79.6%), Russia’s indicator dropped on May 18-21, 2021, to 38.3% (according to media reviews, during and after the clashes on November 16-17, 2021, this trend has likely continued). In the case of France, the indicators increased from the October 2020 rate (21.3%) to 31.3% in May 2021. The USA had its highest record on October 6-7, 2020 (27.5%), but dipped slightly (to 23.8%) on May 18-21, 2021.²¹

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 11.5/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 5/6

Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia introduced based on the 2005 and 2015 referendums were made in close cooperation with the Venice Commission and accommodated its recommendations. The Commission noted that the 2015 draft “was compliant with international stand-

ards on democracy.” At the same time, Armenian society remains highly distrustful of both the process of adopting amendments to the Constitution (including voting at referendums) and the content of these amendments (first, regarding the principle of division of powers). This stance is shared by Ar-

menia's new political leadership, who officially announced preparation for another constitutional reform. A special commission on constitutional reform was formed by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pa-

shinyan on February 12, 2020, which was dissolved in late 2021 and a new one is being formed. The reform itself is also included in the government's program for 2021-2026.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 1.5/7

Focusing activities on the practical aspect of political processes in the post-revolution period and especially in the post-war period, including, first and foremost, security, had adverse effects on consistent institutional reforms. As mentioned in the Freedom House report, "The courts face systemic political influence, and judicial institutions are undermined by corruption. Judges reportedly feel pressure to work with prosecutors to convict defendants"²².

GRECO (the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption) at its 88th Plenary Meeting (Strasbourg, September 20-22, 2021) has made public the Interim Compliance Report of Fourth Evaluation Round on Armenia. This report acknowledges that all 12 recommendations assessed following the previous evaluation round remain only partly implemented. This also refers to the recommendation on reducing the role of the executive branch on court decisions²³.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 3/6

On September 7, 2020, Armenia became the 47th state to have completed the ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ("Lanzarote Convention"). The Convention entered into force on January 1, 2021. The ratification was conducted amid heated discussions between its supporters and conservative social and political circles. At the same time, there is still some uncertainty regarding the adoption of bills on discrimination and domestic violence. The ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the "Istanbul Convention") also remains a subject of debate.

Another side of the problem is law enforcement practices, which affect human rights. Several local and international organizations expressed their concerns regarding the situation of human rights defender Sashik Sultanyan, Head of the Yezidi Center for Human Rights. A criminal case has been initiated against him on incitement to hatred for having shared criticism in 2020 about violations of the human rights of Armenia's Yezidi minority²⁴.

Armenian civil society is also greatly concerned with a number of adopted legislative acts restricting freedom of speech in the country. Journalistic organizations also note a trend of limiting access to official information at the legislative level²⁵.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 3/6

Acquittal rates remain extremely low. Exemption from criminal liability is processed mainly at the level of higher courts. Hereby, during the first half of 2021, the Criminal Chamber of the Ar-

menian Court of Appeals overturned guilty verdicts and terminated cases in 17 appeals considered out of 604, and the Cassation Court in one case out of 231. Cooperation with international

structures in the area of justice, and especially partnering with GRECO, resulted in the trend of

increasing acquittals in Armenia, but progress is extremely slow.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 12/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 3/7

Armenia became a member of the WTO in 2003. This allowed for effective negotiations on the Association Agreement with the EU in 2011-2013, including entry into the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA), as well strengthening economic cooperation with foreign, primarily Western countries. However, Armenia's refusal to sign the Agreement and its accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015 have led to a gradual reorientation of Yerevan's economic priorities.

Current EU-Armenia bilateral relations are regulated by the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. This agreement has been provisionally applied since June 2018 and formally entered into force on March 1, 2021. However, Armenian officials acknowledge that the coronavirus has decelerated CEPA's course of implementation²⁷.

The activities envisaged by the implementation Road Map are hugely underperformed, and the reason was not only the pandemic, but also the conflict with Azerbaijan, domestic political turmoil, and a lack of political will.

Armenia's engagement in stronger bilateral cooperation with the EU could be accelerated by the provision of, according to the European Council President Charles Michel, "an unprecedented financial package" designed to help the Armenian government continue democratic reforms and improve the socioeconomic situation in the country. The decision by the European Commission announced on July 2, 2021, in the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership program, envisages economic assistance and investments up to €2.6 billion to Armenia over the next five years²⁸.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 4/6

Recently, Armenia has been among the most advanced former Soviet republics in the "Ease and transparency of doing business" category, moving from position 38 (2014) to 61 (2010) in the World Bank's annual ranking. Due to the suspension of the World Bank "Doing Business" project, the dynamics of the corresponding indicator can be determined out of collateral data. In particular, according to the World Bank Group's research "Enterprise surveys follow-up on COVID-19," which measured the effectiveness of crisis management of the economy, 24% of companies experienced a decline in sales, meanwhile, the biggest share of businesses that suffered (30%) are small

businesses. On this indicator, Armenia has a relatively good position comparing to other non-EU post-Soviet countries. The percentage of firms "confirmed permanently closed" was 3.5%, and the percentage of firms confirmed or assumed permanently closed was 6.6%. On this indicator, Armenia's position among non-EU post-Soviet countries was average²⁹.

Armenia has a fairly high position in the Index of Economic Freedom compiled by the Heritage Foundation, and it is in 32nd position (being outperformed only by four post-Soviet countries – Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, and Latvia)³⁰. Armenia belongs to the group of "mostly free" states.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 2/6

Considering the pandemic and aggravated conflict with Azerbaijan, data on foreign trade relations can hardly be regarded as sufficiently indicative. However, the tendency of redistribution of shares between trade partners in favor of the Russian Federation and the EAEU countries after Armenia's "pivot" in 2013 is obvious. The share of trade with the EU fell from 26.6% (2014) and accounted for about 18% of Armenia's total trade in 2020. At the same time, the volume of trade with all CIS countries was 28.7% in 2014, while in 2020 the trade share with the four EAEU partners alone was 31.7%. This should be taken into account, as Armenia remained a beneficiary of GSP + (Generalized Scheme of Preferences) till the end of 2021, which allowed saving

about 80% of customs payments when exporting goods to EU countries.

The relative normalization of the economic sphere in 2021 led to an increase in exports in the first half of this year compared to the same period in the past: with the EAEU countries by 32% (about 96% of this volume is from the Russian Federation), and by more than 100% with China (mainly due to the export of copper ore and concentrate), while with the EU, by 22%. Among the other largest Western exporters, Switzerland's indicator decreased (the main export item is products for the mining and metallurgical industry). The dynamics of import indicators were approximately 10% for the EAEU, 9% for the EU, and 7% for China³¹.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 3/6

The Covid-19 situation and aggravation of the conflict with Azerbaijan do not allow us to make any reliable conclusions about investments in the Armenian economy in 2020, especially since a significant part of investment

programs objectively could not be properly implemented. Net stocks of main partners investments at the end of 2020 were: about \$2.365 million from the Russian Federation, and double that from the EU³².

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 9/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 1/2

Since the fourth century AD, the Armenian language has used its own alphabet. In some cases,

users of social networks use the Latin alphabet in Armenian texts.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 3/6

The most recent data on foreign language proficiency in Armenia were obtained during the 2011 census. Then, 3.6% of the population spoke English, 0.3% spoke French, and 0.2% spoke German³³. Over the past 10 years, the number of English

speakers has grown significantly among the younger generation and service workers. This is mainly due to the development of the tourism sector and the increased attention to the study of foreign languages in schools. As far as the proficiency in the

most used foreign language (Russian), this is a relic of Armenia's Soviet past, and its scale is likely to

decline. Moreover, the processes mentioned above contribute to the spread of European languages.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTIONS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 5/7

Cultural life in Armenia in 2020 and partly in 2021 was largely paralyzed, and this includes movie premieres. Feature film distribution had previously been poorly studied in Armenia, and new circumstances generally preclude obtaining a more reliable picture. As in previous years, an empirical assessment of the market leaves no doubt that US-made films are unrivaled in the country's cinemas. Among the largest events in Armenia's cultural life in 2021 are traditional international events, such as the 18th Golden Apricot Film Festival³⁴, the 7th Yerevan Jazz

Festival, and the 15th Yerevan Shakespeare Festival. The overwhelming majority of foreign works, collectives and individual performers included in their programs come from Western countries.

As of January 2021, social media platforms had the following shares: Facebook 70.94%, Instagram 38.3%, YouTube 14.69%, LinkedIn 10.3%, and Twitter 2.4%. Odnoklassniki has been steadily losing users, while TikTok has been growing fast, though neither of the latter platforms provide any data for Armenia³⁵.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 4/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1/5

Due to the pandemic, Armenia recorded a sharp drop in the number outbound business travelers and tourists in 2020 and 2021³⁶. This was due to the cancellation of a number of flights, suspension of work or a drop in the number of applicants at consular services and visa centers, low levels of vaccination among Armenia's population, freezing of business or other kinds of contacts, etc. Some travel opportunities only began to emerge in May 2021, though they have not fully recovered. Since the actual data do not reflect any traceable patterns, no relevant organizations are interested in collecting and summarizing statistical indicators. Visits to Western countries for the citizens of Armenia turned out to be the most difficult. For many Armenians, since the beginning of 2020, obtaining visas to the United

States and most European countries is associated with formidable hindrances. Therefore, the most frequent tourist destinations for Armenian citizens are countries that have abandoned strict anti-Covid measures and have become available via charter flights – Egypt, Cyprus, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro.

Likewise, according to unpublished data from the Armenian Tourism Committee, out of 577,000 tourists who visited Armenia in the first 10 months of 2021, about half were from Russia, followed by Armenia's closest neighbors such as Iran (about 79,000) and Georgia (over 49,000). The total number of Western tourists (from the US, EU members, and other Western European countries) was 81,494.

On November 15, 2021, the European Union and Armenia signed an aviation area agreement, based

on common high standards in aviation safety, security and air traffic management. The agreement

means new opportunities for consumers, airlines, and airports in Armenia and the EU³⁷.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1/3

Due to the limited market opportunities and the population's low purchasing, many large retail companies, restaurants/hotels chains are slow to enter the Armenian market. Carrefour, Best Western, and Marriott are presented widely here. The sharp decline in tourism caused by the pandemic limited the

entry of new franchise facilities into the country in 2020-2021, but in the second quarter of 2022, Armenia will become the fourth country of the former USSR to have a Hard Rock Cafe. The franchise agreement with Hard Rock International has been already signed³⁸.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

As of December 2020, the number of Internet users in Armenia had increased to 2,905,856, which constitutes 98% of the population. The number of mobile broadband users reached 2,475,449, or 83% of the population. 96% of Armenian house-

holds are now connected to broadband Internet (according to World Bank). 99% of communities are covered by mobile phone and wireless Internet networks, and 56.9% of communities are covered by wired broadband³⁹.

Azerbaijan

34.5/100

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF	Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
	5/25	4/25	12/25	9/15	4.5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 5/25

1.1. POLITICAL FREEDOM 1/10

According to the 2021 Freedom House Report⁴⁰, the political environment in Azerbaijan is neither pluralistic nor competitive. The Yeni (New) Azerbaijan Party (YAP) maintained control of parliament in snap elections held in February 2020, in a contest marred by procedural and tabulation concerns, electoral misconduct, and an opposition boycott; authorities arrested opposition leaders along with activists planning to hold a protest. A number of laws restricted candidates' efforts to organize and hold rallies, and the opposition had virtually no access to television coverage. Several incidents of gross violations occurred during the election, starting with the head of the polling station commission stealing the election box, observers being beaten for reporting violations, and falsified election results. More than 100 candidates filed complaints against the Central Election Committee and then with the courts. All these cases were sent to the European Court of Human Rights in a case filed against the Azerbaijani government.

Azerbaijan's authorities sought to restrict media freedoms and limit online discussions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. Several journalists received prison sentences or were detained for reporting on the crisis, while some Internet users were forced to remove material critical of the government's pandemic response from social media

platforms and websites. In a major speech about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic given on March 19, 2020, during his Nowruz holiday address, President Ilham Aliyev implied that he would use measures introduced to slow the spread of the coronavirus to crack down on political opponents, whom he described as traitors, enemies, and a "fifth column"⁴¹. Just days later, the authorities arrested dozens of activists and bloggers, most of whom had criticized conditions in government-run quarantine centers or the government's failure to provide adequate compensation to people struggling financially due to fallout from the pandemic⁴².

The war in Nagorno-Karabakh brought multiple violations of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan, both on and away from the frontlines⁴³. Early on during the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Azerbaijan's government restricted Internet access around the country, citing a need to prevent large-scale provocations and cyber incidents⁴⁴. State-owned Internet provider Bakinternet completely cut off access to the Internet. Other Internet providers cut access to social networks, and to a number of foreign and local websites, such as local bank mobile apps, or remote education programs⁴⁵. Martial law, which was invoked during the conflict, allowed Internet censorship.

Azerbaijan ranked 167th place among 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index⁴⁶. Independent journalists were harassed and repressed for their work, and wartime restrictions only exacerbated the free media crisis. For example, independent journalists were denied access to the frontline during the war. In contrast, pro-governmental journalists were granted such an access. This uneven treatment of journalists meant that in-

dependent journalists were not able to broadcast from the frontline.

During the two decades between 1992 and 2011, more than 50 political parties were registered in Azerbaijan. However, after a nine year break, in 2020 seven new parties were registered, and on October 21, 2021, two more were registered⁴⁷. Very few political parties are operating independently, and at least 45 parties are under the control of the Presidential Administration.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 1/8

The Aliyev family has held the presidency since 1993. The biased electoral framework, repressed media, and political environment have effectively made it impossible for opposition parties to gain power through elections. Traditional opposition parties boycotted the most recent parliamentary, presidential, and municipal elections rather than take part in an unfair process.

Currently, President Aliyev's New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) held its 70 seats in the 125-seat parliament. Independent candidates with no party affil-

iation gained 41 seats, although they are expected to vote along with the YAP, giving President Aliyev effective control over parliament⁴⁸. None of the parties in the Milli Majlis (the National Assembly) are in opposition to the country's leadership. Therefore, the position of the incumbent YAP has the determining voice in the parliament. This "party of power" echoes the pro-Russian narrative. Depending on the situation it most often criticizes Western institutions, accusing them of interfering with the Azerbaijan's domestic affairs.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 3/7

In post-war Azerbaijan, countries were divided into friends and non-friends, according to their position during the war. Turkey, Pakistan, Israel, Georgia, and Ukraine are in the friendly group, while the co-chairs of the Minsk Group – France, Russia, and the United States – are in the unfriendly group. Particularly during the war, the position of France's President and parliament damaged the population's trust in the West. In an interview with television station France 24, President Ilham Aliyev stated that that, "during the war, frankly speaking, France was not behaving like an honest broker. France took sides; took the side of Armenia, openly accusing Azerbaijan and demonstrating a one-sided approach in its statements and

actions. That was, of course, a matter of concern, and we raised this concern because once again, I'd like to say, any country can have preferences, friends, and those who are not friends. It's up to them. We have nothing to say. But if a country has a mandate from the OSCE to be a mediator, in this case, that country should be neutral"⁴⁹.

According to the Annual Survey Report, EaP Regional Overview – 5th Wave (carried out before the war in the spring of 2020)⁵⁰, the EU is the most trusted foreign institution among 41% of Azerbaijan's citizens, with 31% of the respondents saying that they have most trust in the United Nations, 25% in NATO, and 26% in the Eurasian Economic Association. 30% Azerbaijan's population knows

that the EU provides their country with financial support. 69% of respondents described relations

between the EU and Azerbaijan as good, whereas only 13% assessed them as bad.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 4/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 1/6

A referendum modify Azerbaijan's constitution was held on September 26, 2016. At that time, the Venice Commission, an advisory unit of the Council of Europe, said of the referendum: "Many proposed amendments would severely upset the balance of

power by giving 'unprecedented' powers to the president"⁵¹. Since then, Baku has not requested advice from the VC. Over the two last years, Azerbaijan has not cooperated with/requested any advice from the VC."

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 1/7

During most of the reporting period, the courts were closed due to the pandemic, and no change to improve the situation was observed in the legislation affecting the judiciary. Judges are made up of the most loyal members of the government and

do not overturn cases against government bodies in any political cases, or for many non-political cases. According to the 2021 Freedom House Report, Azerbaijan's judiciary is "corrupt and subservient to the executive"⁵².

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 1/6

On November 5, 2021, at the plenary session of the Milli Mejlis (Azerbaijan's parliament), the bill, "On the declaration of amnesty amid the November 8 Victory Day" was adopted⁵³. According to preliminary data, more than 16,000 convicts will receive amnesty⁵⁴. However, the current amnesty does not solve the issue of political prisoners. According to the coordinator of the Committee against Repression and Torture, Namizad Safarov, "Acts of amnesty are adopted in Azerbaijan with political discrimination. Our amnesty does not apply to persons arrested for political beliefs and views.

Although these persons are being charged under various articles of the Criminal Code, it is obvious that the criminal cases against them are far-fetched and fabricated"⁵⁵. According to the Elshan Hasanov⁵⁶, co-coordinator of the Union For the Freedom of Political Prisoners of Azerbaijan, there are 121 political prisoners on the list updated as of May 2021. At the same time, according to the Line of Defense human rights organization, violations have been recorded in the areas of political freedoms, personal integrity, fair trial, freedom of opinion, freedom of the media, and assembly⁵⁷.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 1/6

According to the State Statistical Committee, in 2020, there were 9,945 convictions in Azerbaijan, which is 2,999 less than in the previous year⁵⁸. During the reporting period, Azerbaijan's Supreme

Court decided to terminate on acquittal grounds the charges against opposition REAL Party leader Ilgar Mammadov, and lawyer and human rights defender Rasul Jafarov⁵⁹.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 12/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 1.5/7

Azerbaijan has five preferential trade agreements in force. The trade-weighted average tariff rate is 8.5 percent, and non-tariff barriers impede some transactions. Azerbaijan is not yet a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), despite having applied for membership in 1997. Accession negotiations are ongoing. Azerbaijan still has not signed the Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (AA/DCFTA) with the EU. Azerbaijan was a party to many initiatives launched by the EU, including the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TASIS), Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX), Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE), European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),

and Eastern Partnership (EaP), to which the EU attached different technical means to achieve regulatory convergence. In this respect, Azerbaijan was among the signatories of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU in the late 1990s. It is worthwhile to remember that the PCA is still the legal framework regulating EU-Azerbaijan cooperation. Azerbaijan has always cherry-picked what was offered by the EU through the programs according to its immediate needs, largely side-lining the EU's normative agenda. In February 2017, the EU and Azerbaijan began negotiations on a new framework agreement designed to enhance political dialogue, trade, and mutually beneficial cooperation. Nonetheless, in 2019, several channels signaled that the EU and Azerbaijan were on the verge of finalizing the agreement⁶⁰.

3.2. INDEX OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM FROM THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION 3.5/6

Azerbaijan's economic freedom score is 70.1, making its economy the 38th freest in the 2021 Index. Its overall score has increased by 0.8 points, primarily due to an improvement in government in-

tegrity. Azerbaijan is ranked 23rd among 45 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is equal to the regional average but above the world average⁶¹.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE OF THE SALE OF GOODS 4/6

The EU is Azerbaijan's first trading partner and biggest export and import market. In 2020, total trade between EU and Azerbaijan was \$7.9 billion, with imports from the EU estimated at \$1.5 billion, and exports to the EU at \$6.4 billion⁶². In 2020, the EU's share of Azerbaijan's exports was 49.49% and its share of Azerbaijan's imports was 23.59%⁶³. EU imports from Azerbaijan chiefly consist of mineral products (fuel), vegetable products, chemicals, ma-

chinery, and base metals. EU exports to Azerbaijan are dominated by machinery, precious metals and articles thereof, chemicals, base metals and articles thereof, transport equipment, foodstuffs, beverages and tobacco, optical and photographic instruments, miscellaneous manufactured articles, and plastics, rubber, and articles thereof. Azerbaijan's main trading partners in 2020 were Italy, Turkey, Russia, China, and Germany.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 3/6

According to 2021 UNCTAD World Investment Report, Azerbaijan received \$507 million in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in 2020, a significant drop from 2019 (\$1.5 billion)⁶⁴. These inflows were focused on the oil and gas sector, although one of the top priorities of Azerbaijan's government is to diversify the economy and attract FDI to agriculture, transportation, tourism, and information/communication technology. FDI outflow was \$825 million in 2020, a significant drop from 2019 (\$2.4 billion). FDI in Azerbaijan's economy rose to \$1.6 billion in the first half of 2021, 25.1% more than in the same period last year, according to the Central Bank⁶⁵. According to the Bank, 82.8% of FDI was invested in the oil and gas sector. The list of top countries in which Azerbaijan invested in 2020 is as follows: Turkey (26.9%), the United States (13.8%), Luxembourg (9.89%), Montenegro (8.15%), Malta (6.73%), Russia (7.64%), Austria (7.52%), Bahrain (3.61%), UK (3.59%), and Georgia (3.13%)⁶⁶. The list of top foreign countries investing in Azerbaijan in 2020 is as follows: UK (37.1%), Turkey (12.8%), USA (10.5%), Japan (7.58%), Malaysia (6.88%), Cyprus (5.02%), Iran (4.43%), Norway (4.32%), Russia (3.5%), and the Netherlands (1.72%)⁶⁷.

Following the ceasefire declaration, which brought an end to the intense fighting between

Azerbaijan and Armenia in the fall of 2020, Azerbaijan's government was seeking new investments in the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh that were previously under the control of Armenian-backed separatists. Azerbaijan's 2021 budget includes an allocation of AZN 2.2 billion (\$1.3 billion) for the restoration and reconstruction of these territories. Keeping the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict frozen increases stress and risk, deterring foreign investment to the region.

The European business community in Azerbaijan represents the largest group of foreign investors, with the presence of approximately 400 European companies. Most of these European businesses are small and medium-sized entities operating in the non-oil sectors, which are of strategic importance for diversifying the local economy. According to the EU Business Climate Report Azerbaijan 2020⁶⁸, the confidence of European companies in Azerbaijan's economy remains stable. According to the responses obtained during surveys and interviews, Azerbaijan remains an attractive location for European companies. Over 80% of European companies confirmed their readiness to choose Azerbaijan again as a location for their economic activities, and the companies remain optimistic about their future in Azerbaijan.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 9/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

The Latin alphabet is being used.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 2/6

According to the English Proficiency Index 2021, Azerbaijan's population is among the world's worst when it comes to knowledge of the English lan-

guage. Azerbaijan was among countries with a "very low" level of English proficiency and ranked 86th out of 112 countries where the study was conducted⁶⁹.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 5/7

Hollywood movies dominate in Azerbaijan's movie theaters, with smaller niches occupied by Turkish motion pictures and domestic films. After the introduction of new rules requiring the dubbing of all movies into Azerbaijani language in 2014, the share of foreign TV series dropped greatly. At present, TV channels broadcast domestic TV series.

There were 4.30 million social media users in Azerbaijan in January 2021. This number in-

creased by 600,000 (16%) between 2020 and 2021⁷⁰. According to Social Media Stats in Azerbaijan (October 2021), the most popular social network in Azerbaijan was Facebook. Its market share was 56.4% (4.8 million users), while other social networks were significantly less popular: Pinterest (15.4%), YouTube (11.6%), Instagram (7.2%), Twitter (4.7%), Tumblr (0.3%), and VKontakte (0.66%)⁷¹.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 4.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 0.5/5

According to Azerbaijan's State Committee for Statistics (January-April 2021), the number of citizens going abroad decreased by 5.8 times compared with January-April 2020 and amounted to 162,800 persons. 42.4% of citizens who

traveled went to Turkey, 22.1% percent visited the Russian Federation, 9.4% went to Georgia, 7.9% to Iran, and 19.2% went to other countries⁷². The population that had visited Western countries was less than 5%.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2/3

None of the world's top 10 grocery retailers have a presence in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's grocery chains are strongly present on the market. Of the internationally known fast food chains, only McDonald's, Starbucks, Gloria Jeans, Travelers, Burger King, Cinnabon, Paul, Second Cup, United Coffee Beans, Vapiano, Domino's, Papa John's, Pizza Hut, and KFC are currently doing business in Azerbaijan. Risks and

monopoly on the Azerbaijani market may be deterring factors. Among restaurants widespread in the United States and Europe, Hard Rock Cafe operates in Azerbaijan. There are many international fashion luxury brands in Baku: Tom Ford, Burberry, Chloe, Chicco, Emporio Armani, Boss, Marc Jacobs, MAX-&Co, Michael Kors, Mont Blanc, Paul, Paul & Shark, Rolex, Tiffany & Co, Max Mara, Valentino, etc⁷³.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

There were 8.26 million Internet users in Azerbaijan in January 2021 (out of a total population of 10.18 million in January 2021). The number of Internet users in Azerbaijan increased by 202,000 (2.5%) between 2020 and 2021. Internet penetration in Azerbaijan stood at 81.1% in January 2021⁷⁴. There were 11.3 million mobile connections in Azerbaijan in January 2021. The number of mobile connections

in Azerbaijan increased by 92,000 (0.8%) between January 2020 and January 2021. The number of mobile connections in Azerbaijan in January 2021 was equivalent to 111% of the total population⁷⁵. The number of mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in Azerbaijan is 102.02, however, the number of smartphone users is no more than 7 million people (less than 70% of population of Azerbaijan).

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF	Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
		4.5 /25	4 /25	8 /25	7.5 /15

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 4.5/25

1.1. DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 1/10

The repression of protests in the Republic of Belarus following the presidential elections on August 9, 2020, marked a serious deterioration in the area of political freedom. “Belarus is an authoritarian country in which elections are openly falsified, and civil liberties are severely limited,” the Freedom House organization assesses the situation⁷⁶. The Freedom in the World report included Belarus on the list of “not free” countries, and its overall rating was among the post-Soviet countries, with the lowest marks given to Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan⁷⁷.

“Belarus is the most dangerous country in Europe for media personnel”, was the assessment of Belarus’s level of freedom of speech by the Reporters Without Borders organization⁷⁸. According to the World Press Freedom Index, Belarus dropped five positions, down to 158 out of 180 countries

in the ranking⁷⁹. The situation is considered to be worse in such post-Soviet countries as Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan.

International organizations reported numerous restrictions on political freedoms in Belarus, including attacks on peaceful assembly participants. In December 2020, more than 27,000 people were reported to have been arrested amid massive protests following the country’s controversial presidential election⁸⁰. Many opposition activists were forced to leave the country, including the main opponent of the authorities in the elections, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who was granted asylum in Lithuania⁸¹. The USA, the UK, the EU, and a number of other countries did not recognize Alexander Lukashenko as the legitimate president of Belarus; he is recognized as such in Russia, China, Iran, Armenia, Syria, Venezuela, and Cuba⁸².

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN THE PARLIAMENT 1/8

The majority of the 110 deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus consists of non-party candidates closely associated with Lukashenko; they also include former government civil servants and diplomats⁸³. The Plan for International Parliamentary Cooperation of the House of Representa-

tives for 2021 contains virtually no joint initiatives with parliamentarians from Western countries⁸⁴. At the same time, it emphasizes the cooperation with the parliaments of Russia and the CIS countries. The refusal of influential Western countries to recognize Alexander Lukashenko as president resulted in limitations of parliamentary-level polit-

ical contacts. The acute anti-Western orientation of Lukashenko's statements is also reflected in the rhetoric of Belarusian deputies. Attacks from

Belarusian politicians were especially sharp during the migration crisis that erupted on the border with Poland in the fall of 2021⁸⁵.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 2.5/7

Opinion polls in Belarus bring to light citizens' positive attitude towards Western countries. Thus, according to a survey by the Center for Eastern Studies (OSW), the majority of Belarusians (62.1%) had a positive attitude towards the European Union⁸⁶. A trusting attitude also prevails towards certain Western countries: 78.5% of Belarusians had a positive and rather positive attitude towards Germany, 73.5% towards Poland, and 59% towards the USA. At the same time, the traditional leader of Belarusian sympathies is Russia, with an indicator of 86.7%⁸⁷. The Chatham House Internet survey conducted in April 2021 reveals the multi-vector nature of the foreign policy

sentiments of Belarusian citizens⁸⁸. Thus, 9% are in favor of accession to the EU, 32% are in favor of an alliance with Russia, 46% are in favor of an alliance with Russia and the EU at the same time, 13% are against any alliances. Public demand for neutrality and a prudent foreign policy is quite noticeable among Belarusian citizens. In this context, a poll by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (April 2021) indicates that 13.7% of Belarusians see their country in the EU in 5-10 years, the same number are in favor of the Eurasian Economic Union, 26.7% are in favor of maintaining neutrality, and 35.8% found it difficult to answer⁸⁹.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 4/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 1/6

The year 2021 was devoted to the preparation of a new draft of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. Alexander Lukashenko promised to hold a referendum on the new Constitution in early 2022. The Constitutional Court of Belarus reported that the Venice Commission was informed about "the preparation of proposals to amend the Constitution of Belarus, concerning the competence of the Constitutional Court"⁹⁰. In August 2021, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also asked the Venice Commission to assess constitutional

reform in Belarus⁹¹. At the time of the preparation of this Westernization Index, the final draft of the new Constitution of Belarus had not been revealed publicly. At the same time, in March 2021, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe proclaimed its position, having expressed concerns over the excessive regulation of the procedural aspects of assembly holding in Belarus. Key areas of concern included "the criminal prosecution of peaceful demonstrators; use of vague concepts; the severity and ambiguity of the penalties provided for in the Criminal Code"⁹².

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 1/7

According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2021, Belarus was ranked 97th out of 139 countries⁹³. In 2021, the country received its lowest

score in six years of assessment, at 0.48 out of 1⁹⁴. Most of the post-Soviet countries outstripped it in the ranking. "While formally independent, Belarus's

judicial system is de facto subordinate to the executive branch,” Freedom House reports⁹⁵. The same assessment is given in the report of the US Depart-

ment of State: “The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but authorities do not respect judicial independence and impartiality”⁹⁶.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 1/6

Officially in Belarus, protection of human rights and freedom are guaranteed both by the current Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and by international treaties to which Minsk is a signatory. At the same time, it should be noted that Belarus is not a member of the Council of Europe, nor a member of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Belarus is the only country in Europe to use the death penalty⁹⁷.

Minsk has repeatedly turned up in international reports regarding human rights violations since 1994, the year Alexander Lukashenko came to power. Last year, a number of harsh statements were made at the UN, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, due to the persecution of Belarusian protesters^{98 99}. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported receiving 2,000 complaints of torture and other cruel forms of punishment in places of detention¹⁰⁰.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 1/6

The acquittal rate in Belarus remains low. In 2020, Belarusian courts considered 32,010 criminal cases, in which 34,572 people were convicted¹⁰¹. There were only

93 acquittals, which is less than 0.3%. In the first half of 2021, 16,134 cases were considered with a verdict. The number of persons acquitted was 24 (0.15%)¹⁰².

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 8/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 1/7

Belarus applied to join the WTO in 1993 – negotiations have intensified noticeably only in recent years. The media had forecast the country’s possible entry to the organization in 2020 or early 2021¹⁰³. Belarus continued negotiations with the US, EU, Ukraine, New Zealand, and Canada on joining the

WTO¹⁰⁴. The coronavirus pandemic was reported to have slowed negotiations. Belarus did not aim to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. In the summer of 2021, Belarus suspended its participation in the EU’s Eastern Partnership initiative, in response to EU sanctions¹⁰⁵.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 2.5/7

The Index of Economic Freedom ranked Belarus 95th in 2021 (out of 178 countries)¹⁰⁶. Those who compiled the rating noted that the country is characterized by a drop in indicators related to economic freedom, and that Belarus barely managed to stay in the “mod-

erately free” group. “In addition to weaknesses in the judicial system, relatively low scores on the property rights and government integrity indicators illustrate the need for the government to take additional steps to strengthen the rule of law”¹⁰⁷.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 2/6

In 2020, Russia was Belarus's main trade partner, and its share accounted for 48.3% of the total trade turnover^{108 109}. The European Union is the second largest trading partner (19.6% of foreign trade turnover)¹¹⁰. The first four months of 2021 did not bring significant changes to the list of leaders in trade cooperation with Belarus¹¹¹. Russia continued to hold

the lead with a share of 49%, while trade with the EU amounted to 21.1% of the total. Ukraine occupied the second position among Belarus's main trade partners (with a share of trade turnover of 7.7%). China is in the third position (6.6%). Trade with the United States accounted for 1.5% of total turnover¹¹².

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 2.5/6

Due to the political crisis in Belarus, international financial institutions refuse to cooperate with the country's authorities. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has stopped financing new projects in the country (both public and private projects)¹¹³. The World Bank has also limited its activities¹¹⁴. According to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, the main investors in the

country's economy in 2020 were Russia (21.7%, or \$307.3 million), Cyprus – 17.7% (\$251 million) and the Netherlands (8.4%)¹¹⁵. The top five investors also included Germany (5.4%) and the United States (3%)¹¹⁶. According to the results over nine months in 2021, Russia accounted for 44% of incoming foreign investments, with Cyprus accounting for 12.6%, and Ukraine for 13.1%¹¹⁷.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 7.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 1/2

Belarus does not use the Latin alphabet. The Latin alphabet is widespread in the names of cafes, shops, and all kinds of brands. There is no discussion about the transition of the language into "Belarusian Lacinka" (the Belarusian Latin alphabet). The Latin alphabet is used when

duplicating the names of streets, stations, and geographical names. In general, the position of the Russian language is strong in Belarus – out of 7.9 million citizens who identify themselves as of Belarusian nationality, 6 million people usually speak Russian at home.¹¹⁸

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENCY IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 3/6

According to the EF English Proficiency Index for 2021, Belarus is included in the group of countries with English proficiency at the "moderate proficiency" level. In the overall ranking, it is at 38th position, which is a rather high indicator: only four post-Soviet

countries (three Baltic countries and Moldova) have overtaken Belarus¹¹⁹. The 2019 survey showed that 63% of citizens do not speak foreign languages, 28% speak one foreign language, and 6% speak two languages¹²⁰.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 3.5/7

The most popular TV channels in Belarus are dominated by Russian and Ukrainian film productions. On the main state TV channel, "Belarus 1", out of 26 TV series aired in November 2021, 15 were produced in Russia, 10 in Ukraine, and one in Belarus.¹²¹ The ONT channel was dominated by Russian-made entertainment programs and series. Out of 10 TV series aired in November 2021 on ONT, the majority were of Russian origin.¹²² Film distribution was dominated by Western production – the USA, United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Germany (a

total of eight films in November 2021)¹²³. However, Russia did not lag behind this indicator – five Russian films were distributed in November in Minsk.

According to Internet World Stats, in 2020, Internet coverage in Belarus was 82.8% (7.8 million Internet users)¹²⁴. 82.8% of respondents in Belarus watch YouTube¹²⁵. The most popular social networks are VKontakte (77%), Instagram (65%), Odnoklassniki (57%) and Facebook (47%). At the bottom of the ranking are TikTok (22%), Twitter (17%), LinkedIn (11%), and Snapchat (8%).

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 5.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1.5/5

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, most of the organized groups of Belarusian tourists went to Egypt (44.6%) and Turkey (24.2%) in 2020. All other countries were seriously lagging behind these two destinations – Ukraine

(4.7%), Poland (4.2%), Russia (2.3%), and Lithuania (1.6%)¹²⁶. Western countries were not popular destinations, at least for organized tourist groups. Quarantine measures associated with the Covid-19 pandemic have become a serious obstacle for travel.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2/3

Western brands are widely represented in Belarus, and a significant part of them belong to companies selling clothes, as well as in the food sector. The following brands are present on the market – Mango, Hugo Boss, Inditex group brands (Zara, Bershka, Pull & Bear, Stradivarius, Massimo Dutti), McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, etc. The Polish clothing manufacturer LPP SA, representing such brands as Reserved, House, Cropp, Mohito, and Sinsay, opened four stores in 2020, and another 10 in the first half of 2021¹²⁷. Despite the political prob-

lems within the country, large Western companies continue to promote their brands on the Belarusian market. Studies by Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights showed that two out of three commercials broadcast on state television were made in the interest of large corporations from Europe and the United States¹²⁸. At the same time, the famous French construction retailer Leroy Merlin has suspended the construction of a hypermarket in Belarus, which was supposed to be opened in 2021 (the official reason given was the coronavirus crisis)¹²⁹.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

The number of cellular subscribers in 2021 amounted to 11.67 million (with a penetration rate of 125%)¹³⁰. 64% of subscribers use the Internet access services. Cellular mobile telecommunication services of the second (2G) and third (3G) generations are available to 99.9% of the population in

more than 98% of the country's territory. The coverage of cellular telecommunication services using LTE technology (standard for wireless high-speed data transmission) is constantly increasing and as of April 1, 2021, it accounted for 92% of the population and 42.8% of Belarusian territory¹³¹.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
22.5/25	23/25	25/25	13.5/15	9/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 22.5/25

1.1 DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 9.5/10

The status of democracy in Estonia has remained at a high level over the past two years, despite the pandemic situation. The country continues to hold a strong position in various international rankings on democracy and freedoms.¹³² In the Freedom House’s “Nations in Transit 2021”, it is listed as a “consolidated democracy”, with 84 points out of 100 (this score declined by one point, but continues to hold the highest rating among the countries surveyed regardless)¹³³. Estonia ranks consistently highly in terms of Internet and press freedoms¹³⁴.

Estonia’s last parliamentary elections took place in March 2019, resulting in a governing coalition between the Center Party of Estonia, Pro Patria (Isamaa) Party, and the Estonian Conservative People’s Party (EKRE), leaving the Estonian Reform Party (the winner of the elections) in the opposition. This coalition collapsed in January 2021, having been in office for less than two years. The reasons for the breakdown were manifold but two issues gave a direct impetus. First, the junior coalition member – the populist far-right EKRE – proved to be a highly difficult partner. Due to lack of previous experience in government as well as a very limited pool of appropriate candidates for the positions, the ministers changed often (altogether ten people filled the five ministerial positions allocated to EKRE in the course of 20 months of office; the position of the Minister for Entrepreneurship and Information Technology alone saw four different ministers). The govern-

ment’s everyday work was constantly interrupted by various scandals and solo performances by EKRE ministers, some of which also attracted negative international attention. In one of the most significant incidences, Minister of the Interior Mart Helme referred to the Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin as a “salesgirl”, which led to official apologies both by the President and the Prime Minister¹³⁵. Consequently, at the time of the first wave of the pandemic, the public space was filled with endless corrections and assurances issued by the Prime Minister Juri Ratas and other coalition members to remedy EKRE’s rhetoric, curbing the government’s capacity to respond to the crisis. The second reason for the change of the government was the corruption charge raised against Mikhail Korb, the secretary general of the Prime Minister’s Center Party, who was revealed to be under investigation regarding a €39-million loan related to a real estate development in Tallinn¹³⁶. As the Center Party had been wrestling with various corruption charges over the years (both at the time of its previous controversial leader Edgar Savisaar and its current leader Juri Ratas), this became the opportunity for the Center Party to kill several birds with one stone: both get rid of an inconvenient coalition partner, and demonstrate the ability to “take political responsibility”.

The new government, formed by the Reform Party and the Center Party, took office on January 26, 2021 and is led by Kaja Kallas, Chairperson of the

Reform Party. This is a crisis government that has primarily needed to address the health, economic and societal implications of Covid-19. There is no love lost between the coalition partners – the Reform Party’s liberal outlook and the more centrist, social ideology of the Center Party have conflicted repeatedly over measures to alleviate the effects of the crisis, to the point that the government has been consistently criticized over delayed decisions and low ambitions. The main concern is that vaccination against Covid-19, which started very well in the winter of 2021, has now stalled – Estonia’s current vaccination rate is 58.3% (defined as people vaccinated with two doses as of November 15, 2021)¹³⁷. EKRE has attempted to capitalize on the anti-vaccination sentiment; though it claims to not be vaccination-sceptic, party leader Martin Helme spoke at Estonia’s biggest anti-vaccination rally in October 2021, which led to a backlash where more than 20 people left the party in protest¹³⁸. It must be pointed out that contrary to many other European countries, Estonia’s restrictions during the most recent wave of the virus were relatively mild and the society was kept open by the widespread use of Covid-19 vaccination passports. Despite the highest recorded rate of infections throughout any wave (and an extremely difficult situation in the hospitals) in the autumn of 2021, anyone immunized could still eat out, go to sports clubs, and enjoy entertainment (cinemas, theaters, pubs, etc.) until 11:00 pm every day. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction with the government’s effectiveness (as well as Prime Minister Kallas’ abilities as a leader) has been on the rise and the party ratings have been declining¹³⁹.

In addition to the new government, Estonia also got a new President in October 2021. Kersti Kalju-

laid, who held the office for five years and was widely regarded as successful, was replaced by Alar Karis, a former University Rector, Auditor General and Head of the Estonian National Museum. In Estonia, the President is elected by the Parliament, and the main reason why Kaljulaid was not able to continue was the lack of support from the Center Party, as well as Pro Patria and EKRE, due to her public criticism of Ratas’ government involving EKRE. Karis is considered to be an intelligent and relatively neutral President who is familiar with the inner workings of the state apparatus, though he has little expertise in foreign policy which is a responsibility shared with the President in this parliamentary country.

On top of the above, municipal elections took place in October 2021. While the elections themselves were regular, fair and free, the commentators have attempted to draw conclusions for the 2023 parliamentary elections, even though the local and national results cannot be directly compared. Overall, 24.3% of the votes were won by electoral coalitions formed at the local level, 24.4% of votes were for the Center Party, 17.3% for the Reform Party (the share of votes declined for both compared to previous elections), 13.2% for EKRE (this share increased twofold compared to previous elections), 8.4% for Pro Patria (support remained the same), 6% for Eesti 200 (a newcomer), 5% for the Social Democrats (this share declined by half), and 1.1% for the Greens¹⁴⁰. The results are indicative of the steady rise of EKRE, and of room for new political actors, as indicated by the support to Eesti 200, which has managed to build up its local network of representatives. This may mean that the populist far-right party will contend for the position of the Prime Minister following the next elections.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 7/8

Following Estonia’s latest parliamentary elections, five parties entered into parliament: the Reform Party (28.9% of the votes), the Center Party (23.1%), EKRE (17.8%), Pro Patria (11.4%),

and the Social Democratic Party (9.8%). While all five have confirmed their adherence to Western integration, including EU and NATO membership, EKRE is the only party to have criticized the EU

for its federalist tendencies and intervening in Estonia's domestic affairs. The party also contested (albeit unsuccessfully) some EU initiatives (such as the European Stability Mechanism and the Green Deal) while it was part of the government¹⁴¹. The charge usually brought up in connection with the

Center Party is its links to the Kremlin, which is a reference to the 2004 cooperation protocol with Russia's ruling United Russia party. That agreement has been declared non-active (there are no known existing contacts between the two) but it also has not been formally annulled.

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 6/7

Public opinion of Western institutions and integration with the West is positive, and this is a stable trend. In the spring of 2021, trust in the EU was at 63% (EU average 49%), and support for the economic and monetary union was at 89% (EU average 70%)¹⁴². Support for NATO membership was at 78% (broken down as 93% among Estonians and 43% among residents from other nationalities – though support among non-Estonians has increased by about

10 percentage points since 2015-2018 and stabilized at current levels). Support for NATO Battlegroups stationed in Estonia is at 75% (92% among Estonians, 38% among other nationalities). Support for Estonia's participation in international military operations is at 64%¹⁴³. In 2020-21, Estonia served as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, which has increased domestic visibility of international institutions and Western partners.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 23/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 6/6

The Constitution of Estonia is in compliance with the requirements of the Venice Commission and there have been no recent constitutional changes.

Estonia has also not submitted any legal requests regarding other draft laws to the Venice Commission in the past two years.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 7/7

The state of the judiciary remains very good, according to various assessments. In the Bertelsmann Stiftung's 2020 Transformation Index, Estonia scored maximum points for its independent judiciary and rule of law in general¹⁴⁴. The Eurobarometer survey about perceived independence of the Estonian justice system among the general public (2021) shows that 64% of the respondents rated

the justice system as either very good or fairly good (EU average 54%), as opposed to 24% who did not know or did not answer, and 10% who found the justice system to be either fairly bad or very bad¹⁴⁵. Estonia also ranks 11th across 139 countries in terms of rule of law according to the WJP Rule of Law Index 2021 (the rating has remained the same for the past three years)¹⁴⁶.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 5/6

There are no major changes concerning the status of human rights in Estonia – in general, human rights are respected and guaranteed. However, issues highlighted in previous reports, such as legislation concerning family and the cohabitation rights of same-sex couples, or LGBTQI+ rights in general have not been addressed, and were politicized by the previous government, to the point of planning a referendum on the definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Although the government coalition collapsed before the referendum could be arranged, the accompanying political rhetoric led to significant polarization over the issue. Among other topics which require continued attention are the significant at-risk-of-poverty rate (20.6%) and a gender pay gap (15.6% as of 2020)¹⁴⁷.

In 2021, Estonia's human rights record was reviewed for the third time by the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (first and second reviews took place in 2011 and 2016, respectively) and received recommendations for further consideration¹⁴⁸. In relation to this, the civil soci-

ety organizations (represented by the Equal Treatment Network in Estonia) prepared a Joint Submission to the Third Periodic Review, in which they pointed out several shortcomings in the Estonian human rights regime, such as lack of progress regarding the criminalization of hate speech, weak implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, physical inaccessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities, unstable financial support for gender equality and equal treatment programs, etc¹⁴⁹.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, civil liberties and rights have generally been respected and protected. Estonia activated Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which allows for the restriction of certain freedoms in a time of emergency, but this was done out of caution – should the need to enforce such restrictions arise – and was not implemented. More recently, the issue of dismissing employees who have refused vaccination against Covid-19 has risen, especially in the so-called “frontline” sectors (medical personnel, police, etc.) but the courts are yet to rule on the legality of the procedures¹⁵⁰.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 5/6

In 2020, 33,658 civil case and 14,440 criminal case proceedings were filed in the first instance. There were 2,815 civil case and 1,874 criminal case proceedings filed in circuit courts, and 1,098 civil case and 845 criminal cases filed with the Supreme Court. The number of criminal cases has consistently decreased over the past five years, whereas the number of civil cases

has increased, putting a strain on the courts¹⁵¹. Of the criminal cases brought to circuit courts in 2020, 8.2% of decisions made in the first instance remained unchanged, 0.5% were fully overturned and 0.8% were partially overturned. Of the civil cases in circuit courts, 2.4% remained unchanged, 1.0% were fully overturned, and 1.6% partially overturned¹⁵².

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 25/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 7/7

Estonia has been a member of the WTO since 1999, the EU since 2004 (it joined the Eurozone in 2011), and the OECD since 2010. Strong external trade policy is

one of four key elements outlined in the Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030¹⁵³. For a country with a small domestic market like Estonia, the multilateral rules-

based trade regime and open international economic environment are vital. One priority in terms of external

trade is digitalization (including digital services, e-government, and cyber security solutions).

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 6/6

Estonia's liberal market economy and tax system, combined with its unique e-residency program for citizens of other countries, has proven attractive for international companies. For example, the country ranks 8th in the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom. Estonia holds the 26th position in the IMD 2021 World Competitiveness Ranking (first among the countries of the region)¹⁵⁴, and has been ranked sixth among the world's emerging startup ecosystems in 2021¹⁵⁵. The credit ratings of Estonia are also high: AA- (Standard & Poor's; Fitch) and A1 (Moody's)¹⁵⁶.

In terms of transparency, the 2020 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International ranks Estonia as the 17th least corrupt country in the world¹⁵⁷. The Eurobarometer survey on companies' perceived independence of the Estonian justice system (2021) shows that 57% of companies rate the justice system as either very good or fairly good (EU average 49%), whereas 33% did not know or did not respond, and only 10% found the justice system to be either fairly bad or very bad¹⁵⁸.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 6/6

The Estonian economy continues to be influenced by the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. While the economy has recovered faster than expected and the economic growth stood at 12.9% in the second quarter of 2021, the inflation rate has increased to 5%¹⁵⁹.

In 2020, Western trade partners continued to dominate Estonia's foreign trade. The top 10 ex-

port destinations included eight EU/EEA countries, the United States of America (7.86% of all exports, 4th place) and the Russian Federation (5.6%, 7th place). The top 10 import origin countries included seven EU countries, the Russian Federation (8.72%, 5th place), the UK (2.65%, 9th place), and Belarus (2.64%, 10th place).

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 6/6

Most recent foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Estonia have amounted to EUR 3 billion annually, although this trend is volatile. EU countries were responsible for most of the FDI in 2020, with investments from Luxembourg and Germany making up about 75% of total FDI. Out of top

10 countries, the only investments outside the EU/ EEA were from Ukraine (EUR 70 million)¹⁶⁰. By field of activity, the highest share from total FDI was invested into financial and insurance activities (31%), real estate (18%) and professional, scientific, and technical activities (13%)¹⁶¹.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 13.5/15

4.1 USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

Estonian is the official state language and it uses the Latin alphabet. Signage in other languages (pri-

marily English or Russian) may be used in parallel in bigger public spaces.

4.2 PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 5/6

Based on the results of the most recent census (2011), approx. 66% of the entire population know some foreign language¹⁶². The most common foreign language spoken among residents of Estonia continues to be Russian, however, 2020 was the first time that the Estonian-speakers were using English more than Russian as a language for work or studies. Given that the share of non-English speakers is declining among all residents, English is soon

likely to take over as the most common foreign language¹⁶³.

It is mandatory for pupils to learn at least two foreign languages. In order to graduate from upper secondary school, students are expected to take a foreign language examination in either English, German, Russian/Estonian or French and receive the level of an independent user (B-level according to the Common European Framework).

4.3 SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 6.5/7

Similarly to what was noted above, the majority of movies in Estonian cinemas in 2020 were of Western origin (the US and Europe). Among the top 15 most popular movies, five were either Estonian or co-produced by Estonia, one was French, and the rest were (co-)produced by the US¹⁶⁴. The most popular TV channel in terms of viewers (January until October 2021) is ETV (Estonian Public Broadcasting) with 16.5% of the daily share, followed by private channels Kanal 2 (8.3%) and TV3 (6.7%). The most

popular Russian channel is RTR Planeta (4.7%), followed by NTV Mir (3.5%)¹⁶⁵. Streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO and others are increasingly common among viewers.

According to the report "Digital 2021", Internet penetration in Estonia is 91%, and social media users make up an equivalent of 74.4% of the total population (as of January 2021)¹⁶⁶. The most common platforms are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki and VKontakte.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 9/10

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 4.5/5

While Estonians are otherwise avid travelers (both for tourism and work), the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly curtailed international travel in the past two years, making the numbers incomparable with the pre-pandemic era. Based on international travel statistics from April to June 2021, Estonian

residents made 190,000 visits abroad (62% more than at the same time in 2020 but 90% less than in 2019)¹⁶⁷. Most trips were made within the European Union, which is understandable, given the travel and epidemiological restrictions due to the global health crisis.

5.2 PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2.5/3

Though generally well-covered by major Western franchise corporations, the small number of consumers limits the attraction of the Estonian market. The Swedish chain IKEA has announced that it will open its store in Estonia in autumn 2022, and the German discount retailer Lidl is likely to open its first stores in early 2022.

5.3 MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

Mobile Internet and smartphones are very common in Estonia. According to Digital 2021, there were altogether 1.79 million mobile connections (135.3% of the population – some having more than one) in January 2021, 94.4% use a smartphones to access social media. At the same time, the price of high-speed Internet connection (1000 megabytes and more) is about 4-5 times higher in Estonia than in neighboring countries, which has caused significant dissatisfaction among consumers.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
18.5/25	14/25	17/25	9.5/15	5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 18.5/25

1.1. POLITICAL FREEDOM 6/10

Georgia remains a partly free country on a scale of civil liberties and political rights, according to the Freedom in the World report. However, in the past two years, its scores have worsened and dropped from 63 to 60 on a 100-point scale (100 stands for the freest and 0 for the least free). This backsliding is due to shortcomings in the 2020 parliamentary elections, criminal charges against an opposition leader, and government’s use of excessive force during civil protests in 2019. Political parties are usually able to form and function in Georgia without obstacles, but single-party dominance has overshadowed Georgia’s political landscape since the 2000s. For instance, two weeks after Mamuka Khazaradze announced his intention to form a political party in 2019, he was charged with money laundering (though he was not detained). On the other hand, Georgia decreased its vote threshold to 1%, allowing smaller parties to easily enter parliament¹⁶⁸.

Media freedom in Georgia has not changed much in the past several years, and maintains its position at 60 out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index. The media environment remains pluralistic but highly polarized, where media owners often define editorial content¹⁶⁹. During the campaign period prior to the 2020 parliamentary elections, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reported that major contestants had multiple opportunities to present their views through media, however partisan coverage of

the individual media outlets decreased the opportunity for voters to make an informed choice. Additionally, while the Georgian National Broadcaster used subtitles and sign language to include the voters with who were deaf or hard of hearing, others broadcasters did not. A lack of coverage of female politicians is explained by their limited role in political parties and government¹⁷⁰.

However, all developments in Georgia since October 2020 have been taking place under a months-long political crisis. The country has been in a state of political tension and frequent protests since the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections were rejected by a coalition of opposition parties, where in the ruling party, Georgian Dream (GD), acquired 48% of the votes, following by the United National Movement (UNM) with 27%. The opposition took to the streets, demanding new elections. After several rounds of negotiations facilitated by the EU, in April 2021, the GD and several opposition parties (except the UNM) reached an agreement and ended their boycott of parliament. In July 2021, the GD unexpectedly walked out on the agreement, claiming that the deal had exhausted itself. Under the deal, the GD was to hold snap parliamentary elections in case it failed to secure 43% of the votes in the upcoming local elections. Western diplomats, who mediated and invested in the above-mentioned agreement, criticized the decision, which also meant walking out on other commitments under the deal, including ju-

dicial and electoral reforms¹⁷¹. After the ruling party won 19 out of 20 mayoral races in the two-round local elections in October 2021, which received mixed assessment from international observers, the UNM, calling the elections “rigged”, once again took to the streets. Street rallies have been taking place in Tbilisi and Batumi ever since¹⁷². Against this political backdrop, former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili has remained in jail since October 1, when he secretly arrived in Georgia, following convictions in absentia on several controversial charges. The ruling party deemed Saakashvili’s arrival as an attempt to overthrow the government, while Saakashvili started a hunger strike. Since then, diplomats and West-

ern officials have appealed to the ruling party for Saakashvili’s release until the trial, fairness of the process and his removal to a civilian hospital, given his deteriorated health. So far, he has been denied transfer to court to attend his trial. On November 19, after a group of doctors assessed his condition as critical, Saakashvili was transferred to a military hospital, where he ended his hunger strike, followed by several MPs who had been taking part in a solidarity strike¹⁷³. All these events over the past several months have strongly shaken Georgia’s stance in the eyes of Western partners, while the country remains paralyzed in a polarized political environment and in political crisis mode.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 6.5/8

The majority of Georgian political parties represented in the parliament are pro-Western. As a result of the parliamentary elections on October 31, 2020, the Georgian Dream (GD) acquired 91 out of 150 seats, and the United National Movement (UNM) and its split party, European Georgia, have held 35 and 5 seats, respectively. All three parties are pro-Western, despite frequent accusations of pro-Russian stance from either side¹⁷⁴. It should be mentioned that some individual GD members (within and outside the parliament) are noted to have engaged in anti-Western propaganda, according to the report from the Media Development Foundation¹⁷⁵. Regardless, the share of pro-Western parties increased since the major opposition parties noted above increased their seat numbers from 27 to 40, and most

of the other small parties in parliament also adhere to the pro-Western position. At the same time, the share of the anti-Western minority decreased further. The only anti-Western party in the parliament, the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, only acquired 3% of the votes and is represented with 4 seats in parliament, which is 2 seats less than before. Other parties with anti-Western sentiments, such as the United Democratic Movement and a newly founded Georgian March did not surpass 1% of the vote. The Alliance of Patriots’ main anti-Western messages are against the US, NATO, and about the loss of identity. (It should be noted that the opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary results and until late spring 2021, parliament was only working with MPs from the ruling party and the Citizens party).

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 6/7

An absolute majority of Georgia’s population supports integration into Western institutions. This number has even increased slightly over the past two years, and in February 2021, 83% of Georgians supported EU membership and 78% supported NATO

membership, whereas about every tenth Georgian opposes membership in either. Even though Georgians also like to keep a relationship with Russia while prioritizing Western relations, the number of those who prefer an exclusively pro-Western foreign policy

increased in 2021. 40% of respondents proposed that Georgia's foreign policy should be only pro-European Union and Western (27% in 2019), while 45% prioritizes pro-Western foreign policy while also maintaining relations with Russia (49% in 2019). Those who prefer an exclusively pro-Russian policy (2%) or prioritizing relations with Russia in parallel to pro-Western

policies (6%) remain in the minority¹⁷⁶. Despite their political commitment to the West, Georgians adhere to conservative values that occasionally find themselves in juxtaposition with Western values, especially when it comes to the issues of gender and sexuality. In the 2020 survey, 39% of Georgians thought that the EU poses a threat to Georgian values¹⁷⁷.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 14/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 3/6

Georgia's latest developments concerning the Venice Commission requirements included electoral constitutional amendments and the appointment of Supreme Court judges. The electoral amendments were first proposed in March 2021 by the ruling Georgian Dream and the opposition party Citizens, and were later revised according to the EU-brokered agreement between the GD and the opposition in April 2021. The reform package initiated changes to the structure of the supreme body of the Central Election Commission. The Venice Commission was consulted, and the revised version was adopted on June 29, 2021. In its initial urgent opinion, the Venice Commission warned against frequent changes to electoral law leading to instability, as well as the amendments being too close to the next election period (October 2021)¹⁷⁸. The next revised version of the amendments considered the initial recommendations stemming from the Venice Commission's second urgent opinion, however the Commission also reiterated a pending recommendation for a systemic and comprehensive reform of the Georgian Electoral

Law, rather than urgent changes shortly before the upcoming elections. The Commission noted that most of the opposition parties had not participated in drafting the initial amendments but welcomed some of them joining parliament¹⁷⁹. However, the amendments were eventually adopted without the parties reaching an agreement on some fundamental issues and the major opposition parties UNM and Lelo refused to take part in the vote¹⁸⁰.

The second case concerned the amendments to the Organic Law on Common Courts (which was already adopted when the opinion of the Venice Commission was requested) and appointment of Supreme Court judges in April 2021. The Commission welcomed the amendments that had taken several previous recommendations but proposed further improvements to ensure a meaningful right to appeal and the equal treatment of candidates¹⁸¹. However, the appointment of six judges in July 2021 took place as the ruling party was accused of appointing loyal candidates and against a backdrop of general criticism of the judiciary system by the opposition and civil society¹⁸².

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 3.5/7

Georgia is currently undertaking several judicial reforms, but executive and legislative interference in the courts remains a problem. According to the Pub-

lic Integrity Index, Georgia's score slightly worsened from 5.66 in 2017 to 4.97 in 2019 (10 refers to the best performance) in the area of judicial independ-

ence¹⁸³. Georgia's judicial conduct over the past years has attracted some criticism. In July 2021, the Council of Justice in Georgia presented a list of Supreme Court nominees, but Georgian NGOs criticized their election process as opaque and expressed doubts as to the nominees' reputation. The list was nevertheless confirmed by parliament, despite opposition parties' refusal to participate in voting. The Council of Europe further criticized the appointment, noting a lack of requirements on the judges' impartiality. Consequently, Georgia failed to receive conditional EU financial assistance by September 2021. In addition, on October 31, just one day after local elections, the Conference of Judges of Georgia further appointed two new judges to the High Council of Justice. The process was criticized by the EU's representation in Georgia as "non-transparent and non-competitive". This hasty procedure was deemed another setback in the process of the judicial reform to which Georgia committed itself under the EU Association Agreement. Other recent setbacks listed by the EU included the similarly non-transparent appointment of judges in July 2021,

the non-adoption of constitutional amendments on the Prosecutor General's appointment, and a lack of credible investigation into attacks on journalists and activists during the July 5 protests¹⁸⁴. In addition to the EU, the US Embassy in Georgia also criticized the event as "neither competitive nor transparent" and described it as an expression of Georgia's unwillingness to embrace reforms and increase transparency in the judicial system¹⁸⁵.

In addition, human rights watchdogs have presented a number of accusations of politically motivated prosecutions and a lack of independence in the investigations on police abuses¹⁸⁶. According to the Human Rights Center in Georgia, government power over the Constitutional Court of Georgia increased further during the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁸⁷. It is not surprising that majority of the Georgian public remains skeptical of the judiciary. In a 2021 nation-wide survey, 55% of Georgians assessed the work of courts as unfavorable, while 30% saw it as favorable. However, the number of those with a favorable opinion has increased from 17% in 2019¹⁸⁸.

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 3.5/6

Georgia's constitution guarantees human rights, and it is part of major international human rights treaties and conventions. However, according to the Human Rights Watch 2021 report, abuses by law enforcement remain a problem¹⁸⁹. On a positive note, in 2020 Georgia adopted a la-

bor reform that addresses frequently noted issues in the labor rights law and a Code on the Rights of the Child. Both of these changes were long awaited, and despite some limitations, they were positively evaluated by both local and international human rights organizations¹⁹⁰.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 4/6

In 2020, Georgia's rate of acquittals in criminal cases was 8.3%. 12,513 cases were heard in the courts of first instance, out of which, 4,709 cases were heard in essence (meaning that they were heard in the court; the rest of the cases were final-

ized either by plea bargaining or they had been terminated or returned to the investigation), and there were 393 "not guilty" verdicts. Even though this number fits a trend of increasing acquittals since 2010, it is still a slight drop from 2019 (10.3%)¹⁹¹.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 17/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATION 4.5/7

Georgia has been a member of the WTO since June 14, 2000. Georgia's relations with the European Union are based on an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which entered into force in July 2016. Within this framework, the EU remains Georgia's main trading partner, the two cooperate over state reforms, and people to people contacts are promoted through joint exchanges and visa-free movement of Georgian citizens since

March 2017, though the latter was significantly limited during the Covid-19 pandemic due to restrictions over tourist travel and major flight cancellations. At the same time, during the pandemic, the EU mobilized a Covid-19 response package for Georgia, amounting to €183 million in grants¹⁹². In 2021, the Georgian government announced its plans to apply for EU membership by 2024, though there is skepticism about the EU's and Georgia's readiness for membership prospects¹⁹³.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 6/6

The Georgian economy is the 12th freest in the world. According to the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom, its scores even slightly improved in comparison to 2020, and the Georgia is leading in the post-Soviet space, second only to Estonia. The report characterizes Georgia as one of the world's most business-friendly countries,

where the government does not get in the way of business owners¹⁹⁴. However, in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2020, Georgia's score dropped slightly from 58 (in 2018) to 56 (unchanged in comparison to 2019) due to the high degree of concentration of power, with Georgia now ranking 45th out of 180 countries in the world¹⁹⁵.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE OF THE SALE OF GOODS 2.5/6

Despite Georgia's initial increase in trade with the EU, the Covid-19 pandemic stagnated the Georgian economy and also affected trade with the West. In comparison to 2019, Georgia's exports with EU countries have decreased from \$834 to 716 million, and imports from \$2.4 to 1.9 billion. In case of the US, exports have decreased from \$132 to 80 million, and imports have dropped from \$678 to 555 million. These

changes took place in a context of generally decreasing trade with almost all the trading partners. Despite this trend, the EU's share in Georgia's overall foreign trade has decreased slightly to 23.2% (from 24.2% in 2019), whereas the CIS countries' share increased slightly (from 33.7% to 34.4%). Georgia's top 10 trade partners include the US, Germany, Bulgaria, and Italy, but they are all preceded by Turkey, Russia, China, and Azerbaijan¹⁹⁶.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 4/6

The Covid-19 pandemic greatly impacted foreign direct investments in Georgia, with a decrease from \$1.3 billion to 573 million between

2019 and 2020. Georgia's largest investors from Western countries remain the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which comprise 50% and

28% of overall foreign direct investments, respectively. Other Western countries in the top 10 investors include the US, Malta, Luxemburg, Germany, and Denmark. Despite the overall decrease in foreign investments, those from the Western countries listed above (except the US) have increased,

reflecting the growing overall share of Western investments in Georgia (the UK share increased from 18% and that of the Netherlands increased from 7.7% in 2019). Thus, Western countries now represent Georgia's largest investors, with only Turkey with the UK and the Netherlands¹⁹⁷.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 9.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 1/2

Georgia's official language is Georgian, which is based on the Georgian alphabet and written in its own writing system. The Latin alphabet is not used. However, display boards in English (or at least English versions of the names) are very

frequent in public spaces. At the same time, in a context of tremendous growth in tourism, which is dominated by tourists from Russia¹⁹⁸, use of the Russian alphabet/language in tourism industry is also becoming highly visible.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 3.5/6

English language proficiency is not high in Georgia. According to the EF English Proficiency Index 2020, Georgia occupies 47th place out of 100 countries, and 31st place out of 34 countries in Europe. This score places it in the category of countries with moderate English proficiency. However, in comparison to 2019, Georgia has improved its place, moving up from 56th place, and thus moving from low to moderate proficiency¹⁹⁹. In the 2019 Caucasus Barometer Survey, 22% of Georgians reported English language proficiency at the intermediate or

advanced level, and 18% at the beginner level. In addition, 16% claim to know a foreign language other than Russian or English. There is a considerable age gap in the proficiency of English, whereas 44% of young people between 18-35 report intermediate or advanced proficiency, in comparison to 4% of Georgians over 56 years of age²⁰⁰. Therefore, it is not surprising that over time and with the inclusion of English as a compulsory foreign language at schools, the share of Georgians with English proficiency is growing.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TELEVISION, THE SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 5/7

Georgian movie theaters are fully dominated by Western and mostly American movies. As an example, on October 12, 2021, out of 13 movies running at all of Tbilisi's cinemas, all were Western (mostly

American). All of them were offered in Georgian or in English with Georgian subtitles²⁰¹. Similar trends can be noted among the movies shown on Georgian TV (Western along with Georgian movies).

When it comes to TV series, the situation is a bit different. Out of the 18 TV series from the three most-watched TV channels (Imedi, Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2) in October 2021, 3 were Western (1 British and 2 Ukrainian), while the rest were either Turkish (12), Indian (2), or Georgian (1). Thus, only about 10% of television programs were Western²⁰².

Georgians are frequent users of social media, and out of those who use it, in 2021, 96% reported using Facebook most frequently, while 21% use Instagram and 3% use Twitter. These

numbers represent an increase from 2019. Only a minority use the Russian alternative social media network Odnoklasniki (3%). However, one can assume that as English language knowledge is relatively low, Western Internet sites, especially for news and information, are much less popular. For instance, only 2% of Georgians note using Western news sites for information about the current international situation. A majority use Georgian TV (87%), followed by social media (49%) and Georgian news sites (10%)²⁰³.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 5/10

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 2/5 POINTS

Despite a small percentage of Georgians visiting Western countries, this number was on the rise since EU visa liberalization in 2017. In a 2019 national survey by CRRC, only 9% of Georgians reported that they had traveled to an EU country²⁰⁴. However, three years after the institution of visa-free movement with the EU (March 2020), half a million Georgians had made more than a million visits to the Schengen zone²⁰⁵. Unfortunately, the travel industry

was extremely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, completely halting Georgian outgoing travel in 2020, when most flights were canceled. In the summer of 2021, Georgia was on and off the EU's "red country" list, and Georgians' ability to travel for tourism was very limited due to the surge in Covid cases, as well as delayed vaccinations in Georgia. By mid-2020, 44% of Georgians were expecting less travel abroad during the next six months²⁰⁶.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1.5/3

Out of 100 top global retailers according to Deloitte 2021 report²⁰⁷, Carrefour, Spar, H&M, NIKE, GAP, and Marks & Spencer are present in Georgia. In addition, some other Western retailers in Georgia include McDonald's™, Burger King, Wendy's, Subway, KFC, Dunkin Donuts, Burberry, Superdry, La Senza, Mango, Monsoon, Zara, Massimo Dutti, Pull & Bear, Bershka, Armani Exchange, Calvin Klein, Lacoste, etc.²⁰⁸ As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020,

e-commerce in Georgia is now 3.2 times higher in comparison with the previous year. Georgians spent 3.3 times more on international online shopping than locally, and cross-border e-commerce spending has grown at an annual rate of 40% from 2018-2020. The largest Western online platforms used to shop abroad include Amazon, eBay, and Asos, however, offsetting factors include longer delivery time and additional shipping charges²⁰⁹.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1.5/2 POINTS

In past years, Georgia has seen a tremendous increase of Internet and smartphone usage. In a 2020 national survey, 80% of respondents reported that their households owned a smartphone (considering that each household has several members). This number represents almost a 20% increase since 2019²¹⁰. Even though there is no gender gap in overall Internet use, there are, however, divides in terms of age and geography. Younger people are more likely to be regular/daily Internet users (96%) than people aged 60 or older (79%), while households in urban areas

(91%) have higher Internet coverage than those in rural areas (75%)²¹¹.

The use of mobile Internet has been steadily increasing in Georgia, and the percentage of users has increased by 7% annually between 2016 and 2020. By the end of 2020, 3.3 million Georgians were using mobile Internet, amounting to 64% of all mobile users²¹². According to the Freedom on the Net report, 3G and 4G services are widespread and in 2019, the Georgian National Communications Commission introduced a 5G networks development strategy, though progress has so far been slow.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
4.5/25	5.5/25	12.5/25	6.5/15	4/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 4.5/25

1.1. DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 1.5/10

Against a backdrop of silenced dissent, arrests of opposition activists, and restrictions on peaceful assembly and election monitoring²¹³, as expected, Kazakhstan’s January 2021 parliamentary elections resulted in a sweeping victory for the Nur Otan party led by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who, despite resigning from the presidency and handing the post to current president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, retained chairmanship of the Nur Otan party, as well as the Security Council of Kazakhstan. The joint report by International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and the Kazakhstan International Bureau of Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR) listed major violations and infringements by authorities, which include a crackdown on political opposition, serious restrictions on the rights to political association and assembly, the detention and persecution of peaceful activists and protesters, kettling in sub-zero temperatures, intimidations, and harassment²¹⁴. The final report of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) parliamentary elections observation mission would also lead to a broad list of grievances and violations, albeit milder, concerning overall political freedoms and the conduct of the elections itself²¹⁵. Moreover, following the elections, several NGOs and rights groups that called out elections violations, such as Echo and Erkindik Kanaty, were targeted by Kazakh authorities in coordinated attacks, and hit with fines and suspensions on the pretext of tax and foreign funding violations²¹⁶.

The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) investigations into Israeli NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware technology revealed that Kazakh authorities were among those spying on journalists, activists, opposition figures, and dissidents, although the names of those being watched were yet to be determined²¹⁷. In late November, several activists of the Oyan, Qazaqstan! movement received an official alert from Apple Inc. claiming that their iPhones were targeted by state-sponsored attackers, which are believed to be linked with the Pegasus technology²¹⁸. In the meantime, the revelations of the “Pandora papers” investigation would also lead to media censorship and blockings, as occurred with the prominent Kazakh media outlet Hola News following their coverage of the financial flows associated with the alleged third wife of the former President Nursultan Nazarbayev²¹⁹. Shortly afterward the editor-in-chief and two founders of the outlet were forced to cut their ties and resign.

The 2021 World Press Freedom Index²²⁰ by Reporters Without Borders ranked Kazakhstan as 155th out of 180, just ahead of Rwanda (#156), Uzbekistan (#157), and Belarus (#158). Compared to the same index for 2020, Kazakhstan showed no perceivable improvements in the area of press freedoms (#157)²²¹, as it outpaced Rwanda and Belarus only due to the ongoing opposition crackdown, detentions, and journalist arrests in Rwanda and lingering brutal repressions in Belarus following that country’s dubious presidential elections in

August 2020. Kazakhstan scored 33 out of 100 in the Freedom on the Net 2021²²² Index by Freedom House, which is an insignificant change from the last year's score of 32 out of 100, qualifying Kazakhstan as "Not Free." The report also highlights recurrent government attempts to restrict and control Internet freedoms, as well as the introduction of various monitoring technologies such as machine-in-the-middle (MITM) and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which usually intensify during elections, as it happened in January

2021. At the same time, Kazakh authorities are in the process of amending numerous laws and regulations, including the laws "on informational support" and "on communications," that would stipulate, among other things, the requirement for social media platforms and messengers such as Facebook or Instagram to have a registered local office with a local citizen as a branch chief, and to implement local authorities' recommendations within 24 hours, which in this case, means deleting specific content or restricting access to it²²³.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 1/8

According to the official results of the 2021 legislative elections for the Mazhilis²²⁴, the lower chamber of the bicameral Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which were held with serious violations, restrictions and persecutions²²⁵, the governmental Nur Otan party, which is officially led by the former President Nazarbayev, received 71.09% of votes, followed by Ak Zhol (10.95%) and People's Party (9.1%), creating a formal visibility of a multi-party parliament, while two other pro-governmental parties – Aul and Adal – could not pass the 7% threshold, having received 5.29% and 3.57% of the votes, respectively. No opposition or alternative parties or movements participated in the elections, as the only officially registered opposition party, the All-National Social Democratic Party decided to boycott the elections, citing their unwillingness to facilitate the formal participation of an opposition party in the elections in which the outcome would have been decided in advance²²⁶, while the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan was denied registration. The 2002 law "on political parties," which stipulated the creation, registration, and functioning of political parties, had been constantly amended ever since, making it almost impossible for opposition or

alternative parties to be legitimized, as numerous amendments were introduced in 2020 just prior to the elections, as well as in 2021.

None of the parties represented in parliament are known for their pro-Western views or even a moderate approach toward Western values, while some were traditionally known for their conservative stance on the matter. The Nur Otan party, previously known as the Otan (Fatherland) party and renamed in 2006 to include part of the first name of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, could rather be described as a "personalized dominant party," with no distinct program or ideology different from those of their leader²²⁷. Interestingly, it was only in late November 2021, almost two-and-a-half years after stepping down from the presidency, that Nazarbayev announced his resignation from the Nur Otan party chairmanship, to be transferred to the current president²²⁸.

Kazakhstan scored 23 out of 100 (Not Free) in the Freedom in the World 2021²²⁹ Index by Freedom House (identical to last year's score), in which Kazakhstan received 0 points out of 4 in some subsections such as electoral processes, political pluralism, and participation.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 2/7

Despite Kazakhstan's active and long-time engagement in non-Western intergovernmental integration schemes with close political, strategic, and economic ties with Russia and China, some of which, like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), officially declare their non-Western nature and the creation of "unique values,"²³⁰ public perception of the West and, particularly, the European Union (EU), might diverge from government rhetoric. This is especially interesting, since the two most influential stakeholders in Kazakhstan's policies – Russia and China – both in terms of their impact on public opinion and growing economic dependence, are in open confrontation with the United States and Western Europe. The ongoing and well-orchestrated Russian government propaganda and misinformation endeavors to undermine and denigrate Western values and political culture in recent years have sizeable audience in Kazakhstan as well, due to their shared historical and linguistic background. Kazakhs traditionally considered Russian media to be more reliable than Western media, especially since Russian-owned media has the capacity to push government policy in Kazakhstan in a Russia-favorable direction²³¹.

In response to the Gallup International survey question "Which of these powers do you think will be a superpower in the world in 2030?" 48% of Kazakhs stated that the United States will not be a superpower, compared to a 28% global average²³². According to a more detailed version of the same survey carried out in Kazakhstan by BISAM Central Asia, 56% of Kazakhs expected Russia to be the superpower, as opposed to 42% for China, 20% for the United States, 13% for the EU, and 8% for the UK²³³. Moreover, only 7% of respondents

in Kazakhstan agreed that Russia destabilizes the world, as opposed to 49% for US, 30% for the EU, and 20% for China. At the same time, 38% of respondents approve of the job performance of the US leadership in Asia (25% do not approve).²³⁴ However, the anti-Western or anti-American sentiments are not solely driven by political and ideological differences between governments and intergovernmental alliances, as some misgivings are driven by growing traditionalism and conservatism, especially in matters of sexual and familial values²³⁵. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan (along with Uzbekistan) was the only country in Central Asia to mention the EU among the top 3 partners to be prioritized in the next 3 years, as another survey reveals²³⁶.

The recent report entitled *Youth in Kazakhstan: Assessing their Values, Expectations, and Aspirations*²³⁷ based on an extensive survey carried out throughout 2020 presents a much more detailed picture of values and preferences from the youth perspective. Thus, the attitude of 20.9% of respondents to potential neighbors from Western Europe was "very bad" (24.1% was "very good"), however 29% and 23.4% of the respondents would choose the US and EU countries, respectively, if they had opportunity to study abroad, with only 3.6% preferring China. Youth in Kazakhstan are the least tolerant towards homosexuality, as 65.7% of them expressed a negative attitude (4.8% expressed a positive attitude).

As for attitudes towards countries and regions, EU countries fared best in connection with "human rights" (13%), "freedom" (15.3%), "democracy" (17.3%) and "opportunities" (28.9%), while China leads in the category of "enemy" (17.9%, the US received 6.6% of votes in this category) and "source of threat" (33.5%, with the US coming in at 12.3%).

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 5.5/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 1/6

According to the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission), opinions on improving the legal framework of the Constitutional Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan published on March 23, 2021, constitutional reviews are carried out extremely rarely, as only 71 cases have reached the Constitutional Council in the last 25 years, and this figure is between zero and 2 cases in the last few years. This report recommends amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, Administrative Offences Code, and the Administrative Procedure Code²³⁸.

Non-compliance with the stipulations of the Venice Commission has been reported on numerous occasions in connection with the government's treatment of activists, dissidents, and political prisoners. As a member of the Venice

Commission since 2012 and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) since 2020, Kazakhstan should regard the PACE criteria concerning political prisoners and politically persecuted people, as the Open Dialogue Foundation's 2021 report, entitled Political Prisoners and Victims of Political Persecution in Kazakhstan, claims²³⁹. According to KIBHR, the use of kettling against peaceful protesters violates the Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly promoted by OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission²⁴⁰. The Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly clearly states that the containment (or "kettling") should be avoided and is permissible in exceptional situations, such as instances of imminent violence (#217)²⁴¹, which were not the case in Kazakhstan.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 2/7

The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 ranked Kazakhstan 66th out of 139 countries, with a score of 0.52, far ahead of Ukraine (#74), Uzbekistan (#85), and Russia (#101)²⁴². In the 2020 index, Kazakhstan was ranked 62nd²⁴³. By the measures of "Constraints on Government Powers," which focuses on constitutional and administrative limitations and accountability of government power, Kazakhstan scored much worse (0.43, 108th).

Indeed, the lack of constraints on government (in our case, presidential) powers often serves as the primary background for infringement on judicial independence. In November 2021, 42-year-

old economist Berik Nazhmidenov, who had no prior judicial or legal experience, was elected as a Supreme Court judge upon the proposal by the President Tokayev. According to the constitutional law on the Court System and the Status of the Judges (Article 29/2)²⁴⁴, only a person with a law degree and at least 5 years of legal practice may be elected as a judge.

According to the Freedom House's Nations in Transit 2021 report, Kazakhstan scored 1.25 out of 7 (its lowest score since 2005, only ahead of Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan in the "Judicial Framework and Independence" category, compared to the average score of 3.24²⁴⁵. The judicial

independence subsection of the extended country report for Kazakhstan states that the judicial branch is highly dependent on the executive branch, as the president appoints or nominates judges upon the

recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, which is itself appointed by the president, and thus courts serve as an instrument in persecuting and intimidating political dissent²⁴⁶.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 1.5/6

In his recent address to the nation in September 2021, President Tokayev once again made impressive pledges of political modernization and human rights protection, during which he claimed that the country made “significant progress” in the last two years²⁴⁷. He also mentioned the non-functioning Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Human Rights introduced over the summer as “a long-term institutional framework for further improvement of the human rights protection system in Kazakhstan,” and went even further by highlighting the rights of “human rights defenders,” and the necessity “to ensure the safety of their activities, to suppress illegal actions that impede their work.”

In recent years, Article 405 of the Criminal Code, citing activities linked to organizations

that had been banned or liquidated in connection with extremism or terrorism, became the basis for numerous politically motivated arrests and imprisonments, as 58 people had already been convicted by this article since 2018, while another 77 are under investigation²⁴⁸. Additionally, over the course of the last several years, the government has used various pretexts to carry out systematic impediments for human rights groups and organizations that cover human rights violations, political persecution of dissent, arrests, detainments, and torture²⁴⁹. Just prior to the 2021 parliamentary elections, 13 human rights groups were threatened with fines and suspension of activities on the pretext of violating Article 460/1 of the Code on Administrative Violations (reporting on foreign funds)²⁵⁰.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 1/6

As 2018 collective research reveals, acquittals and rehabilitations in Kazakhstan account to 0.12% of criminal cases during the investigation stage and 0.05% in the courts, which is linked, among other things, to judges’ unwillingness to get into confrontations with the prosecutors, and the legacy of the Soviet judicial system with intertwined functions of police, prosecutors, and judges²⁵¹.

According to the official presentation of the Supreme Court from October 22, 2021, the overall number of acquittals, which were the lowest in 2016 (62) and 2017 (70), were on a steady rise

in 2018 (270), 2019 (318), and 2020 (329), while the number of acquittals for the first 6 months of 2021 was 113²⁵². The slight increase of acquittals on defamation and insult charges was also mentioned in the Freedom on the Net 2021 report²⁵³. In any case, the share of acquittals in Kazakhstan is extremely low and far away from the usual double-digit number for most of the world, which becomes a matter of despair and concern of many lawyers and human rights activists, especially those providing legal assistance to political dissidents, activists, and journalists²⁵⁴.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 12.5/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 2/7

Despite Kazakhstan being a founding member of the Russian-dominated Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) along with Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, and being an integral transit link of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), according to the World Trade Organization (WTO) data, the European Union once again became the primary destination for Kazakhstan's exports, amounting to 42%, which far exceeds exports to China (13.6%), Russia (9.7%), South Korea (5.3%), and Switzerland (4.6%) combined²⁵⁵. As for imports, Russia is the primary country of ori-

gin (36.7%), followed by China (17.1%), the EU (16%), South Korea (8.9%), and the United States (3.5%).

According to the most recent official statistics provided by the Bureau of National Statistics, for the period from January to September 2021, Kazakhstan's exports increased by an impressive 20.6% compared to the same period of 2020, amounting to \$43.3 billion, of which 25.9% went to Italy (14.1%), Netherlands (7.6%), and France (4.2%) alone, while China became largest export destinations (16.8%)²⁵⁶.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 3.5/6

In the Heritage Foundation 2021 Index of Economic Freedom²⁵⁷, with an overall score of 71.1 ("mostly free") Kazakhstan is 34th out of 178 countries, ahead of Malta, Belgium, and Spain. As detailed data of the index would reveal, Kazakhstan performed worse in the "Government Integrity" subfield (44.6), while performing best in "Fiscal Health" (98.3)²⁵⁸. In the 2020 version

of the same index Kazakhstan was 39th, which would qualify as "moderately free"²⁵⁹, again performing worst in "Government Integrity" (40.9), but with its highest score in "Tax Burden"²⁶⁰. In the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index, Kazakhstan ranked 55th out of 141 countries, ranking highest in the "Labor Market" field (#25).

3.3. WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 3/6

Unlike its exports, 82.4% of Kazakhstan's imports are made up of manufactured goods, of which radio-telephony transmission tools and medications make up the top imported products²⁶¹. Of the overall imports, amounting to \$29.47 billion for

the period from January to September 2021, the share of imports from European countries amounted to 15.4%, and those from the US amounted to 3.5%, while Germany, with 4.6%, became the third largest importer after Russia and China²⁶².

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 4/6

According to the official government statistics, for the first six months of 2021, foreign direct in-

vestments (FDI) into Kazakhstan increased by 30.4% and reached \$11.1 billion, of which \$3.3 billion came

from the Netherlands, \$2.1 billion from the US, \$1.3 billion from Switzerland, \$459.5 million from Belgium, and \$233 million from South Korea²⁶³.

With a 34.9% increase in FDI compared to the previous year, Kazakhstan ranked first

among transition economies in growth of net FDI in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) World Investment Report 2021, amidst the overall global decline of FDIs²⁶⁴.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 6.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 1.5/2

On December 31, 2019, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan issued its “State Programme for the Implementation of the Language Policy in Kazakhstan for the Years 2020-2025,” which, among other things, targets the modernization of the Kazakhstani language through the Latin-based alphabet, which is mentioned as its primary goal²⁶⁵. As part of the program, each province or municipality provides detailed report on the progress, including the share of official communication held using Latin alphabet, informative and educational events,

as well as detailed statistics on language proficiency among the province’s populations (knowledge of Kazakh, Russian, and English)²⁶⁶.

Although the decree to transform the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin was issued in October 2017, since the beginning, implementation was supposed to be gradual and involve three major steps, to take place from 2018 to 2025²⁶⁷. Later, the timeline was extended to 2030, with the final version of the script to be determined in 2022²⁶⁸.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 1.5/6

Besides the transformation of the Kazakh language into the Latin script, the State Programme for the Implementation of the Language Policy in Kazakhstan has stipulations about English, as the program’s goals include trilingual (Kazakh-Russian-English) competence of 31% of the population by 2025²⁶⁹. As of 2016, only 23.7% of the popula-

tion was competent in English²⁷⁰.

Nevertheless, the EF English Proficiency Index 2021 ranked Kazakhstan 96th out of 112 countries, placing it among the “Very Low Proficiency” countries²⁷¹. A lack of basic English skills remains an issue even at the government level, as 7 out of 18 ministers did not possess any knowledge of English²⁷².

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN NATIONS’ MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS; THE SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND TWITTER) 3.5

Due to recurrent lockdowns and restrictions, movie theaters were among the businesses severely hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, as many of them

have closed down or gone bankrupt since 2020, while movie production and distribution were disrupted globally for several months. The movie

data between January 1 and March 14, 2020, the day the first major lockdown began in Kazakhstan, presents a good picture of the pre-pandemic era: 117 movies were screened in Kazakhstan, of which 17 were local and 60 were foreign productions, including 20 Russian movies²⁷³. According to the same data, between January 1 and June 7, 2021, 216 movies were screened, of which 22 were local and 194 were foreign (including 44 Russian movies). Considering that the non-Russian foreign movies screened in Kazakhstan are almost exclusively Western productions, the share of Western movies in local movie theaters after the

pandemic began is close to 69%, as opposed to about 51% of the pre-pandemic figures. The government, however, intends to increase the share of the local movies to 25% by 2025²⁷⁴.

In the meantime, since 2019, all foreign movies screened in Kazakhstan ought to have Kazakh subtitles or dubbing. In recent years, Kazakhstan has intensified the dubbing of popular foreign movies, especially animated Western movies, primarily by Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and Sony Pictures, as recently the Pixar production “Luca” became the 37th movie dubbed into Kazakh by the “Bolashak” Foundation²⁷⁵.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 4/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1/5

As anywhere in the world, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, international travel, whether for business, education or tourism, had been seriously disrupted in Kazakhstan, as there were physically few routes and destinations available for most of the population, none of which were Western countries. Traditionally, summer vacation was a period of intense travel to Europe, however, current visa and entry regulations, vaccination requirements, and medical restrictions, along with transportation difficulties forced Kazakhs to seek alternative travel routes. Although it is not representative for the

entire population, a youth survey carried out during the pandemic revealed that 64.8% of the respondents have not lived or studied abroad, though 26.7% of the young people plan to do so in the future²⁷⁶. Other figures presented even more impressive rates, as about 42% of Kazakhs between 15 and 29 intend to move abroad for study or permanent residence²⁷⁷.

As for the overall population, the 2021 survey carried out by Aitu-Dala revealed that 49.1% of the population has never visited a foreign country, and only 4.6% regularly fly abroad²⁷⁸.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1.5/5

As of the beginning of 2021, about 29,700 foreign companies are officially registered in Kazakhstan, making up 6.3% all business enterprises in Kazakhstan, of which 29,200 are small and medium enterprises (SMEs)²⁷⁹. The few big enterprises, how-

ever, have a relatively greater economic impact in the country, as about the third of the country’s tax revenues are provided by 30 large foreign companies, representing the energy and mining sector, tobacco producers, and breweries²⁸⁰. For instance, JTI

Kazakhstan, Philip Morris Kazakhstan, and British American Tobacco Kazakhstan are among Kazakhstan's top 10 foreign taxpayers.

As for popular global brands, Wendy's joined McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, and Hardee's to become another global fast-food chain to en-

ter the Kazakh market in the spring of 2021, by opening two restaurants in Almaty, out of 25 restaurants to be opened in nine cities²⁸¹. As a comparison, McDonald's, which entered the Kazakh market five years ago, has 20 restaurants in five cities, so far²⁸².

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1.5/2

According to the World Bank Individuals Using the Internet as Percentage of the Population Index, Kazakhstan has currently reached 86%, ahead of France, Lithuania, or Russia²⁸³, with 92.4% of households being connected to the Internet²⁸⁴. As the Freedom on the Net 2021 report suggests, 73.7% of the population are covered by 4G mobile services.

In the Inclusive Internet Index 2021 by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Kazakhstan ranked 62nd overall out of 120 countries, ranking relatively high in "Readiness" (54th globally)²⁸⁵. In 2020, the smartphone shipments to Kazakhstan reached 4.3 million units (a 6.7% increase compared to 2019 data)²⁸⁶.

Kyrgyzstan

32.5/100

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
7.5/25	8/25	8/25	6/15	3/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 7.5/25

1.1 DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 3.5/10

Political freedom – the freedoms of association, organization, competition, and expression – is largely observed, both in law and, to a significant degree, in practice. The law on political parties, which was adopted and has not been updated since 1999, provides very liberal rules for establishing and running political parties. As long as at least 10 people come together, hold a constituent meeting, and adopt a party charter, they can apply for and receive registration as a political party with the Ministry of Justice. The only substantive rules are that parties may not be based on a religious platform or on a platform aimed at jeopardizing the integrity of the state. Currently, there are nearly 300 political parties in Kyrgyzstan, and while the vast majority of them tend to be dormant, new parties continue to be formed regularly, especially ahead of elections²⁸⁷.

Representation in parliament is a telling indication of both the plurality and the fluidity of the party landscape in Kyrgyzstan. Based on the preliminary results of the November 28, 2021 elections – a repeat election following the annulled vote from one year ago – six parties were expected to be seated in the party-based proportional representation section of parliament (54 seats in the 90-seat chamber), and none of them had been represented in the outgoing

convocation of parliament²⁸⁸. Of the six parties in the outgoing parliament (2015-2021), a fully party-based legislature, two parties had been reelected unchanged from the preceding five-party convocation (2010-2015), one was a merger of two separate parties from that convocation, and three parties were entirely new – all splinters from a single party²⁸⁹. In the 2007 parliament – the first time when the chamber was composed of parties – there were three parties seated, and only one of them – the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan – went on to be represented in two subsequent convocations²⁹⁰.

The 2020 parliamentary elections were annulled following mass protests against the results of those elections. Out of 16 competing parties, four parties made it to parliament by passing the 7% threshold. On the night after the elections, protesters broke into the parliament building and violent clashes with police followed. This also mobilized a greater protest, which was widely peaceful, against the election results. One of the main accusations of the opposition was that three of four elected parties, which had won the majority of seats, had close ties with the then-president Sooronbai Jeenbekov. Following the accusations between the opposition and the president, the Central Electoral Commission de-

cided to annul the elections and hold them again at a later date. The annulment of the elections led to a political crisis, which also led to the resignation of President Jeenbekov after a week of protests²⁹¹. Based on this, preterm presidential elections were called in early 2021 and won by Sadyr Japarov. In addition to the presidential elections, on April 11, 2021, a referendum was held on the constitutional reform calling for the return of the presidential system. Slightly less than 80% of the votes cast were in favor of the new Constitution²⁹².

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 2/8

On November 28, 2021, Kyrgyzstan held parliamentary elections (the results were still being tabulated as of writing this report). According to the new Constitution and election law adopted in 2021, the Kyrgyz parliament consists of 90 members, of which 36 come from single-mandate plurality voting districts with no party affiliation requirement. 54 members of parliament were elected through a party-based proportional representation system with preferential voting (voters could vote for parties and for a candidate within that party's list). Tentatively, 6 parties passed the 5% threshold and would be seated in parliament. None of the new parties expected in parliament had clearly stated their positions on the West; one party – "Alliance" – is likely to be pro-Western, while the rest are likely to be mostly neutral, and open to shifting positions when specific issues come up for vote or deliberation²⁹³.

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 2/7

When it comes to pro- or anti-West attitudes in public opinion, this widely mirrors the situation in parliament – that is, either neutral or negative towards the West. As noted above, this derives from the geopolitical context and propaganda in Kyrgyzstan, which is anti-American and highly focused in favor of Russia. Thus, the 2021 International Republican Institute (IRI) opinion poll overwhelmingly

The vibrancy and pluralism among the political parties, if only somewhat feckless, is more broadly reflective of the state of political freedom in Kyrgyzstan. There is generally a high level of competitiveness, an absence of any stable political hegemony, and there is a vocal opposition – both in parliament and outside – at any given time. Occasionally, some restrictive or even persecutive measures are adopted by the ruling group toward its most stinging critics, but such moves have not led to silencing of criticism and opposition.

Generally, the anti-West/pro-West dichotomy in Kyrgyzstan is largely the result of the country's geopolitical context and domestic propaganda. Kyrgyzstan is aligned with Russia by its membership into the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union and thus is highly dependent on Moscow. For this reason, most parties and MPs are publicly either neutral or anti-Western in their positions. However, in fact, as of November 2021, there are no openly anti-Western parties in parliament. The few pro-Western voices in the parliament tend to represent opposition MPs. These groups have closer ties with NGOs and the media and care more about such issues such as defending human rights and individual liberties, transparency and accountability in government, diversity and tolerance, democracy, and rule of law, etc. However, despite being pro-Western, these MPs do not overtly state their sympathy for the US or EU.

viewed relations with Russia as positive (92% in July and 81% in September, when this figure curiously dropped behind Turkey's 90%). Far fewer people viewed the relations with the United States as positive (36% in July and 38% in September), and slightly more viewed relations with EU as positive (50% in July and 53% in September)²⁹⁴. The same poll shows that slightly more than half of the re-

spondents (53%) consider democracy the best form of government in Kyrgyzstan.

One interesting development is the number of applications for the US “Green Card” lottery, which was subject to wide-ranging discussions in the me-

dia and on social networks. It is difficult to assess the exact number of applications, but certainly there has been steady growth in recent years. The year 2021 is expected to record the largest number of applications from Kyrgyzstan in history²⁹⁵.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 8/25

2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 2/6

The new leadership that came as a result of the October 2020 protest, led by Sadyr Japarov, who was elected president in January 2021, made changing the constitution a central part of their agenda, with the aim of installing a presidential form of government, and replacing the mixed form of the government with a strong separation of powers. This was put in motion in November 2020, and following a hasty process that violated significant procedural rules, a draft of the constitution was produced by early 2021. The government did not intend to seek the opinion of the Venice Commission. Moreover, speakers on government’s behalf were speaking against inviting foreigners to decide for Kyrgyzstan²⁹⁶.

The Venice Commission’s opinion was requested by the Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic, following calls from civil society and independent legal experts. The opinion of the Commission, which was received in March, several weeks ahead of the April 11 referendum, criticized the draft. On the substance of the draft, for example, the opinion stated: “the powers and prerogatives of the president, par-

liament, and judiciary system, as well as some provisions regarding the rights and freedoms of persons, do not correspond with the international standards or to OSCE commitments”²⁹⁷. The opinion provided significant negative feedback on all aspects of the constitutional reform, from the proposed text, to the process of initiation and discussion of the change, to the manner in which the referendum would be conducted²⁹⁸.

The referendum was held as scheduled on April 11, essentially disregarding all criticism from the Venice Commission as well as from a broad array of other national and international experts and institutions. Indeed, a central argument of the Japarov administration and its supporters was that the previous Constitution and many previous laws were problematic. According to them, this was precisely because these were written in heeding to the opinion of foreign advisers. Japarov’s supporters mentioned that unlike before, they were initiating the reforms to make all laws more genuinely fit Kyrgyz cultural and political needs.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 1.5/7

Independence of the judiciary system is where Kyrgyzstan has performed least well throughout its independence. Courts continue to be subservient to the office of the president and the executive branch

in general. In the 2021 Freedom House’s Global Freedom scores, Kyrgyzstan was denoted as “Not Free” for a long time, after having been the only “Partly Free” country in Central Asia. Some of the

worst scores under “Political Freedom” were on judicial independence, where it scored “0” out of 4, which tells us a lot about how independent the judiciary is²⁹⁹. In matters without any political significance, courts also tend to be some of the most corrupt institutions, according to results of the IRI public opinion surveys. In a late 2019 poll, for example, to the question of “What is your opinion of the work of the following institutions?”, the courts had the worst scores of all institutions surveyed, with 30% “positive” and 61% “negative”³⁰⁰.

Judiciary independence has worsened since late 2020 and throughout 2021, as the whirlwind of political changes instrumentalized the courts to legitimize some acts and open the door to others. Thus, for example, previously, a large number of persons convicted for crimes, including now-pres-

ident Sadyr Japarov, got the courts to annul their convictions and clear them of any criminal record. Furthermore, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, the body granted the right to decide on constitutionality of laws under the 2010 Constitution, was drawn into the process of legitimizing the constitutional change initiative, as well as the highly debated act of extending the term of sitting parliament beyond the constitutionally provided limit.

In late 2021, having introduced the Constitutional Court to replace the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in the new Constitution, Kyrgyzstan was lacking the constitutional judiciary – the relevant laws and procedures were not in place to fill that court. Thus, overall, the country’s judiciary independence has worsened.

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 2.5/6

The human rights situation and the legal basis for human rights protection have worsened in Kyrgyzstan in the past year. The relatively positive human rights situation prior to the constitutional change was the result of steady work and pressure by many parties, from human rights organizations and activists, to committed parliamentarians, media, and some international partners. The 2010 Constitution, thus, provided for a broad and strong foundation for civil and human rights, and numerous laws and international covenants made up a complex web of provisions and human rights protections. Of course, it is worth noting that there were also significant shortcomings in the enforcement of many of these human rights laws and provisions.

The new Constitution, adopted in 2021, while providing for standard and occasionally even extraordinary language on human rights guarantees (such as providing for a right to a healthy environment), includes provisions that may potentially endanger individual rights to expression and choice. Such risks

are contained in references to sanctity or the priority of traditional and moral values, interests of society, relations and obligations inside a family, and more. In these provisions, as well as in provisions for emergency situations, it remains either unclear or unstated which human rights may not be limited under any circumstances, or under which conditions such limitations may be introduced. The opinion of the Venice Commission, produced jointly with OSCE/ODIHR, includes an extended section of comments and recommendations on human rights provisions³⁰¹.

Furthermore, the speedy review and change of the country’s entire body of law provides for other risks and curtailments of human rights protections that have been raised by independent voices, to little response from the government-commissioned working groups and the authors of bills. Such concerns were raised especially regarding the set of legal codes on criminal justice, provisions for transparency, protections against undue burdens on suspects, and other elements of human rights which have weakened.

2.4 NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 2/6

Despite repeated calls on the judiciary governance to produce these statistics, there is no regular update on acquittal rates. However, a study carried out in 2018 by media group Kloop and based on thousands of trial cases over the preceding six years (2012-2017) shows alarming numbers which are unlikely to have changed in the last couple of years³⁰². According to the study, the rate of acquittals lingered around 4%, sometimes falling below that and sometimes rising slightly above it. That is to say, a person was 96% likely to face a

guilty verdict if he or she were sued in a Kyrgyz court of first instance. At the courts of appeals (second and third instances), the rate of acquittals is only slightly higher – 6.6%. Interestingly and unsurprisingly, a higher rate of acquittal of 18% was found in cases involving charges for “abuse of office” and “extortion of bribes” – that is, the sorts of charges that state officials would be subject to. All these data reconfirm the low trust in courts among the population that is highlighted in the opinion polls cited above³⁰³.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 8/25

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 2/7

With its location in Central Asia and long border with China, Kyrgyzstan is far from the European borders and is not a prospective EU member. However, Kyrgyzstan has maintained an active dialogue with EU, both in the framework of EU-Central Asia multilateral contacts and bilaterally. The EU-Kyrgyzstan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has been in effect since 1999, and as of 2017, the two sides have been in negotiations on an upgraded agreement, the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. EPCA negotiations were in the final stages when, partly due to Covid-19 and partly due to instability in Kyrgyzstan, the process slowed down. Since 2016,

Kyrgyzstan has also benefited from the trade preferences scheme known as GSP+ as the only Central Asian country to have this status. The country has not, however, been able to fully benefit from the opportunity, with low export capacity to EU markets.

Kyrgyzstan has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 1998 – again, it is the first country to from the region and all of ex-Soviet states to be admitted into that organization. As with the GSP+ provisions, Kyrgyzstan has again failed to significantly benefit from WTO privileges. Its main economic ties remain to a set of closer neighbors – Russia, China, Turkey, and the Central Asian countries.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 2.5/6

In Corruption Perceptions Index 2020, Kyrgyzstan was 124th out of 180 countries, and scored 31 out of 100 – a performance that has remained virtually stable, with minimal movement toward improvement³⁰⁴. In terms of economic freedom, Kyrgyzstan was 78th out of 178 ranked countries and placed in

the “Moderately Free” group in the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom – 2021³⁰⁵.

Kyrgyzstan’s business community was in active defense mode in 2021, fighting off recurring government legislative initiatives that would have worsened protections against arbitrary regulation, introducing

‘economic emergency’ regimes that would freeze regular legal protections, and creating additional tax and non-tax burdens while raising the price of electricity for commercial consumption, to name just a few. Some of these initiatives were fought off and mitigated, others were still in progress as of the writing of this report. One major event in 2021 that worsened the business environment and investment security was the de facto capture of the Kumtor gold mine, which is Kyrgyzstan’s largest single export producer, from control of the Canadian company Centerra Gold³⁰⁶. In a rushed and dubious legal case in

Kyrgyzstan, a government agency sued Kumtor Gold Company, the company run by Centerra to operate Kumtor mine, for large-scale environmental damage, demanding a compensation of over \$3 billion. The court sided with the government and imposed the requested compensatory fine. The leadership of Kumtor Gold Company left Kyrgyzstan, and the government moved in, introducing temporary external administration over the company. That process, which has been unfolding since the spring of 2021, may turn out to be the biggest blow to Kyrgyzstan’s investment attractiveness yet.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 2/6

Kyrgyzstan’s foreign trade has been mostly with neighboring economies such as Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, despite mechanisms such as WTO membership and GSP+ with the EU. Until the crisis caused by the government takeover of the Kumtor Gold Company set in early May 2021, the single largest export destination was the United Kingdom – more than half of the national export was gold (55.7%), and all of that was traded on the London gold market³⁰⁷. In October 2021, Kyrgyzstan was removed from the London gold trading association (LBMA) Good Delivery List, and it remained unclear and untransparent where the Kyrgyz government was or would be exporting its gold³⁰⁸.

Kyrgyzstan’s foreign trade has also been highly imbalanced, with total exports over three times less than total imports³⁰⁹. Most imports came from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey, and other countries, and encompassed the whole spectrum of goods, from machinery to food and clothing. No European or Western economy accounted for even 1% of imports³¹⁰. Major export destinations were the same set of countries as imports, except that – at least until gold exports ceased – the UK was by far the largest export destination. Previously, gold exports had been sent to Switzerland before shifting to the UK several years ago.

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY’S ECONOMY 1.5/6

Investments in the Kyrgyz economy suffered from the complex of processes and events described in the previous sections – Covid-related trade restrictions, followed by political turmoil, followed by a deepening economic crisis, accompanied by investment-unfriendly events such as the takeover of the Kumtor Gold Company.

Kumtor was the largest single project that attracted Western – mostly Canadian – foreign direct investment in

Kyrgyzstan’s history, having begun in late 1990’s. Specific data and statistics on FDI origins have been unavailable in the longer span of years, as well as for the most recent period – 2020 and 2021. The Ministry of Economy data for 2019, which is the most recent data available, indicate a significant growth of FDI compared to 2018, and especially a significant increase of FDI from Western countries – Canada (#2 at 163.4% of 2018), Switzerland (#3 at 433.6% of 2018), the UK (#5 at 166.8% of 2018), and

the Netherlands (#6 at 7.2% growth upon 2018). China, the leading origin of FDI in Kyrgyzstan, did not change from 2018 and remained at the top of the list, whereas Russia, the other major partner, was #7 in 2019 with a drop of almost 70% compared to 2018³¹¹.

Clearly, those positive indicators from 2019 did not hold for long, and the crisis that began in 2020

and continued throughout 2021 led to net investment outflow in 2020 (estimates widely varied), a projected mild recovery in 2021, and the strong likelihood that some of the main Western FDI had contracted, especially those from Canada and the United Kingdom. Actual reliable statistics are, however, not available.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 6/15

4.1 USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 0.5/2

The Kyrgyz language is written in Cyrillic, continuing with the script adopted and adapted to Kyrgyz in 1940 under the Soviet Union. Briefly, from 1920's to 1940, Kyrgyz was written using Latin script. In the years since independence from the USSR, there have been discussions about and some calls to switch to Latin, however the idea has never been seriously contemplated. The main reasons for sticking with Cyrillic have been the close political, economic

and social ties with Russia, the costs of switching the alphabet, and the presence of strong voices of resistance among society to such a switch.

Still, the use of Latin – the ability to write, transliterate, and read Latin script – has been steadily expanding along with the omnipresence of smartphones, apps and the Internet. It has been fashionable among the youth to use Latin letters and script in their communications.

4.2 PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 1.5/6

There is widespread interest in learning foreign languages in Kyrgyzstan, with English being absolutely the most highly sought. In cities and towns across the country, there are numerous clubs and centers for English language teaching – a testament of how sought-after the skill has been, generating a fast-growing commerce of language courses. The other Western languages are much less sought-after– German and French are taught as a main foreign language, instead

of, or alongside English in some public schools. Besides English, the most sought-after languages have been Chinese and Korean – both are testament to the pragmatic, employment-minded interests of those seeking out these skills.

That being said, proficiency levels in all foreign languages are rather low in Kyrgyzstan. According to the 2021 English Proficiency Index, Kyrgyzstan ranks 101, being part of the group with “Very Low Proficiency” in the English language³¹².

4.3 SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN NATIONS' MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS; THE SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND TWITTER) 4/7

Kyrgyzstan's cinema market is undeveloped, with movie theaters available only in the largest few cities, and by far, the greatest number of

them is found only in the capital, Bishkek. Television channels, therefore, are a more accessible way for non-urban Kyrgyzstanis to watch films.

The cinema offerings in Kyrgyzstan are overwhelmingly Western productions – the foreign films menu tends to be almost entirely Western, and almost all of that is from Hollywood. The rest of the offerings available are Kyrgyz movies. Cinema goers in Kyrgyzstan, in a dramatic improvement upon some 10 years or so, have an opportunity to watch popular Western movies almost without any lag behind American and European viewers. Almost all Western movies are presented with Russian translations; only very few films and usually in boutique clubs are offered in the original English.

Among films watched online (YouTube, primarily) and on TV, the most popular genres tend to be sitcoms and soap operas and multi-series epic films, rather than traditional movies. Though during the earlier years of independence, the most popular were productions like *Santa Barbara* and *Simplemente Maria*, the subsequent trends have shifted, and currently, the most popular series are Turkish

productions, such as *The Magnificent Century* and its successors, and, to lesser extent, Russian and Korean productions.

Most of the globally popular online social networks, messengers and platforms are popular in Kyrgyzstan, too. Instagram is the most popular public platform, with 2.1 million Kyrgyzstani users as of January 2020, attracting members for commercial interests, information, and for entertainment. Facebook is somewhat less popular but still significant, with over 600,000 subscribers, being the top platform for politics in particular. Twitter has much more limited popularity (about 60,000) and it is still a somewhat elite platform in Kyrgyzstan, for users who are mostly Russian-speaking and dedicated to politics, culture, and special topics³¹³. Russian-produced social networks Odnoklassniki and VKontakte were previously very popular but now in decline. TikTok is a fast-spreading new giant.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 3/10

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION THAT HAS VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1/5

No serious and up-to-date statistics exist on the destinations of travelers abroad from Kyrgyzstan, nor is there information on the purposes of such foreign travel. Cautious estimates under the circumstances are that far fewer people from Kyrgyzstan are traveling to the West compared to those traveling to Russia and the nearest neighboring countries.

At any given time, around 700,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan happen to be outside the country – most of them as labor migrants in long-term travel abroad. This rough estimate is cited in information of the State Migration Service³¹⁴, whereas far lower numbers are cited with reference to the Russian migration service (around 350,000 in 2018) and the Kyrgyz National Statistical Com-

mittee (just over 250,000 according to their 2018 survey)³¹⁵. There are various likely reasons for the wide discrepancy, from unaccounted changes of citizenship, to misreporting in survey-based statistics, to undocumented migration.

Of the large number of labor migrants, only a small fraction head to the West – the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy are some of the more popular destinations. The difficulty of getting visas and work permits, in addition to language barriers and cost of the travel, are some of the obvious reasons for these small numbers. That said, as with estimating the Western language fluency percentages, it would be safe to estimate not more than 10% – and probably far less – of Kyrgyz citizens to have been in the Western countries.

5.2 PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1/3

Kyrgyzstan, as a relatively small market of about 6 million people with limited disposable income on average, has not yet attracted most major Western food and clothing chains. There are KFC restaurants and Papa John's pizzerias – the only two major fast food international franchises.

Many international brands are recognized, popular, and sold in Kyrgyzstan, but without franchise stores. Local businesses simply procure goods at brand factories abroad – in Turkey, Russia, and other

locations – and sell them in Kyrgyzstan, often with brand names in shop titles. Among such popular brands are Levi's, US Polo, United Colors of Benetton, Zara, Mango, New Balance, etc.

For a long time, the only internationally recognizable hotel functioned in Bishkek was the Hyatt Regency hotel. More recently, a Ramada opened its doors, replacing a local hotel, and in 2021, a purpose-built new building opened as Novotel hotel.

5.3 MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE SMARTPHONE USAGE 1/2

Kyrgyzstan enjoys some of the lowest mobile Internet prices in the region, and three main mobile operators compete for the Kyrgyz market. In 2020, there were over 9 million mobile connections in Kyrgyzstan – that is, 150% of the population – which suggests the large number of mobile users who use more than one mobile operator service, as well as some people who may have subscribed to and then discontinued a service. Nonetheless, the population of Kyrgyzstan is virtually all linked

to mobile communications. Access to the Internet is via smartphones using mobile Internet at 3G and 4G standards for most Kyrgyzstanis, albeit about 27% of overall Internet access/traffic in 2019 was via smartphones, whereas over 72% of data was trafficked via computers. Overall, Internet penetration in Kyrgyzstan in 2019 (as of January 2020) was 47% of the population. Interestingly, the three most frequently visited websites were Google, YouTube, and local news portal Akipress³¹⁶.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF	Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
		21.5 /25	20.5 /25	24.5 /25	13.5 /15

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION **21.5**/25

1.1. POLITICAL FREEDOM 8.5/10

According to the 2021 Freedom House report on Freedom in the World 2021, Latvia is free, with the score of 89 out of 100. Latvia scored 37 out of 40 points in political rights and 52 points out of 60 for civil liberties. This result has remained unchanged from 2020, and is a slight improvement from 2019, when the score for political rights was lower – 35 points out of 40³¹⁷. In the Freedom House 2021 report on Nations in Transit, Latvia’s overall democracy score rose from 5.79 (2020) to 5.82 (2021) based on civil society criteria (countries are rated from 1 to 7 with 7 being the highest level of democratic progress). Yet, as in most other countries, this is a decrease from late 2010s³¹⁸.

According to the Latvian business register, as of November 17, 2021, there are 81 registered political parties and party unions in the country. Many of those are regional parties³¹⁹, which is partially the result of recent municipal reform and elections held in June 2021. The formation of political parties in Latvia is a relatively easy process – 200 citizens over the age of 18 can establish a party for a token payment of €27³²⁰. Any political party is eligible for government funding as long as it has received over 2% of the votes in the previous parliamentary elections³²¹. Latvia held parliamentary elections in 2018, and European Parliament elections in 2019. 16 political parties participated in each election³²². In 2021, only 34.01% of eligible voters took part in municipal elections³²³.

One notable exception regarding the formation of new parties is a law banning former members of Communist parties from engaging in political activities³²⁴. With regard to political rights, Latvia has numerous non-citizens who still do not enjoy the right to found a political party or take part in elections. As of May 2021, non-citizens represented 10.1% of the population, a decrease from 10.4% in 2020 and 11% in 2018, which can be explained by natural decrease, migration, as well as a drop in Latvia’s overall population³²⁵.

According to the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, Latvia was ranked number 22 out of 180 countries (the same ranking as in 2020 and two places up from 2018 and 2019). Latvian authorities continued their push against pro-Kremlin media in 2020, launching investigations into pro-Kremlin media outlets and the Baltic Media Alliance holding, which led to banning several Russian news outlets. The legal grounds for such a ban were the EU sanctions against Russian citizens working to destabilize Ukraine. According to Reporters Without Borders, the measures taken by Latvian authorities lacked transparency, while at the same time, some individuals under surveillance were wrongly identified as journalists. Meanwhile, several independent Russian media companies under threat from the Kremlin have set up their activities in Latvia and enjoy protection from the Latvian authorities³²⁶.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 7/8

In 2018, seven political parties were elected to the Saeima (Latvian Parliament), resulting in a very fragmented parliament. Out of 100 parliamentary seats, 23 went to Harmony, the only significant political party with ties to Russia. Harmony has tried hard to rid itself of its pro-Kremlin image, and in public discourse, portrays itself as neither anti-EU, nor anti-Western (in fact, it was also the runner-up in the 2019 European Parliament elections, winning two seats). 16 seats went to the populist KPV.LV, and another 16 to the New Conservative Party. The liberal Development/For!, as well as the National Alliance each gained 13 seats, while the former ruling party New Unity received mere 8 seats³²⁷. After two unsuccessful attempts to form a government between the leading parties, New Unity's Krišjānis Kariņš succeeded in creating a functioning, pro-Western government which has maintained

power throughout the Covid-19 crisis, despite some reshuffles in government positions.

The populist KPV.LV has since dissolved and its members have formed a faction "Independents" and are among the non-partisan MPs. Former KPV.LV members use populist tactics (both inside and outside the Parliament) and are the main promoters of movements against Covid vaccines and Covid restrictions and are also the loudest opposition to most government policies. Despite not having political parties that officially align them against the EU and NATO or side with Kremlin, there certainly are MPs with Eurosceptic and anti-NATO sentiments. Furthermore, the mere lack of ties with the Kremlin does not necessarily mean that all parties are promoting "Western values" – the aforementioned KPV.LV, National Alliance, and Harmony are the most visible examples of this.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 6/7

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, "Return to Europe" was the defining trend in Latvia's foreign policy. Hence, in the political discourse and for the most part in its national identity, Latvia considers itself part of Western civilization. Unlike in some other former Soviet countries, since independence, Latvia has clearly declared everything Soviet as alien to its identity. That does not always reflect individual sentiments, of course, especially among the elder Russian speaking population.

According to the latest Eurobarometer data from the summer of 2021 (published in September 2021), 43% of Latvians have a positive image of

the EU (EU27: 45%), 42% have a neutral opinion (EU27: 38%), and only 15% see it in negative light (EU27: 16%). To a large extent, Latvian attitudes have moved closer to the EU27 (previously, Latvians were more positive than the EU27). 70% of Latvians identify themselves as EU citizens (EU27: 72%), but there is also growing skepticism towards the EU. In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, 58% of Latvians fully trust that the EU will make the right decisions, while this number is higher in the EU27 – at 65%. This, in fact, reflects post-Soviet countries' general distrust in authorities³²⁸.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 20.5/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE VENICE COMMISSION REQUIREMENTS 5.5/6

The Latvian Constitution is in compliance with the requirements of the Venice Commission. However, Latvia has received repeated international criti-

cism about its large number of non-citizen residents who do not enjoy the right to vote³²⁹, though the number of people affected by this is decreasing. As

of 2021, non-citizens comprised 10.1% of the population (10.4% in 2020). 74% of non-citizen residents are over the age of 50, while this figure is only 37% for Latvian citizens³³⁰. In January 2020, the law on

automatic citizenship for the children of non-citizens (born after January 1, 2020) entered into force, meaning that non-citizen status is no longer assigned to newborns³³¹.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 5.5/7

According to data from Freedom House (2021), Latvia's score on Judicial Framework and Independence is 4.5 (where 1 is worst and 7 is the best). This matter drags down Latvia's overall democracy score, as in most other areas, Latvia has scored 6 and higher³³².

In general, the Latvian judiciary is seen as independent – around 55% of individuals and companies saw it as independent in 2021, an improvement from earlier years. The main issues facing independence were pressure from economic and political groups, as well as the status of judges³³³.

Lengthy pre-trial detentions, along with the inconsistent provision of legal aid remain a problem³³⁴. In 2018, there were three hearings against Latvia at the

European Court of Human Rights, with one hearing resulting in a finding of violations³³⁵. In 2019, there were four hearings, in which four resulted in a finding of violations³³⁶; while in 2020, there nine judgements and eight resulted in a finding of violations. Claims against the “right to respect for private and family life” is a new trend which goes hand in hand with Latvia's continued failure to adopt partnership legislation³³⁷.

According to Freedom House, in 2021, Latvia scored 6 on its corruption index (on a scale from 1 (worst) to 7 (best))³³⁸. However, corruption remains a problem. Although the investigation of corruption cases continues to improve, prosecutions are slow, and conviction rates low, especially in high profile cases.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 5.5/6

Latvia is a member of the core UN and Council of Europe human rights treaties, most of which were adopted back in the 1990s. Hence, the legislation and practical means for human rights protections are in place. Human rights violations by the government are extremely rare. However, some issues remain – such as the status of non-citizens that is currently applied to 10% of population, as well as in relation to conditions in prisons. At the government level, there is necessary legislation in place to pre-

vent discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities. However, Roma and LGBTQI communities still experience discrimination, and the investigation of hate crimes remains slow and biased³³⁹. There have been several unsuccessful initiatives to introduce legislation stipulating “partnership” among unmarried and/or same sex partners. Domestic violence remains another important issue, although there are active initiatives and social campaigns aimed at addressing and improving the situation.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 4/6

According to 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard, the overall number of court cases per 100 inhabitants (civil, commercial, administrative, and other at the 1st instance) remains below 20 cases per 100 inhab-

itants³⁴⁰. In 2020, the Latvian Higher Court heard 2,639 cases: 1,127 civil, 826 administrative, and 686 criminal cases. As of the beginning of 2020, the number of unfinished cases was 1,641, while at the

end of the year, there were 1,335 such cases. 2,945 cases were finalized during 2020³⁴¹.

According to data from the Prosecutor's Office, the rate of acquittals in Latvia has contin-

ued to grow over the past few years – from just above 3% in 2016 and 2017, to 5% in 2018³⁴², and reaching 6.9% and 7.2% in 2019 and 2020, respectively³⁴³.

3 | **ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 24.5/25**

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 7/7

Latvia has been a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund since 1992. It has been part of the World Trade Organization since 1999, the EU since 2004, the Eurozone since 2014, and the OECD since

2016. Latvia is fully integrated with the Western markets and has a free market economy. Latvia is one of the staunchest supporters of the sanction regimes EU has introduced against Russia and Belarus.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 5.5/6

Latvia continued to carry out reforms aimed at further improving the business environment³⁴⁴. Latvia's economic freedom score is 72.3, making its economy the 30th freest in the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom. Its overall score has increased by 0.4 points, primarily due to an improvement in judicial effectiveness. Latvia is ranked 17th among

45 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is above the regional and world averages³⁴⁵.

Corruption and lack of transparency remain issues for Latvia (although these are improving with time) – Latvia is currently listed 42nd out of 180 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index³⁴⁶.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE OF THE SALES OF GOODS 6/6

In 2020, Latvian exports to the EU member states accounted for 66.1% of the country's total exports (49.6% to Eurozone), while exports to CIS countries totaled 12.7%, and exports to other countries accounted for 21.2%. In turn, of all imports into Latvia, 75.9% were from EU member states (56.3% from the Eurozone), 9.5% from CIS countries, and

14.6% from other countries. The balance of these export and import shares has remained very similar over the years, while 2020 showed slight increase in exports (with all groups apart from CIS), and slight decrease in imports (among all groups). Overall, Latvia exported goods to 197 countries and imported from 163 countries³⁴⁷.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 6/6

According to the Bank of Latvia, foreign direct investment (FDI) into Latvia in 2020 totaled €16.727 billion. The share of FDI originating in the

EU was €12.753 billion (76.24%). The share of FDI originating in the EU and other Western countries was €13.943 billion (83.36%). One of the larg-

est individual investors in Latvia was Russia, with €1.498 billion (8.96%), while other former Soviet countries invested €415 million (2.48%). A proportion of FDI to Latvia originated from offshores outside the EU. It is also worth noting that there are hidden investments made via the Cypriot, Moldovan and Austrian financial systems, which might have their origins in the former Soviet Union. €85 million were invested by non-EU interna-

tional organizations. The remaining investments came from other countries, including Israel (€67 million), Singapore (€58 million), and an unidentified country (€334 million). Interestingly, investments from Hong Kong in 2020 were €52 million, while China invested only €22 million. Other countries with a smaller share were South Korea (€23 million), the UAE (€17 million), Turkey (€14 million), and Vietnam (€10 million)³⁴⁸.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 13.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET 2/2

The Latvian language uses the Latin alphabet. However, approximately 30% of the population

uses Russian as its mother tongue and therefore also use the Cyrillic script.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 5/6

Latvia is a multilingual state, and according to Eurostat data from 2019, over 80% of Latvian pupils learn two or more foreign languages at school³⁴⁹. The first foreign language taught in school is English, with the choice of another foreign language a few years later. The most common foreign languages other than English taught in Latvia are Russian, German, Spanish, and French, as well as the Scandinavian languages. The younger generation

is fluent in Western languages, however, Russian is still in demand in the Latvian business environment, especially given that over 30% of the Latvian population speaks Russian as a native language and Russian is an advantage when dealing with former Soviet countries. However, in 2021, the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, publicly called for employers to abandon the trend of requiring Russian proficiency as a pre-requisite for employment³⁵⁰.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 6.5/7

National legislation requires national and regional electronic media ensure that at least 51% of their weekly content (excluding news, sport competitions, games, commercials, and teleshopping) contains European audiovisual products. National and regional electronic media must also ensure that at

least 40% of the content is in the state language. Furthermore, 65% of the overall televised content (excluding news, sport competitions, games, commercials, and teleshopping) must be broadcast in the state language. Content dubbed in the state language is included in this category³⁵¹.

The largest share of movies shown in Latvian cinemas are Hollywood productions, with local movies increasingly making it into the top 10 most watched lists. In 2020, 3 out of the 10 most watched movies were Latvian productions, while the rest were produced (or co-produced) in the United States. Due to repeated Covid-19 lockdowns, 2020 might not be the best example, however, it does reflect this trend over the past several years. For example, in 2019, 2 out of 10 movies were produced in Latvia, while the remaining 8 were produced in the United States³⁵². This does not reflect a state policy, but rather consumers' preferences, as local cinema and culture are genuinely popular in Latvia and receive government funding. European films are also popular in Latvian cinemas, especially during movie festivals.

Statistically, 89% of the Latvian population uses television as a source of information, while 80% use

Internet news portals and 80% listen to the radio. 75% of the population receives information through social media, and 73% through written media (printed and/or online)³⁵³. According to Gemius Audience in October 2021, the most popular online sites were Delfi (with 882,045 real users), LSM (738,324 real users), and Tvnet (with 732,416 real users)³⁵⁴. Delfi and Tvnet are news sites with Latvian and Russian content, which have also provided higher quality journalism via subscribed content since 2020, a common trend among global news outlets. LSM provides content in Latvian and English and is a publicly funded radio and television organization operated by both of Latvia's public broadcasters – Latvian Television and Radio Latvia. The most popular social media in Latvia are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. A certain share is also held by LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, TikTok, and Reddit³⁵⁵.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 9/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION THAT HAS VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 4.5/5

Foreign travel decreased by 71.1% in 2020, dropping to merely 0.7 million, and only every 9th trip was abroad (compared to every 4th in 2019). 34.4% of the population was forced to cancel their planned foreign trips due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. In 2020, Latvian residents made only 0.3 million one-day foreign trips (71.5% less than in 2019), and their main destinations were Lithuania (73%) and Estonia (25.4%). 0.4 million people made a multi-day trips abroad (a 70.8% decrease from 2019), and the most popular destinations were Estonia (20.8%), Lithuania (12.5%), and Germany (11.1%). It must be noted that travel within Latvia also decreased considerably

(by 43.8%)³⁵⁶, due to heavy lockdown rules and the unpredictability of pandemic developments. Foreign tourism to Latvia fell by 61.6%³⁵⁷.

However, the general trend in Latvia is that a large share of population travels abroad for work, vacation, and studying. With low-cost airlines holding a large share of the market and Latvia being a member of Schengen Zone, foreign travel is cheap and easily accessible for most of the population. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Latvian diaspora in places like the UK, US, Canada, Australia and, to some extent, the EU have had a hard time reuniting with their friends and relatives.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2.5/3

Despite Latvia's small market, it has a number of Western corporations in the retail, clothing, and catering sectors. Other than the small mar-

ket size, there are no barriers to Western retailers entering the Latvian market. Latvia is listed as the 19th according to World Bank's Ease of

Doing Business and ranks 15th in both getting credit and enforcing contracts, 16th in paying taxes, and 25th and 26th in registering property and starting a business respectively³⁵⁸. A share of the market remains occupied by Latvian companies,

as currently there is great appreciation for local crafts, clothing and food products. Many international, Western-based retail chains are important players in Latvia, and online trading platforms are widely accessible.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USE 2/2

In 2020, the proportion of households with Internet access in Latvia reached 89.7%, an increase of 30% over the last 10 years. The proportion of regular Internet users rose to 86.9%. In the 16-24 age group, 97.9% used the Internet at least once a week. This number decreases slightly among older age groups: for those ages 25-54, it is 95.2%; and for those ages 55-74, it is 69.6%. The most active Internet users are located in the capital city of Riga

and its surrounding regions. However, differences throughout the country are limited, and the overall Internet use and access is consistently growing³⁵⁹. In 2020, 79.3% of the population had smartphones for personal use³⁶⁰. Mobile Internet networks were offered by the three main providers, Tele2 (94.4% coverage of Latvian territory), Bite (91.7% coverage), and LMT (88.7%)³⁶¹. It is estimated that Latvia will have a full 5G coverage by 2023³⁶².

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
22.5/25	20/25	25/25	13.5/15	8.5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 22.5/25

1.1. DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 8.5/10

On October 11 and 25, 2020 Lithuania held parliamentary elections to elect the 141 members of the Seimas.³⁶³ Campaign topics included healthcare and the Covid-19 pandemic, social and economic issues, energy, the environment, and pensions³⁶⁴. While the main center-right opposition party, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), won the most seats, no party won a majority, resulting in the formation of a coalition. Ingrida Simonyte, leading the Homeland Union, was appointed Prime Minister of Lithuania, and Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen of the Liberal Movement was elected as Speaker of the Seimas³⁶⁵.

The election provided voters with clear political alternatives, and there were several changes made from the 2016 parliamentary elections. First, the Central Electoral Commission proposed an extension on early voting, from two days to four days, and remote electronic voting was available for voters abroad or in self-isolation due to Covid-19³⁶⁶. Other amendments included modifications of provisions on candidate registration, voter list management, postal and voting from abroad³⁶⁷. constituency added in Vilnius and one constituency removed in Kaunas. A new “worldwide” constituency was established, while constituencies in rural areas were enlarged³⁶⁸. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), “no major concerns were expressed with respect to political parties’ treatment by the

authorities, their access to the media, or election dispute resolution”³⁶⁹.

Only 47.8% of voters participated in the first round of voting, rendering this the second-lowest voter turnout in Lithuania’s democratic history³⁷⁰. While the pandemic may have played a part in discouraging people to come out and vote³⁷¹, some scholars note this may be evidence of “democratic hollowness” and declining popular involvement in democracy³⁷².

The Lithuanian media landscape is diverse and pluralistic. There are over 30 TV channels, over 40 radio channels, and approximately 200 print media outlets³⁷³. Online media and television are the main sources of election-related information. According to the 2020 and 2021 World Press Freedom Index from Reporters without Borders, Lithuania ranks 28th, behind fellow Baltic states Estonia and Latvia³⁷⁴. In its assessment of Lithuania, Reporters without Borders criticized the government’s actions in refusing to hand over an audio recording of a government meeting in which journalists were defamed. The situation rose to Lithuania’s supreme court, which sided with the group of journalists claiming that the government was “violating both the journalists’ rights and the public’s right to know”³⁷⁵.

Reporters Without Borders further stated that “This set a very important precedent, giving journalists right of access to all non-classified information”.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 7.5/ 8

Political parties in Lithuania tend not to stray too far away from the political center, and the majority are pro-Western. The parliamentary elections in 2020 were marked by a “fiasco of numerous small nationalist and Eurosceptic parties” which failed to

unite and collected only 1-2% of the votes each³⁷⁶. The “soft Eurosceptic” party, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania³⁷⁷, dropped from five seats in 2016 to three seats (out of 141) in 2020 (approximately 2% of the total Seimas seats).

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 6.5/7

Lithuania has highly positive attitudes about the European Union (EU), with 80% of Lithuanians stating that they feel they are citizens of the EU³⁷⁸. According to the 2021 Standard Eurobarometer, 57% of Lithuanians have a positive image of the EU, and 69% say they trust the EU. While still high, Lithuanian optimism about the future of the EU has declined the most among EU states, with 71% of Lithuanians claiming to be optimistic about the future of the EU. A high majority of Lithuanians are also in favor of “a European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro”³⁷⁹.

Lithuanian citizens also hold very positive views of NATO. In a GLOBSEC survey, 84% of Lithuanians would vote to stay in NATO if there were a referendum on Lithuania’s NATO membership³⁸⁰. On June 3, 2021, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg wel-

comed Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte of Lithuania to the NATO Headquarters and praised Lithuania’s commitment to the Alliance³⁸¹. Lithuania meets NATO’s 2% defense spending budget, spending 2.03% of its GDP on defense in 2021. Finance Minister Gintare Skaiste claims that a majority of the political parties in Lithuania support the gradual increase of defense spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030³⁸².

Stoltenberg also praised Lithuania’s hosting of the German-led multinational NATO battlegroup in Rukla and its contributions to the NATO mission in Afghanistan³⁸³. As part of the evacuation of Lithuanian troops from Kabul, Lithuania has provided asylum to around 180 Afghan interpreters and their family members, and has committed to take up to 30 persons who specifically worked for the NATO mission in Afghanistan³⁸⁴.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 20/25

2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 6/6

The Lithuanian Constitution is in compliance with the Venice Commission.

For the first time in the history of Lithuanian courts, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania applied to the European Court of Human Rights for an advisory

opinion in the case of Neringa Venckiene. According to Freedom House, the Central Electoral Commission (VRK) failed to register her as a candidate in the 2020 parliamentary elections based on her formal removal by impeachment from the Seimas in 2014.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 6.5/7

According to the 2021 European Commission’s Rule of Law Country Report, 55% of Lithuania’s general public rated the perceived

judicial independence as “fairly good” or “very good”, an increase of three percentage points compared to 2020³⁸⁵.

On November 4, 2020, the new 2020-2022 anti-corruption action plan was adopted with the aim of improving the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Programme³⁸⁶. This program aims to achieve “greater management efficiency in the public sector, transparency, and openness of decision making and procedures, accountability to the public, and higher resilience to corruption in the civil service”³⁸⁷.

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 4.5/6

During a vote held at the UN General Assembly, Lithuania was elected a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2022–2024³⁹⁰. Previously, Lithuania had been an observer of the UN Human Rights Council and will become a full member for three years starting January 1, 2022. During its membership period, the Foreign Ministry stated that Lithuania will have a special focus on the security of activists, the protection of children and people with disabilities, human rights in conflict zones, and timely response to human rights violations^{391 392}.

Lithuania has been criticized by the international community and its regional partners for adopting a resolution to undertake all possible measures against “hybrid aggression [...] during which flows of third-country nationals [are] illegally crossing the state border [...] in violation of international law and international commitments with the purpose to destabilize the situation in Lithuania and cause damage to the State of Lithuania [...]”³⁹³ According to the head of the EU Border Agency Frontex, Lithuania has around 20 reports detailing alleged violations against migrants in Lithuania³⁹⁴.

In July 2021, the Lithuanian Parliament passed amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Al-

Lithuania was added to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index in 2021, which measures how the rule of law is experienced and perceived around the world. Globally, Lithuania ranks 18th, behind Estonia (ranked 11th) but ahead of Latvia (ranked 24th³⁸⁸). In most metrics, Lithuania scores higher than the regional average (consisting of EU, North American, and EFTA countries), however Lithuania scores below the regional average in the absence of corruption and fundamental rights metrics³⁸⁹.

iens, which allows the detention of migrants for up to six months, curbs the right of appeal for rejected asylum-seekers, and stipulates that migrants can be deported while their appeals are under consideration^{395 396}. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles states that the amendments “have created an extremely hostile environment for asylum seekers and irregular migrants in general in Lithuania [...], undermining the fairness and efficiency of the asylum procedure, contrary to Lithuania’s international and EU obligations on the protection of refugees and human rights”³⁹⁷.

Lithuania ranks 34th in the Rainbow Index out of 49 European countries, which scores how the laws and policies of each country impact the lives of LGBTI people³⁹⁸. Only seven of the 17 political parties competing in the October 2020 parliamentary elections expressed support for legally recognizing partnerships in a gender-neutral manner³⁹⁹. LGBTI rights organizers criticize Lithuania’s “anti-gay propaganda law”, which restricts the dissemination of information that “abases family values”, resulting in public and private media outlets facing pressure to limit coverage of the LGBTI community⁴⁰⁰.

2.4 NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 3/6

The number of convicts and detainees in Lithuania continues to decline as a result of earlier reforms⁴⁰¹.

The number persons incarcerated in penitentiaries was 5,320 in 2020, the lowest number in the past five years.

In 2020, 24,883 persons were suspected of (charged with) criminal offenses, and 16,060 were convicted for criminal offenses by the

courts⁴⁰². Additionally, in 2020 there were 260 acquittals (approximately 1.5%) out of 17,771 persons tried⁴⁰³.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 25/25

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 7/7

Lithuania has been a member of the WTO since May 31, 2001, of the EU since May 1, 2004, and of NATO since March 29, 2004. Lithuania is an active part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup led by Germany and contributing nations. NATO also took responsibility of Baltic airspace in March 2004, where NATO allies conduct the Baltic Air Policing mission from the Lithuanian

Air Force Air Base in Siauliai⁴⁰⁴.

Lithuania is also actively involved in the World Trade Organization, contributing EUR 30,000 in September 2021 to finance training and other capacity-building activities for government officials from developing and least-developed countries. Lithuania has overall donated nearly EUR 400,000 to the various WTO trust funds⁴⁰⁵.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 6/6

According to the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom from the Heritage Foundation, Lithuania scores 76.9, making its economy the 15th freest in the 2021 Index. Lithuania's overall score has increased by 0.2 points due to improvements in government integrity, and Lithuania ranks 8th among 45 countries in Europe⁴⁰⁶. Lithuania also has seven free economic zones that provide favorable conditions for developing businesses to encourage industry growth, particularly in less-developed regions of the country. These conditions include tax incentives (0% corporate profit tax for the first 10 years), support services, and "ready-to-build" industrial sites with physical and legal infrastructure⁴⁰⁷.

Lithuania scores 30th in the International Institute for Management Development's (IMD) World Competitiveness ranking, up one spot from its 2020

results⁴⁰⁸. Results are highest among the metrics for international trade competitiveness, which is attributed to Lithuania's excellent export diversification, high share of business services exports in relation to GDP, and share of the total volume of international trade (exports and imports) in relation to GDP⁴⁰⁹.

Lithuania's rank in Transparency International's Corruption Index remains unchanged from 2020, with the country ranking 35th out of a total of 180 countries and 14th in the EU. According to survey data from the World Bank Group, Lithuanians rank corruption 5th (out of a total of 18 acute problems), behind low wages, the healthcare system, rising prices, and unemployment. Corruption is also a cultural problem, with 71% of Lithuanian survey respondents stating that a bribe helps to solve problems and 44% of CEOs agreeing that a bribe facilitates solving problems⁴¹⁰.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 6/6

In the second quarter of the 2021 financial year (April-June 2021), Lithuania exported a total of EUR 3.1 billion and imported EUR 1.8 billion. The European

Union continued to be Lithuania's largest trade partner, with Lithuania exporting EUR 2.2 billion to the EU (approximately 70% of total exports) and importing

EUR 1.2 billion (approximately 65% of total imports)⁴¹¹. Lithuania's most important export trade partners

include Germany (EUR 456 million), France (EUR 261 million), and the Netherlands (EUR 211 million).

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 6/6

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Lithuania amounted to EUR 24.5 billion in the second quarter of 2021. The largest country investor in Q1 2021 was Germany (EUR 5.5 billion), followed by Sweden (EUR 3.9 billion), and the

Netherlands (EUR 2.1 billion)⁴¹². The key attractive sectors for Western investment include finance and insurance, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and motor vehicle and motorcycle repair⁴¹³.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 13.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

The Lithuanian language uses a supplemented version of the Latin alphabet.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 5/6

The Official Statistics of Lithuania in foreign language proficiency have not been updated since 2016; proficiency in foreign languages include Russian (86%), English (45%), Polish (15%), German (12%), and French (3%). According to the English First English Proficiency Index, Lithuania ranks

24th out of 112 countries in English proficiency⁴¹⁴. Compared to the countries studied for this Westernization Index, Lithuania ranks second (after Estonia), and is included in the "high proficiency" category, alongside fellow Baltic states Estonia and Latvia.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTIONS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 6.5/7

Facebook continues to be the most popular social media platform, and younger users engage with Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok⁴¹⁵. At the time of writing this report, the majority of films in Lithuanian cinemas are produced in the West, with films from the USA, France, and

Poland. Only a handful are of Russian origin or dubbed in Russian⁴¹⁶. Popular TV channels include LNK (owned by Vilnius-based MG Baltic Media), TV3 (owned by US-based Providence Equity), and the public Lithuanian National Radio and Television channel (LRT).

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 8.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 4/5

Since the 1990's, Lithuania experienced a population drop of 24%, mainly due to emigration contributing to a 'brain drain' and a change in Lithuania's demographic structure⁴¹⁷. The majority of emigrants (67%) declared their departure to EU countries, specifically the United

Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Ukraine, and Ireland⁴¹⁸. According to a survey by NielsonIQ, 77% of Lithuanians travel abroad⁴¹⁹. In August 2021, the majority of destination flights were to European countries: the United Kingdom (286 flights), Germany (196 flights), and Latvia (137 flights)⁴²⁰.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2.5/3

Franchising in Lithuania is popular, especially since the establishment of the Lithuania Franchise Centre in 2008, and the number of successful franchisors and franchisees in Lithuania is steadily increasing⁴²¹. The introduction of brands such as The

Body Shop, Mango, Hugo Boss, and Zara, among many others, is mostly related to the introduction of large shopping malls Akropolis, Europa, and Mega across the country. In 2021, Domino's Pizza opened its first-ever location in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius⁴²².

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

In 2021, Internet penetration in Lithuania is at approximately 82%. The number of social media users in Lithuania increased by 5.6% between 2020 and 2021⁴²³.

According to the 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index from the European Commission, Lithuania ranks 14th out of 27 EU countries in key digital policy areas⁴²⁴. According to the In-

dex, 65% of all Lithuanian households subscribe to fixed Internet access, below the EU average of 77%. However, Lithuania aims to implement the RAIN3 project which plans to build around 30 new communication towers and develop broadband networks in rural areas. Mobile broadband coverage in Lithuania is 67%, which is lower than the EU average, but Lithuania has 100% coverage of 4G.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF	Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
		18.5 /25	13.5 /25	16.5 /25	10.5 /15

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 18.5/25

1.1. POLITICAL FREEDOM 7/10

Moldova’s political agenda has been very dynamic over the last two years. The driving force behind these political changes has been the mobilization of the pro-reform and pro-Western movements, which resulted in the election of Maia Sandu as the President of Moldova following the November 2020 presidential elections, when Sandu confidently defeated incumbent pro-Russian President Igor Dodon. Sandu’s election also led to a political crisis, as parliament was under the control of former President Dodon, and thus, the president and parliament had very different agendas. After Sandu took office and the government resigned in December 2020, there were several attempts to appoint a government loyal to Sandu – all of which failed due to insufficient votes. This in turn allowed President Sandu to dissolve parliament and set early parliamentary elections for July 2021. Sandu’s Action and Solidarity party won the elections and the majority in the parliament, ending the political crisis. Moreover, the election result was a serious statement in favor of reforms.

Both presidential and parliamentary elections were held in line with democratic standards. The International Election Observation Mission and the OSCE mission concluded that the presidential elections “were well administered, competitive, and fundamental freedoms were largely respected”⁴²⁵. Also, despite the Covid pandemic, media polar-

ization, and legislative gaps, as well as certain allegations of vote-buying during the parliamentary elections, “voters had a choice between political alternatives and the fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression continued to be respected”⁴²⁶. In case of both elections, power was handed over peacefully and transparently, which again confirms that Moldova is at least an electoral democracy.

Freedom of association is guaranteed by law and widely respected in practice. In general, association and assembly rights are rarely subject to interference or restrictions from state institutions. Political parties and civic groups face no outright prohibitions to exercising their rights. There is a significant number of parties registered in Moldova which offers a wide choice, out of which 23 participated in the 2021 parliamentary elections. There is also a popular organization including thousands of NGOs, though most of them are inactive.

According to the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, Moldova is ranked 89 out of 180 countries, below only the Baltic countries, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in the former Soviet region, but also above two EU member states, Hungary and Bulgaria⁴²⁷.

Despite some improvement in Moldova’s media environment, there are still significant challenges, as reflected by verbal and physical violence against journalists. One of the main difficulties is the fact that the press has become the target of multiple

lawsuits, largely filed with the intention of intimidating investigative reporters.

Monitoring by non-governmental media organizations reveals that some of the most popular media outlets, including national broadcasters, have become politically partisan, replacing journalism with propaganda. Media owners are heavily in-

involved in the editorial policies of media institutions, encouraging self-censorship, and media institutions have provided biased, incomplete, and often manipulative information to media consumers⁴²⁸. On top of this, the Russian media plays an important role in Moldova, and often promotes disinformation and fake news.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 6.5/8

Since parliamentary snap elections held in July 2021, parliament has had a solid pro-Western majority. Out of 101 MPs, 63 represent Maia Sandu's pro-Western Action and Solidarity Party. The second political group represented is the Bloc of Communists and Socialists, which received 32 mandates, and which is known for their pro-Russian, anti-reform views. The remaining 6 mandates are held by Sor Party, which has a populist and anti-reform agenda with an aim to avoid geopolitical divisions, and which is led by the fugitive politician and the main suspect in a \$1 billion bank fraud scheme, Ilan Shor.

Aside from the transformation in parliament, both electoral campaigns were unique in many respects. Above all, the traditional East-West divide was not as visible as in the past, and in fact became a secondary issue. Unlike in previous campaigns, the reforms became the most-discussed subject. There was special emphasis on fighting corruption and reforming the judiciary, along with economic reforms and poverty reduction. So far, the new parliament appears to be sticking to its electoral agenda, but practical results of that are yet to be seen.

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 5/7

Moldovan public opinion is in favor of closer relations with the West. According to a recent poll, if a hypothetical referendum were to take place on whether to choose between integration with the EU or with the Russian-led Eurasian Union, 56.8% of voters would opt for integration with the EU, and 27.9% for the Eurasian Union. Support for the EU is about 10% higher than two years ago. Also, it is

very interesting that 41.4% of voters, the highest number in history, support unification with Romania, while 46% are against it⁴²⁹.

There are also interesting changes with regard to the leaders of other states. For the first time, Angela Merkel is the most trusted leader, with almost 60% support, while Vladimir Putin is in second place with almost 58%.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 13.5/25

2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 4.5/6

Moldova has a well-established tradition of appealing to the Venice Commission for sorting out domestic political fights. In 2020-2021, the Venice

Commission issued 14 opinions for Moldova, which is more than in the period of 2018-2019, when the Commission issued 11 opinions⁴³⁰. Most of the

opinions touch upon topics related to constitutional amendments and laws in the area of judiciary reform, the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, electoral code, media, and prosecutor's office.

The prosecutor's office requires a special attention in this context, as one of the main electoral promises of Sandu and her party was to reform the judiciary and the prosecutor's office, one of the first laws adopted by the new parliament pertained to the prosecutor's office. The amended law is very sensitive, since it introduces the possibility to evaluate the Prosecutor General and dismiss him or her should his or her work be deemed "unsatisfactory". The law

was fast tracked for adoption, which led the opposition to criticize the lack of an inclusive process and transparency surrounding the decision-making process. One of the main criticisms was that the parliament should have first requested the opinion of the Venice Commission and only then adopted the law.

Overall, it is quite difficult to assess the degree of the implementation of the Venice Commission recommendations. Quite often, recommendations are implemented unless there is a political issue which prevails the best practices. But when it comes to the constitution, recommendations are widely implemented and in line with the Venice Commission.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 3/7

The independence of the judiciary is one of Moldova's most serious problems. The multitude of judiciary reforms did not produce any significant changes. The poor situation of the judiciary is also confirmed by the Rule of Law Index 2021, in which Moldova scores 0.51 out of 1⁴³¹.

During the electoral campaign, one of the main promises of Sandu and her party was to reform the

judiciary and fight corruption. The official agenda is indeed very much focused on judiciary reform. Reforms to the external vetting of judges and prosecutors, in order to clean out corruption are a priority. This is also a pressing matter for the general public, whose distrust in judiciary is among the highest in the region, at almost 80%⁴³².

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 3.5/6

Despite having human rights legislation that is widely in line with the European framework and international conventions, Moldova is still facing a series of problems when it comes to enforcing those human rights laws. The 2020 annual Ombudsmen's report notes that the observance of human rights remains problematic. On top of usual problems related to access to justice, the right to medical assistance, freedom of speech, etc., Covid-19 has further exacerbated the situation. The pandemic led to multiple human rights violations affecting fundamental freedoms and the democratic process in Moldova. The report states that "the COVID-19 crisis has led to deepening poverty, rising inequalities, structural and consolidated discrimination, and a worsening of the human rights situation"⁴³³.

Systemic human rights violations in Moldova have been confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights. According to the data from 2020, Moldova is a frequent "client" of the ECHR. In 2020 alone, the ECHR received 523 complaints against Moldova, which, given the country's population, is 3 times higher than the European average. Nevertheless, the good news is that in 2020, the ECHR received the lowest number of complaints against Moldova in the last 12 years. The most common types of violations found by the ECHR include the non-enforcement of judgments, insufficient investigation of ill-treatment and deaths, illegal detention and detention in poor conditions, as well as illegal quashing of irrevocable court decisions⁴³⁴.

2.4 NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 2.5/6

According to the Annual Report from the Prosecutor's Office, the rate of acquittals in 2020 the first instance courts was 2.5%⁴³⁵. As in previous years, the categories of offenses for which defendants were

acquitted were mainly related to crimes against property, traffic safety crimes including drunk driving, smuggling, and the illegal sale of drugs. In most of the cases, the acquittal was based on the lack of evidence.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 16.5/25

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 4.5/7

Moldova joined the WTO in 2001, which helped the country sign new trade agreements and develop viable multilateral trade.

Despite Chisinau's attempts to join the EU, Brussels avoids the topic as there is no consensus within

the EU. Instead, in 2014, Moldova and EU signed the Association Agreement with the EU which also includes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, providing for many opportunities for bilateral trade while sidestepping full integration.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 3/6

The 2021 Index of Economic Freedom ranks Moldova at 85 out of 178 countries, with 62.5 points out of 100, categorizing it as moderately free. Within that score, Moldova's strongest positions are fiscal health (96.5) and tax burden (94), as well as trade freedom (76.8) and monetary freedom (71.5). The lowest score has been for labor freedom (39.2) and judicial effectiveness (29.9)⁴³⁶.

Serious problems within the judiciary, as emphasized in point 2.2, remain an issue to a healthy business environment. A corrupt court system has led many companies to lose confidence in whether their business is protected. The Corruption Perception Index ranks Moldova at number 115 out of 180 countries⁴³⁷. The current score is a slight improvement from two years ago, however, there has been no breakthrough in terms of fighting corruption in Moldova.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 5/6

Trade and economic activity decreased in 2020, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics⁴³⁸, the EU remains Moldova's main trading partner. In 2020, Moldova exported 66.7% of its goods to the EU, amounting to \$1.65 billion, which is less than two years ago (\$1.9 billion). The CIS countries account for 15.2% of exports, which is less than a quarter of exports to the EU. At the same time,

imports figures look different, with 45.6% coming from EU countries and 24.3% from CIS countries. In the case of both exports and imports, the EU prevails while Russia is of lesser importance. However, Russia's exports to Moldova include important commodities such as gas and oil, which means that Moldova continues to depend on Russia, despite trade being a lower priority on the bilateral agenda. In October 2021, Moldova faced a gas crisis as

its Gazprom contract expired and a new one has not yet been signed amid price hikes on the market. While negotiating the new contract, for the first time ever, Moldova has had to buy gas from a source other than Russian Gazprom. A new five-year contract has been signed with Gazprom, but

tensions should be expected, as there are still many ambiguities. The Kremlin denied that it was putting political pressure on Moldova, though experts in Moldova and EU argue that Russia is leveraging energy to punish Chisinau for the election of Maia Sandu as president⁴³⁹.

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 4/6

According to the 2021 World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, FDI inflow in Moldova amounted to \$55 million in 2020, down from \$503 million in 2019⁴⁴⁰. This ten-fold drop in investment is the direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The total estimated FDI stock amounted to \$4.8 billion in 2020. As in previous years, most of FDI came from EU countries. Out of the FDI stock, 82.2% represents investments coming from the

EU, while investments from CIS states total 5.9% and of the remaining 11.9% is from other countries⁴⁴¹.

Generally, Moldova is not very attractive to investors. The country is facing a number of challenges related to the corruption, including in the judiciary, investment climate, obstacles to export, but also mass migration of the active population. Remittances from Moldovan migrants remain an important source of "investment".

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 10.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

The Republic of Moldova has used the Latin alphabet since independence in 1991. Although the Latin-based script Romanian language is taught in the country, there is an exception of the Russian-occupied region of Transnistria, where the "Moldo-

van" language is taught based on Cyrillic-script. During Soviet times, the authorities decided to switch the alphabet from Latin to Cyrillic, and to rename the Romanian language as "Moldovan", in order to show that Moldovans spoke a different language.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 3.5/6

Learning foreign languages is trendy in Moldova. In most cases, younger people tend to speak more English and other foreign languages than older generations. However, there is an urban-rural discrepancy, with the urban population having a better knowledge of foreign languages. The process of learning a foreign language is also massively shaped

by migration patterns, especially among people who are middle-aged and elderly.

The English Proficiency Index⁴⁴² assesses Moldova as a country with moderate proficiency, ranking 40 out of 112 countries. This is the highest result among former Soviet states, with the exception of the three Baltic countries.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 5/7

During the week of November 22–28 Moldova's largest cinema chain, Patria, was showing eight movies – with the exception of one Moldovan production, they were all Western productions⁴⁴³.

One particularly interesting development in Moldova is the fact that most of movies are dubbed in Russian, and only a few of the most popular productions are also available in Romanian. Recently, there have also been movies shown in English with Romanian subtitles. The availability of Netflix subscriptions has boosted ties with Western productions.

Moldovan channels with Russian content are still high among the population's preferences, with

Prime TV topping the ratings. According to an opinion poll⁴⁴⁴, the next four channels in Moldova's top five include those with local content, an improvement compared to 2019.

In terms of social networks, people use mostly Facebook 67.2%, Instagram 26.5%, Odnoklassniki 24.1%, and TikTok 10.9%⁴⁴⁵. Compared to 2019, there is a significant decrease in the use of Russian social networks – in 2019, Odnoklassniki was used by 66% and VKontakte by 14%⁴⁴⁶. For comparison's sake, just four years ago, in 2017, Odnoklasniki had almost twice as many users as Facebook.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 6.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 3.5/5

Moldovans are a very mobile nation, mainly for reasons of seasonal or permanent work. Mobility and employment opportunities for Moldovans are also facilitated by the fact that more than one million Moldovans hold Romanian citizenship, which grants them many privileges in the EU⁴⁴⁷.

In terms of tourist destinations, the top five destination countries are Turkey, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ukraine, and Greece. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significantly negative effect on travel in general⁴⁴⁸.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1.5/3

Moldova is not a popular location for Western chain corporations. The biggest retail company, Linella, is owned by local business stakeholders. Among other big retailers are German wholesaler Metro Cash & Carry. Kaufland has opened hypermarkets in Chisinau and in several regions around Moldova. In addition to Radisson Blu, the Marriot and Ibis hotel chains have en-

tered the Moldovan market. In terms of clothing, Nike, Adidas, Puma are some athletic wear retailers with a presence in Moldova. Luxury brands do not have any official representation in Moldova, however, many luxury designer brands do have production facilities in Moldova. McDonald's, KFC, and Robert's Coffee are some restaurants and fast food chains present in Moldova.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1.5/2

In 2021, Moldova had approximately 4.3 million mobile phone users, which is more than the population of Moldova itself (3.6 million)⁴⁴⁹. Out

of the total number of users, 2.3 million were using mobile Internet, out of which 1.6 million were using 4G⁴⁵⁰.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
4/25	3/25	5/25	4.5/15	2.5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 4/25

1.1. DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 1/10

A de facto one-party system has been established in Tajikistan since 2016. The Tajik political opposition has disappeared as a legal political player; the secular oppositional block was broken up and subordinated to the authorities by 2010, and the most influential opposition party, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), was banned in 2015.

The ruling People’s Democratic Party occupies the overwhelming majority of seats in the Tajik Parliament. The major opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRPT), was banned in September 2015, and the majority of the party leadership are either imprisoned or living in exile. Two deputy heads of the IRPT have been sentenced to life imprisonment. The Social Democratic Party – the only officially registered opposition party in the country – has effectively been destroyed and exists mainly on paper. The remaining six officially registered political parties openly demonstrate loyalty to the authorities and refuse to define themselves as political opposition.

The latest parliamentary elections were held on March 1, 2020, and confirmed the existing status

quo in parliament. Out of seven registered parties, only the opposition Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan remained outside of parliament. According to official data, only 0.32% of voters voted for this party, although the party disagreed with the election results.

Out of 63 seats in Parliament, the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) won 47 parliamentary seats, the Communist Party won two seats, the Democratic Party won 1 seat, the Socialist Party 1 seat, the Party of Economic Reforms won 5, and the Agrarian Party of Tajikistan won 7 seats.

There is a high risk that current drastic political changes in neighboring Afghanistan will have an impact on the state of the Westernization process in Tajikistan. Thus, we can expect that the authorities will tighten their control over civil society, which is often regarded as a space for potential public mobilization, critical discourse, and political destabilization. It would certainly hamper the democratization processes in the country and contribute to its further drift towards authoritarianism.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 1/8

There are no officially registered political parties in Tajikistan that can be described as pro-Western organizations. No one of them declares adherence to pro-Western ideologies and values in their programs. To some extent, the only exception to this is the Social Democratic Party

of Tajikistan, which is described as a center-left and liberal political party that stands for the open market and democratization reforms. During the 2020 parliamentary elections, the Social Democrats nominated five candidates on the party list. However, the Central Commission for Elec-

tions and Referenda stated that only 0.32% of the electorate voted for the SDPT, and thus, this party was not able to overcome the 5% barrier to

entering parliament⁴⁵¹. In general, the SDPT is in a deep crisis caused by the Tajik authorities over the last 15 years.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 2/7

There are still no sociological surveys or opinion polls concerning the Tajik public's perceptions of Western civilization. In general, the Tajik public, especially the youth, regard Western countries as the most attractive destination for temporary (labor) or permanent migration. Thus, every year the number of Tajik citizens participating in the US green card lottery increases⁴⁵².

The number of Tajiks applying for asylum in Western countries has also risen. The countries where Tajik citizens more often apply for asylum within the European Union include Germany (approximately

66%) and Poland (approximately 28%)⁴⁵³.

The highest number of asylum applications submitted by Tajiks was recorded in 2016, with 3,210 requests. This was linked on the one hand to the increase in State repressions against the Party of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan (IRPT), which was banned in September 2015. On the other hand, some experts explain this phenomenon as an attempt by Tajik citizens working in Russia to take advantage of Germany's "open door" policy at the time. In the meantime, Poland became the first EU border crossing point for Tajik citizens traveling to Germany⁴⁵⁴.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 3/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 1/6

According to experts, the Tajik Constitution and legislation meet international requirements and standards. At the same time, the Tajik Government often fails to meet international standards in practice while implementing constitutional standards and legislation. Since 2014, Tajikistan does not have a practice of regularly contacting the Venice Commission or other international organizations

for legal consultations about important matters. In 2020-2021, the Tajik Government was sharply criticized for numerous cases of human rights violations, including "kidnapping and forced repatriation of the country's citizens in foreign countries, only for these citizens to reappear in custody in Tajikistan; forced disappearances; and torture and abuse of detainees by security forces"⁴⁵⁵.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 0.5/7

Judiciary independence has continued to deteriorate during the last several years. The Tajik judiciary is structured in a way that does not ensure the independence of the judicial power from the executive. As a result, the judiciary system has de facto failed to ensure rule of law in the country. In the current context, judges are often unable to adjudicate cases fairly without a risk of

negative consequences for independent decisions.

Over the past few years, the Tajik authorities have significantly limited lawyers' ability to work independently. Thus, they have introduced a new decree, according to which, only members of the government-controlled Union of Lawyers of Tajikistan under the Ministry of Justice may work as defense attorneys in the courts⁴⁵⁶.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 1/6

Over the last year, the Tajik Government has issued several decrees restricting freedom of expression. On February 10, 2021, the state-run media regulator, the Television and Radio Committee, announced new licensing rules for privately owned television and radio stations. Under these new rules, independent TV and radio stations are required to “work within the framework of the country’s unified policy in the information sphere” and “unquestioningly comply” with the Television and Radio Committee’s orders⁴⁵⁷. This law is in line with amendments passed by the Tajik Parliament in July 2017, allowing security services to monitor individuals’ online activities, including by keeping records of mobile messages and social media comments⁴⁵⁸.

In July 2021, amendments were made to the law on bars and attorney activity. In accordance with

these changes, Tajik attorneys may only defend their clients in court trials if approved by the newly established Legal Aid Center, and must, upon request, “urgently come to the inquiry officer, investigator, prosecutor, or judge”⁴⁵⁹.

In February 2021, President Rahmon signed 96 decrees at once, affecting almost all judges in the country. Accordingly, 153 judges and court officials were either transferred to other positions or fired.

In October 2021, the Tajik Parliament started consideration of amendments to the Criminal Code on making penalties for illegal religious education, including online education, harsher, with imprisonment of up to 3 years. Previously this was punishable with an administrative fine of up to 72,000 somoni (around \$6,000) or prison term of up to 3 years for repeat offenses⁴⁶⁰.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 0.5/6

Tajikistan’s justice system is clearly highly intolerant to acquittals in criminal trials. The lack of acquittals does not appear to be a personal choice of judges, but a systemic problem of excluding the option of making independent decisions in criminal cases. Acquittals are vanishingly rare, to the extent that the overwhelming majority of judges have never issued a single acquit-

tal in their careers, and some judges have never even heard of one being issued by other judges.

The Supreme Court of Tajikistan opened an administrative case against a judge at the at Bobodzhon Gafurov (the Sughd region) district court, who acquitted a defendant and released them from the courtroom⁴⁶¹.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 5/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION: 2/7

Tajikistan applied for WTO membership in 2010; the application was approved in 2012, and the country has held WTO membership since March 2, 2013⁴⁶². The Covid-19 outbreak forced the postponement of Tajikistan’s first WTO Trade Policy Review, which had been scheduled for March 2020⁴⁶³.

In 2019, Tajikistan chaired a number of regional organizations and their structures, including the

Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation, and the Forum for Security Cooperation at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2020, Tajikistan began its chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan, and took over the chairmanship of the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)⁴⁶⁴.

Tajikistan has been a full member of the OSCE since 1994. Since that time, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has opened five field offices in the country. The relationship between Tajikistan and the OSCE deteriorated since 2016, when the OSCE Human

Dimension Meeting was held in Warsaw, with participation from representatives of the Islamic Renaissance Party and Group 24, which was banned and declared a terrorist organization in Tajikistan. As a result, Tajik authorities have downgraded the OSCE Program Office, which was forced to close its regional offices in the country⁴⁶⁵.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 1/6

According to the Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom, Tajikistan is ranked 134th out of 178 states and therefore in the 'mostly unfree' group⁴⁶⁶. According to the US State Government report, Tajikistan remains a challenging place to do business and presents potential high-risk, high-reward opportunities for foreign investors. In 2020, the pandemic crisis and closed borders depressed both the flow of remittances and foreign trade, leading to a 3% contraction of Tajikistan's GDP; it also caused an 11% currency devaluation and a considerable decrease in domestic business and trade activities⁴⁶⁷.

In order to facilitate business, the Tajik government has simplified the business registration process by adopting a single-window registration system for investors in 2019, though additional efforts are needed in order to make this system effective. In addition to obtaining state registration through a single-window, a company must still also register with the Social Protection Agency, Statistics Agency under the President of Tajikistan's Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Employment; Sanitary-Epidemiological Service at the Ministry of Health; as well as with local authorities, municipal services, and other agencies⁴⁶⁸.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 1/6

Over the last two years, Tajikistan's main trade partners have been Russia (21% trade turnover in 2020), Switzerland (20.3%), Kazakhstan (18.5%) and China (10%). In general, the share of European countries

remained minimal – thus, Germany's share was only 1.5%. The only exception is Switzerland, which imported a wider range of products to Tajikistan, from pharmaceutical to machinery and equipment⁴⁶⁹.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 1/6

The pandemic and economic crisis have negatively affected the flow and amount of foreign investment into Tajikistan. Thus, according to official statistics, in 2021, the overall amount of foreign investment in Tajikistan dropped by 47%⁴⁷⁰, to \$192.7 million in 2020, but showed a strong recovery in the first half of 2021, increasing by 43.7%, to about

\$118 million. China accounts for three quarters of all foreign investment in Tajikistan. Investments originating from Russia declined to about 7% of the total and were the second-largest source of FDI⁴⁷¹.

Since the beginning of pandemic crisis, several hundred million dollars have come in from the international community in the form of crisis

aid. In the first part of 2020, the European Union alone provided at least €52.2 million (\$57 million) for short- and long-term Covid-19 support to be

provided through partners like the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and German development agency GIZ⁴⁷².

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 4.5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 0.5/2

None of Tajikistan's various ethnic groups uses the Latin alphabet, which was only used for the Tajik language during a short period, from 1936 to 1939,

before being replaced with the Cyrillic script. There is no public discourse in the country concerning a possible return to the Latin alphabet.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 1/6

The most popular foreign languages in Tajikistan are Russian and English. According to available data, about 68% of Tajik population claims that to be fluent in Russian in one way or another⁴⁷³. According to another survey, 69% of respondents indicated Russian along with Tajik and English as a desired language of instruction for their children⁴⁷⁴. At the same time, the English language is increasingly popular among the educated population, intellectuals,

and students. In local private language centers, the number of students studying English is usually two-and-a-half times greater than the number of students willing to learn Russian⁴⁷⁵.

German attracts a relatively small number of students – mainly youth planning to apply to one of the German universities abroad. The French language is taught mainly in the Bactria Language Center in Dushanbe, which covers just a few dozen students.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN NATIONS' MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS; THE SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND TWITTER) 3/6

In Tajikistan, US movies constitute the overwhelming majority of the local cinemas' repertory. EU movies are rarely played by local TV channels. In 2021, the first so-called online-cinema Somon-TV was established. This is a private providing a subscription-based streaming service, which offers a library of films and television programs, including those produced in-house⁴⁷⁶. The pandemic negatively affected this sector, as the Government closed all cinemas in the country.

According to statistics, there were one million social media users in Tajikistan in January 2021. The number of social media users in Tajikistan increased by 340,000 (+52%) between 2020 and 2021. The number of social media users in Tajikistan was equivalent to 10.4% of the total population in January 2021⁴⁷⁷. It should be noted that these statistics cover only the Tajiks living inside the country. However, a considerable part of Tajik social media users reside abroad.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 2.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1/5

Tajikistan closed its borders in mid-March 2020 and soon afterwards suspended all international flights and railway routes. It resumed flights several months later, but only to Russia, several post-Soviet countries, and Istanbul and Dubai. The routes to Western countries remained closed in the end of 2021, as Tajikistan was still considered as a country at high risk for new and emerging strains of coronavirus⁴⁷⁸. The lack of trust was caused by the peculiarities of the Tajik authori-

ties' anti-Covid strategy, which was widely considered as unconvincing and dubious. Thus, Tajikistan was among the few countries of the world to consistently deny any presence of Covid in its territory since the beginning of the pandemic. Social distancing measures were not implemented, raising serious international concerns. As a result, the number of Tajik citizens traveling to Western countries has drastically reduced since the beginning of pandemic.

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 0.5/3

Due to the pandemic, the authorities closed the majority of Tajik trade centers, markets and restaurants for several months. This economic decline prevented local companies from developing business enterprises, including franchises. The only exception to this is the establishment of a KFC restaurant in Dushanbe in September 2021. The KFC brand belongs to the international company Yum! Brands,

Inc., and the company "Mazzai Nav" LLC, which is its official partner in Tajikistan⁴⁷⁹.

However, the majority of existing franchising enterprises managed to survive the crisis, including South Fried Chicken, Baskin Robbins, Tea Funny, Sait Efendi, and fast-food and cafe networks such as HotDogger, Coffee Moose, New York Coffee, Segafredo, and Jeffrey's Coffee⁴⁸⁰.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1/2

The number of Internet users in Tajikistan increased by 948,000 (+39%) between 2020 and 2021. Internet penetration in Tajikistan stood at 34.9% in January 2021⁴⁸¹. There were 10.14 million mobile connections in Tajikistan in January 2021.

The number of mobile connections in Tajikistan increased by 198,000 (+2.0%) between January 2020 and January 2021. The number of mobile connections in Tajikistan in January 2021 was equivalent to 105.2% of the total population.

Turkmenistan

17/100

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
2.5/25	3/25	4/25	5/15	2.5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 2.5/25

1.1. DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 0.5/10

In the Freedom House rating on the state of political and civil freedoms in the countries of the world, Turkmenistan ranks 207 out of 209 possible (third place from the end) and is in the category of “not free countries”⁴⁸². Almost all freedoms are suppressed in Turkmenistan: there are no independent political parties, trade unions or public organizations⁴⁸³, the entire press⁴⁸⁴ is tightly controlled by the state, the Internet is totally censored, and international human rights and humanitarian organizations are prohibited from entering the country.

Elections to the upper house of the Turkmen parliament, the Halk Maslahaty, were the main political event of 2021. The elections were held in accordance with the new version of the Constitution⁴⁸⁵ ⁴⁸⁶ adopted in 2020. According to the norms of the new Constitution, the national parliament, or Milli Genes, is a representative body and consists of two chambers: the Halk Maslahaty (upper chamber) and the Mejlis (lower chamber)⁴⁸⁷.

The main political surprise during elections to the upper house of parliament was the nomination of the current President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, as a candidate for deputy (this happened on the last day of the legally allowed nomination period). At the same time, Article 73 of the Constitution reads: “The President of Turkmenistan cannot be a member or deputy of the Milli Genes of Turkmenistan”⁴⁸⁸. Nevertheless, the president was elected as a member of the upper house of parliament⁴⁸⁹, and then also as its chairman⁴⁹⁰. By doing this, the President of Turkmenistan usurped not only the executive, but also the legislative branch of government. These events intensified rumors of a possible transfer of power from the current president to the son of Serdar Berdimuhamedov, who currently serves as the Deputy Prime Minister for Banking and Economic Affairs⁴⁹¹. International organizations did not offer a reaction to these latest elections.

1.2. PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 1/8

There is not a single party in Turkmenistan with its own foreign policy agenda. Generally, the parties support the foreign policy pursued by the President,

which is based on the Turkmenistan’s permanent neutrality, and determined by the goal of securing existing and potential natural gas markets.

1.3. PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 1/7

In Turkmenistan, all media are under control of the government. State propaganda aims to strengthen the cult of the president's personality along with conservative and nationalist values in society. At the same time, international politics and life are not covered by the official media, with the exception of the president's trips abroad. All public and demonstrative manifestations of belonging to Western popular culture – tattoos, hipster hairstyles and beards, provocative clothing styles – are persecuted by the police.

The lifestyle that is common for Turkey and the Turkish concept of comfort and service has been accepted by the society as a standard, while Chinese goods represent technological progress. These two prime examples showed Turkmen society that the standard of living, comfort, and access to advanced technologies may have nothing to do with Western values. It is impossible to objectively assess society's attitude towards Western values due to the authorities' strict tacit ban on polling or surveys.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 3/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 1/6

Turkmenistan is not a member of the Council of Europe, therefore, the Venice Commission does not apply. However, in 2016, after the draft of Constitution of Turkmenistan appeared in the public domain, the OSCE ODIHR initiated an analysis of the main provisions of the draft of Constitution emanating from Turkmenistan's membership in the OSCE⁴⁹². The number of critical comments in this document turned out to be so great that it presupposed that the draft of Constitution was completely inconsistent with the obligations on OSCE membership.

During President Berdimuhamedov's visit to Germany (August 2016), Chancellor Angela Merkel publicly expressed her desire for an examination of the draft Constitution of Turkmenistan by the Venice Commission, considering the mutual intention to bring Turkmenistan closer to the COE and the EU. Berdimuhamedov accepted the offer, but then ignored it (the constitution was adopted in September 2016). Furthermore, comments from the OSCE ODIHR were ignored.

The latest edition of the 2020 Constitution has not been reviewed by the Venice Commission.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 0.5/7

Members of the judiciary are appointed and removed directly by the President of Turkmenistan. According to a Freedom House re-

port, "the judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and dismisses judges unilaterally"⁴⁹³.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 1/6

Turkmenistan is a party to most UN conventions on human rights, the Constitution of Turkmenistan⁴⁹⁴ contains a separate chapter on human rights guarantees and freedoms, and the Constitutional

Law "On the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan"⁴⁹⁵ contains provisions defining the primacy of international law and recognizing the decisions of UN bodies.

However, the Turkmen authorities refuse to cooperate with international human rights organizations. In particular, Turkmenistan refused to host a number of special rapporteurs from various UN mechanisms (on torture, enforced disappearances, etc.). The OSCE (ODIHR) either refuses to observe elections or sends short-term missions.

Several series of laws in Turkmenistan are in direct violation of the norms of international law or contain provisions that allow them to be sabotaged. The Criminal Code of Turkmenistan⁴⁹⁶ criminalizes “sodomy”; the law governing the Internet⁴⁹⁷ contains prohibitive norms; the law “On Migration”⁴⁹⁸ contains a rule allowing a repressive ban on leaving the country. A special state commission “for the artistic level of created literary works, theatre plays and screenplays assessment”⁴⁹⁹ officially confirmed

the existence of governmental censorship of culture. Legislation on political parties⁵⁰⁰, public associations⁵⁰¹, rallies⁵⁰², and mass media⁵⁰³ also contains strict restrictive and discriminatory regulation. The practices of public associations (NGOs) are paralyzed by a presidential decree, which makes it almost impossible for them to receive technical and grant support from abroad⁵⁰⁴.

The law “On the Ombudsman”⁵⁰⁵ adopted in 2016 did not lead to meaningful work for this human rights institution. The issues of persons who have disappeared in Turkmenistan’s prisons⁵⁰⁶, the rights of prisoners, and torture are completely ignored in the Ombudsman’s Report; little attention is paid to the ban on leaving the country⁵⁰⁷, or issues related domestic violence and the persecution of LGBT persons.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 0.5/6

There is no practice of acquittals in Turkmenistan. There is a one-time precedent for the

termination of criminal cases during the investigation stage.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 4/25

3.1. EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 1/7

In 2021, Turkmenistan applied to join the WTO⁵⁰⁸, and received observer status in that organization in July 2020. Turkmenistan has been involved in negotiations with the European Union to sign a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)⁵⁰⁹ for over ten years. In October 2021, the EU announced that the ratification of

the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement is closely connected to “progress in the field of human rights” in Turkmenistan⁵¹⁰. Given Turkmen authorities’ reluctance to address the matter of persons who have disappeared in Turkmen prisons⁵¹¹ along with other problems, prospects for signing the Agreement are illusory.

3.2. EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 0.5/6

The authorities of Turkmenistan exercise strict control over the activities of all business structures. from large industrial producers to private entrepre-

neurs. For this purpose, the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan⁵¹² was established by a separate law⁵¹³. This Union is the larg-

est, and enjoys a near monopoly on subsidies and loans from the government and state-owned banks of Turkmenistan, along with the exclusive right to represent the interests of Turkmen business abroad.

All other state institutions designed to fulfil a regulatory and stimulating role (the State Exchange, Chamber of Commerce and Industry) are purely cosmetic, creating the appearance of a “market” and “competitive” economy.

The development of private entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized businesses in Turkmenistan is constrained by several factors: confusing and inconsistent legislation; total corruption at all levels of government regulation; state control over business; and usurpation of entire

economic spheres and areas of the economy by the president’s closest circle^{514 515}.

Doing business is complicated by the lack of free conversion of the national currency into currencies of other countries. All currency entering the country is forcibly converted into the national currency, the manat. Applications for the purchase of goods in foreign currency abroad are accepted only from a limited number of legal entities and are satisfied for 10-50 percent of the declared amount. We should not lose sight of the fact that for several years now, the official rate of the manat against the dollar (and the euro) has remained “stable”, but at the same time there is also a real (“black”) exchange rate, reaching a difference of 7-10 times compared to the official rate⁵¹⁶.

3.3. WESTERN SHARE OF THE SALES OF GOODS 1/6

Few Western countries export to Turkmenistan, and this market tends to be dominated by hydrocarbon, with a significant share of trade falling on China, Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Georgia⁵¹⁷. Most importers from Turkmenistan are also non-Western

countries: Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, China, and India⁵¹⁸. This is due to the fact that some high-tech products are re-exported by Turkish and UAE companies or supplied to Turkmenistan through Western firms’ representative offices in these countries.

3.4. WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY’S ECONOMY 1.5/6

There is no reliable data on the volume of foreign investments (including Western investments) in Turkmenistan.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 5/15

4.1. USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

Turkmenistan has completely switched over to the use of Latin script. However, this did not lead to an increase in Western influence. To some extent,

this change has contributed to the mass migration of the population to Turkey, where a similar script is used.

4.2. PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 1/6

The number of such people is small. Most of the population lives in extreme poverty, which, along with a stagnating educational system, makes learn-

ing foreign languages inaccessible for many. There is also a lack of motivation among the majority of the population.

4.3. SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 2/7

Commercial film distribution is dominated by the latest novelties of the international film industry, and usually supplied with Russian translation⁵¹⁹. Due to the relatively high price of movie tickets, cinema attendance is low. Turkmenistan's capital city, Ashgabat, has only three full-fledged cinemas and about 10 smaller movie theaters in shopping centers; in regional centers there are no such cinemas. The National Broadcasting Corporation is represented on the air by thematic channels – the main one is Altyn Asyr, a channel about culture. There is also a youth channel, a sports channel, and Turkmenistan 24, which broadcasts news about Turkmenistan in foreign languages. There are almost no foreign topics on these chan-

nels, including dubbed foreign films. The exception to this is the broadcast of soccer matches. Cable networks include over 30 Russian channels, Turkish entertainment and news channels, English-language channels CNN and BBC, as well as Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Kazakh channels broadcast via satellite. Cable TV is widespread in the capital and regional centers, but in the suburbs and rural areas, the population watches TV using satellite dishes.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and all other social networks are blocked in Turkmenistan. VPN is prohibited by law in Turkmenistan, and the distribution of VPN programs is a criminal offense punishable by up to seven years in prison.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 2.5/10

5.1. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 0.5/5

Due to the strict Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, leaving Turkmenistan has now been banned for two years. Before the pandemic, the country was experiencing massive emigration⁵²⁰, mainly to work in

Turkey or obtain permanent residence in Russia⁵²¹, although there was also a strong uptick in the number of applications for permanent residence in the United States⁵²².

5.2. PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 1/3

There are several brand franchises with heavy presence in Turkmenistan, mostly those selling clothing and footwear, such as Collin's, Zara, and Wrangler. There

are no representative offices of Western corporations in Turkmenistan, there are no foreign restaurant or fast-food chains, and there are no foreign retail chains.

5.3. MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1/2

There are no official statistics or relevant data on this issue. The only provider of mobile communication services in the country is a subdivision of the state corporation Turkmentelecom. Turkmentelecom does not provide statistics on the number of its users. The relative coverage of mobile communications covers all settlements with in so-called "oases" and is represented in cities

with 4G, in rural areas with 3G. Since most of Turkmenistan's geographical area falls on sparsely populated deserts, absolute coverage is low. The limiting factor of Internet access is not technical equipment and physical coverage of the territories or the number of smartphones used by the population, but the authorities' Internet censorship for political and ideological reasons⁵²³.

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
18.5/25	13/25	15/25	10.5/15	7/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 18.5/25

1.1 DEGREE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM 7/10

Ukraine is firmly entrenched in the Freedom House rating as a “partially free” country. Since 2017, its democracy percentage within this rating has consistently fluctuated at the level of 60-62 points out of 100, which can be described as a stable improvement over the previous period (37 points in 2016). In particular, Ukraine’s indicator for 2021 was 60. Furthermore, political rights were assessed at 26 points out of 40.

Since the previous rating, there have been no presidential or parliamentary elections in Ukraine, however, there were repeated cabinet reshuffles in both 2020 and 2021. During these reshuffles, the President of Ukraine and his office have been repeatedly accused by the experts and civil society of unconstitutional interference with personnel appointments in the government, as, according to the law, such appointments should be exclusively the privilege of the Prime Minister. As a result, both governments during Zelenskyy’s presidency were appointed by the President’s Office, with the President and the head of his office themselves participating in interviews with potential ministers⁵²⁴.

A notable event of 2021 was the dismissal of Dmytro Razumkov from the position of Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada. Razumkov got into high-level politics in 2019 as a part of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s team while still playing a relatively independent

political game and not always moving in step with the decisions and wishes of the President’s Office. The conflict between the President and the speaker, which arose due to the lack of political allegiance and, according to some sources, Razumkov’s own political ambitions, provoked discussions about the threat of Ukraine, which is in fact a parliamentary-presidential republic turning into a de facto presidential republic. The very ballot for dismissing Razumkov from office, initiated by the presidential “Servant of the People” party, was conducted in violation of the Verkhovna Rada rules and provided Zelenskyy’s critics with additional ammunition for accusing Zelenskyy of creating authoritarianism in Ukraine⁵²⁵.

Pluralism in the media remains quite high, despite the fact that many media outlets are influenced by their owners’ financial support and political agendas. The television market is divided between six media holdings, which make up 71% of the country’s viewership⁵²⁶. These are mainly oligarchic media holdings. In 2021, Ukraine dropped by one position in the World Press Index, where it currently occupies 96th place. Besides, some noticeable changes took place in the Ukrainian television market in 2021 in connection with the introduction of the National Security Council sanctions against the television channels

owned by Viktor Medvedchuk (he has also been accused of high treason). This mainly concerns the news channels owned by Medvedchuk, which are quite popular in the south and east of the coun-

try. For the first time in the history of Ukraine, the National Security Council began to impose sanctions against Ukrainian citizens, which, from a legal point of view, raised many questions.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 6.5/8

The majority of the parties represented in the Ukrainian parliament are pro-Western. The only exception is still the party “Opposition Platform-For Life (Za zhyttia)”, which has several leaders, including Viktor Medvedchuk (Vladimir Putin is a godfather of his daughter). The leaders of this party continue to hold regular dialogue with the Russian leadership. Since the previous index, however, three new elements have emerged. The first is that the presidential “Servant of the People” party began to speak more clearly about European and Euro-Atlantic integration: shortly after being elected to parliament, the party considered this topic as a kind of “monopoly” of Petro Poroshenko and his party, which was even renamed during the 2019 election campaign to sound similar to the abbreviation of the “EU” in Ukrainian (“European Solidarity”). The second is that the voices advocating for relations with China have become more audible in public. It is telling that one of these voices was the head of the presidential party faction, David Arahamia, who even was interviewed by the Chinese state news agency Xinhua, during which he stated that the principles of the “Servant of the People” party and

the Chinese Communist Party largely coincide, and that his political movement wanted to learn from the CPC’s experience in governing the country and building the state⁵²⁷. The third feature is the apparent presence of different approaches to strengthening relations with Ukraine’s Western partners within the pro-Western political camp. For example, in 2021 there was a lot of controversy regarding what security relations approach to use in dialogue with the United States. While some MPs with relevant government representatives were united in their belief that it was necessary to focus on concluding a bilateral Defense Agreement with the United States that would not contradict Ukrainian’s further integration into NATO, but would only strengthen it, others advocated appealing to the United States on behalf of the Verkhovna Rada with a request to grant Ukraine the status of Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). It is noteworthy that the discord of opinions on the matter occurred not along party lines, but also within different pro-European parties. Meanwhile, some individual representatives of both “Servant of the People” and the EU were in favor of the first option, while others supported the latter.

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 5/7

Support for the EU and NATO remains quite high among Ukrainians, despite the absence of real achievements visible to ordinary citizens in recent years when it comes to the European and Euro-Atlantic tracks. Thus, Ukraine’s membership in the EU at the time of preparation of the Index was supported by 62% of the population, while

NATO membership was supported by 58%⁵²⁸. The only region of Ukraine where the number of opponents to joining EU and NATO is greater than the number of supporters is eastern Ukraine. The highest level of support for both the EU and NATO is in western Ukraine and Kyiv (overall support is higher than in the Center of Ukraine). Member-

ship in the EU and NATO is also predominantly supported by voters of all political parties represented in parliament, except for the “Opposition Platform – For Life”. Among non-parliamentary parties, the greatest opposition to NATO membership is observed among the electorate of Muraev’s party “Nashi” (only 12% of its voters support the Euro-Atlantic course). It is notewor-

thy that the foreign leaders who inspire the greatest trust in Ukrainians are the leaders of Western countries⁵²⁹. The leaders of Russia and China occupy last place in the list of those whom Ukrainians trust. Alexander Lukashenko, who previously enjoyed high levels of sympathy and trust among Ukrainian society, has rapidly lost his standing following the fraudulent Belarusian election in 2020.

2 | **LEGAL WESTERNIZATION** 13/25

2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 5/6

The Venice Commission is still an important arbiter in assessing Ukrainian legislation. In the last two years, the number of opinions issued by the Venice Commission regarding Ukraine has grown significantly⁵³⁰. These were mainly related to the legislation of the rule of law reforms, along with some other issues. Also, during this two-year period, the Venice Commission has used its urgent opinion format twice including to help resolve the acute constitutional crisis in Ukraine, which will be discussed further below.

A positive example of an appeal to the Venice Commission during Zelenskyy’s presidency is the Law “On an All-Ukrainian Referendum”, during the preparation of which most of the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the OSCE were considered. This law is considered one of the main achievements of the Zelenskyy presidency in this area. Another positive experience during the reporting period was the prepared draft law “On Political Parties”, which is to replace the existing “Law on Political Parties” in Ukraine. The new bill passed the formal examina-

tion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE, and in March 2021, it received a generally positive assessment from the institution’s experts. The issue is that despite such an assessment, as well as the fact that a year-and-a-half has passed since the start of the political parties’ legislative reform. At the time of preparation of this analysis, the draft law has not yet been registered with the Verkhovna Rada.

At the same time, it should be noted that an appeal to this body sometimes proves to be more of a forced (pressured by civil society or international partners) step than one taken on the government’s own initiative. Also, in Ukraine there still is a trend of using appeals to the Venice Commission for political interests or even to trigger a potential political crisis. In 2021, the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Dmytro Razumkov, submitted an incoordinate appeal to the Venice Commission to evaluate the “Law on Oligarchs” promoted by the President, which was precisely the tipping point leading the presidential party in parliament to initiate the process of dismissing Razumkov from his post.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 3/7

Compared to the previous Index, Ukraine has slightly improved its position in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, climbing from position 77 to

74 out of 139 countries of the world. In the regional dimension, which in the ranking covers Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ukraine is exactly in the middle: in

7th position out of 14, significantly lagging behind Georgia and North Macedonia, but at the same time, it is noticeably ahead of the Russian Federation. Despite the fact that some critical steps were taken in 2021 regarding judicial reform in Ukraine, particularly, the Laws on the Resumption of the Work of the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine and the Law on the Reform of the High Council of Justice, judicial reform remains Zelenskyy's main stumbling point when it comes to Ukraine's key international partners.

In addition, Ukrainians themselves do not perceive any improvements to the courts' independence. Thus, only 10% of Ukrainians trust the judicial branch of government (at the end of 2018, according to the same poll of the USAID program, the level of trust was slightly higher, at about 16%)⁵³¹.

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 4/6

The matter of human rights in Ukraine during the reporting period was mainly determined by two factors. The first is the ongoing temporary occupation of Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions by the Russian Federation, where a significant number of human rights violations were recorded. The situation in Eastern Ukraine is aggravated by the continued armed conflict (in spite of the ceasefire in place since the summer of 2020), due to which the population in these regions experiences an acute shortage of not only se-

A notable feature of this period is also an open confrontation between the Office of the President and the Constitutional Court, which commenced at the end of 2019, but grew especially acute after the adoption of the Constitutional Court decision in October 2020 canceling major anti-corruption Ukrainian legislation achieved after 2014, including the declaring of Ukraine's asset declaration registry unconstitutional and invalidating key provisions of Ukraine's corruption prevention law. In response to this decision, the President of Ukraine introduced a bill in which he proposed suspending the powers of all members of the Constitutional Court, which he later recalled himself. Additionally the President, in violation of his constitutional powers, has twice removed the head of the Constitutional Court from office.

curity but also housing, food, medicine, and schooling. The second factor is the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions, particularly freedom of movement. The Covid-19 pandemic has hit women particularly hard, as they make up over 80% of doctors and social workers in Ukraine. The quarantine restrictions have caused an explosive increase in domestic violence cases – an increase of 30% in the number of known cases alone⁵³². In 2021, Ukraine adopted a new National Human Rights Strategy with a corresponding three-year action plan.

2.4 NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 1/6

The number of acquittals in Ukraine remains very low – until now they have not exceeded 1%, which hardly allows us to speak of any positive dynamics in this matter – in the early 2000s, this number was actually zero (0.02% in 2000-2002), and in 2008 – 0.2%⁵³³. A notable and rather remarkable point is

that the statistics on acquittals observed among top officials sentenced for corruption are in fact quite different. Thus, in Ukraine, from January 1 to July 16, 2021, the courts issued 55 rulings for top officials who were suspected of corruption, 29 of which were acquittals⁵³⁴.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 15/25

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 4.5/7

Ukraine has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 2008. The Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union came into full effect in 2017. Over the past few years, Ukraine (unlike other associated countries Georgia and Moldova) has been actively engaged in the dialogue with the EU on the review of the Agreement regarding the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), referring to the fact that negotiations on this Agreement took place more than ten years ago – the realities both in Ukraine itself and in terms of the level of exports inside the EU were completely different. Also, within this di-

alogue, Ukraine emphasizes joining the so-called ACAA (Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products) greatly, which in Ukraine is also called “industrial visa-free travel to the EU” because it concerns Ukrainian integration into the EU’s industrial goods market. ACCA can potentially cover one fifth of Ukrainian exports to the EU, mainly mechanical engineering products⁵³⁵. Ukraine was ready to sign ACCA in three sectors out of the 27 stipulated in the Association Agreement from 2019. However, at the time of writing this analysis, only two assessment mission visits have taken place in this regard.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 3/6

According to the Index of Economic Freedom 2021, Ukraine is ranked just 127th worldwide. In Europe, it occupies last place at 45th, lagging behind neighboring Belarus, Moldova, and Russia. Compared to the previous year, the dynamics are positive,

but the improvements are very minor, with growth at only 1.3%. Overall, Ukraine has most improved its rankings in the observance of property rights, however, Ukraine’s performance has worsened in the areas of legal efficiency and freedom of trade.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 4/6

The European Union remains Ukraine’s main trading partner. According to the results from 2020, the share of trade with the EU amounted to 40.7%, which in terms of percentage was roughly at the same level as in 2019 (40.1%). However, compared with the previous year, trade volume with the EU has dramatically decreased by 9%, to \$48.1 billion⁵³⁶. The main reason for the drop in trade with the EU is the pandemic. Ukraine’s main trading part-

ners among the EU countries are Poland, Germany, and Italy. In contrast to the previous Index, a new trend has emerged – since 2019, without any effort from Ukraine, China has become its main bilateral trading partner. In 2020, Chinese trade volume increased by another 20%, and Ukrainian exports, half of which are agricultural products, doubled. Trade with Ukraine’s key strategic partner, the United States, remains fairly low.

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 3.5/ 6

The same three European countries – Cyprus, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – remain Ukraine's most significant investors among foreign countries. However, it is likely that such investments from these countries "cover up" the money moved around by Ukrainian businessmen and oligarchs, and thus such funding may be "money returns" rather than actual investments in Ukraine. In general, in 2020, the indicator of the level of foreign investment in Ukraine amounted to minus -\$868 million⁵³⁷, that is, there was in fact a capital outflow. In the case of

Ukraine, over the past twenty years, capital outflow has only occurred in 2015, in the midst of the active phase of the war in Donbas. It is noteworthy that after taking office, Zelenskyy voiced the idea of creating so-called "investment nannies" – specially authorized managers who protect the rights and interests of investors who have invested more than \$100 million in Ukraine, 24 hours a day⁵³⁸. However, the investors themselves perceived this idea as another example of Ukraine's unfavorable business climate: everything is so bad an "investment nanny" is necessary.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 10.5/15

4.1 USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 1/2

In 2021, the previously rather marginalized idea of transferring the Ukrainian language into the Latin alphabet found influential supporters in the highest echelons of power. In particular, the National Security and Defense Council secretary, Oleksiy Danilov, has publicly spoken out in support of abandoning the Cyrillic alphabet⁵³⁹. He called the transition to the Latin alphabet "a fundamental thing", and advocated for the compulsory study of English beginning in kindergarten. However, discussions about the transition to the Latin alphabet continue. For example, the language ombudsman of Ukraine, Taras Kremin, did not support the idea of the National Security Council's secretary, having stated that the issue of preserving the Cyrillic alphabet is equal to the issue of preserving traditions. Other experts do not support this idea, because of fear of creating another line of linguistic division in Ukraine, which could actually weaken the status of the Ukrainian language. The last time the idea of switching to the Latin alphabet was raised at the highest levels in Ukraine was in 2018, by the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin. Latin transliteration of words or simply the use of English-language names of the service sector objects (especially the names of wine shops

(and other alcoholic beverages), pastry/coffee shops, and beauty salons) remains a popular trend in Ukraine. Furthermore, Ukrainian brands, the number of which is constantly increasing due to the high demand for "Made in Ukraine" products, have adopted the popular trend of using English-language words for naming.

The issue of transferring the languages of national minorities into the Latin alphabet, particularly the Crimean Tatar language, has also reached a new level. In September 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the alphabet of the Crimean Tatar language based on the Latin script. The implementation of such an alphabet was based on decisions made by the Kurultai of the Crimean Tatar people from 1992. The educational process in the Crimean Tatar language will be transferred to the use of Latin graphics before September 1, 2025⁵⁴⁰.

There is also a huge support for the "Ukrainization" of Ukrainian words spelled in the Latin alphabet abroad, that is, the improvement of the Latin transliteration of the Ukrainian words. For example, the continuing efforts to shift to spelling "Kyiv" instead of "Kiev" at airports around the world, as well as in international media.

4.2 PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 3.5/6

In 2021, Ukraine climbed up to the 40th position in the English Proficiency Index (compared to 47th place in 2019⁵⁴¹). Now, Ukraine is classified at the moderate proficiency level and is the 30th out of only 35 in Europe. Today, advanced knowledge of the English language in Ukraine is demonstrated by specialists who work in the IT field, marketing, law, and finance. The lowest rates are among the office workers, distributors, and accountants⁵⁴². Alternatively, in the case of Ukraine, it is necessary to differentiate between real

proficiency levels and those declared by respondents. Thus, according to one of the polls conducted earlier by TNS, 89% of respondents claimed they speak English, 17% stated that they speak German, and 9% said they are proficient in French (however, only 18% declared their English level is above average). In 2019, the Concept for the Development of the English Language at Universities was established in Ukraine. The main idea is to test knowledge upon university enrollment (the required level is B1) and upon graduation (B2)⁵⁴³.

4.3 SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 6/7

Currently, Western productions dominate both cinemas and television. However, Ukrainian products are also strengthening their presence. At the time of writing this analysis, about 8-10% of cinemas' total income turnover was occupied by Ukrainian films⁵⁴⁴. During the presidency of Zelenskyy, who himself filmed and starred in movies prior to taking office (his *Head of the Office*, Andriy Yermak, was also a film producer), Ukrainian filmmaking has received more attention. This includes both Ukrainian films and preferential terms for foreign film productions in Ukraine. The Verkhovna Rada has adopted a law on a 25% cost refund to production crews if filming takes place in Ukraine. This law was the reason why Netflix decided to shoot

"The Last Mercenary", starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, in Kyiv, though the filmmakers faced other difficulties, including to the requirement that they collect 393 permits for filming⁵⁴⁵. During the quarantine period in Ukraine, the number of active social media users increased by 7 million⁵⁴⁶. Ratings of the most popular social networks by the number of users in 2021 was as follows: Facebook (59%), YouTube (43%), Instagram (30%), Telegram (17%), and Twitter (6%)⁵⁴⁷. Networks of Russian origin such as VK and Odnoklassniki made up only 5% and 3%, respectively. In Ukraine, women are the users of the most popular social networks in all age groups. The fastest-growing social network in Ukraine is Tik Tok (now at 5 million Ukrainian users).

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 7/10

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 3/5

The pandemic has severely limited the travel opportunities to Western countries for Ukrainians. Many EU countries simply restricted travelers from Ukraine in the past year-and-a-half. Nevertheless, according to

the Border Guard Service of Ukraine, Poland is in the first place of destinations where Ukrainians traveled most often. Poland was visited by 1.9 million Ukrainians in the first six months of 2021. Hungary is another

er popular EU destination, which took fourth place in terms of the number of Ukrainians who visited it during the first half of 2021. Other top destinations countries are traditional tourist routes for Ukrainians: Turkey (in second place) and Egypt (in third place). In October 2021, Ukraine and the EU finally signed the Open Sky Agreement, which was initialed back in 2013, then de-

layed on the part of the European Union. This agreement will increase the number of low-cost companies on the Ukrainian market and expand the number of travel destinations to European countries. It is symbolic that the day after signing the Open Sky Agreement, Wizz Air announced the launch of 26 new flights to EU countries from four Ukrainian cities⁵⁴⁸.

5.2 PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2.5/3

The most notable event throughout of the reporting period was the long-awaited entry of the IKEA brand into the Ukrainian market. However, only one store was opened in the format of “city store”: a small (compared to the company’s standards) store in a shopping center of the city. The Swedish company was planning to open one more store in the same format in September 2021, but at the time

of preparation of this analysis, that plan had not yet come to fruition. Overall, since 2017 more than 45 international retail chains have entered the Ukrainian market, the most notable of which was H&M. Ukrainians have access to three technology services: Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Xoom. Uber Taxi has been present in Ukraine since 2016, and Glovo delivery service has been present since 2018.

5.3 MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 1.5/2

The pandemic has favorably contributed to the growth in the number of Internet users in Ukraine. The number of Ukrainian Internet users increased by 2 million throughout the pandemic year, which is 33% more than in 2019. In 2021, 30 million people used the Internet in Ukraine, which is approximately 67% of the country’s population⁵⁴⁹. The number of smartphone users in Ukraine is growing rapidly every year, and quarantine has only intensified this trend. In 2013, only 9% of Ukrainians owned smartphones, and in 2019, that figure had grown to 66%⁵⁵⁰. Women use smartphones more often (53%) than men (47%).

Digitalization has become an important and positive trend during the presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyy. More than 11 million Ukrainians use the Diia application, which stores all personal documents in digital format. Ukraine became the first country in the world to introduce a digital citizen passport. With the help of Diia, digital driver’s licenses, student IDs, car insurance, electronic signatures, payment of taxes and fines, and many other documents and services have become available for smartphone users. The goal of the current Ukrainian government is to provide 100% of services for Ukrainians online – “without officials, without queues, without corruption”⁵⁵¹.

Uzbekistan

33.5/100

SCORE, POINTS/OUT OF

Political Westernization	Legal Westernization	Economic Westernization	Language and Cultural Westernization	Lifestyle Westernization
6/25	8.5/25	7/25	7/15	5/10

1 | POLITICAL WESTERNIZATION 6/25

1.1. POLITICAL FREEDOM 2/10

In 2020-2021, political freedoms increased slightly, but the change was modest. Parliamentary elections were held in Uzbekistan in December 2019, under the slogan “New parliament,” and debates among political parties were organized, demonstrating that a new degree of pluralism had been achieved. However, the parliament’s activities subsequently revealed that unanimous (or almost unanimous) voting still takes place. There are no significant open debates among party factions within parliament. Uzbekistan was rated ‘not free’ by Freedom House’s annual study of political rights and civil liberties worldwide⁵⁵².

Presidential elections took place in October 2021 and once again, parties nominated their candidates for the position and debates were organized. However, no party managed to advance a real alternative to the incumbent. Slowly, albeit in some respect artificially, these showcase processes are building a pluralist political climate, because they teach a passive society to deliberate on politics, elections, the country’s problems, and so on.

Opposition political parties still do not exist in Uzbekistan and all existing parties are loyal to the President and his regime.

Media freedoms are improving, but the last remnants of censorship persist. Recently, independent bloggers have become quite active and popular, though some have faced restrictions and pressure from local and executive power structures. Nevertheless, the free speech space is expanding. This is especially visible and obvious on social media despite the numerous problems faced here. In 2021, Uzbekistan was ranked by Reporters Without Borders as 157 (out of 180 states) in the World Press Freedom Index⁵⁵³.

The development of civil society institutions has become an important element of overall social and political reforms in Uzbekistan. Several presidential decrees and governmental resolutions were recently adopted in this sphere. About 8,000 NGOs are registered in Uzbekistan⁵⁵⁴. Currently, the new NGOs Code and Mass Media Code have been drafted and are being publicly debated.

According to information from the Ministry of Justice, work has begun on preparations for a new program of administrative reforms for 2022-2023. This document’s key focus should be increasing the efficiency of state management and local executive power structures as well as the creation of a “mobile management system”.

1.2 PRO-WESTERN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT 2/8

Currently, there are no “pro-Western” parties in Uzbekistan’s parliament. On the contrary, there is a nationalist party. Members of the Lib-

eral-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (UzLiDeP) can be considered, at least to a certain extent, as relatively more pro-Western, given that their

political ideology supports the market economy and major business enterprises. However, paradoxically, UzLiDeP's nominee Shavkat Mirziyoev – the current President – stated that the country is not ready to introduce a system of electing local governors, while the leader of the National Revival Party Alisher Kadirov supported such a democratic reform of the electoral system.

At the same time, the pro-Russian foreign policy orientation is growing stronger. This was revealed with the Senate's decision to support Uzbekistan's joining the Russia-led Euro-Asian Economic Union (EAEU). In December 2020, Uzbekistan became an observer member of the EAEU. In general, given the parliament's lack of independence, the matter of whether some MPs are pro-Western is certainly relevant.

1.3 PUBLIC OPINION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 2/7

Interest in and acceptance of Western values and lifestyle are increasing in Uzbekistan. On the one hand, several Western universities have opened branches opened in the country and the education system is being reformed according to European standards; for example, Uzbekistan is preparing to be the part of the Bologna process⁵⁵⁵.

Uzbekistan actively participates in the US-led "C5+1" diplomatic process, which brings together 5 Central Asian states and the United States to discuss general regional cooperation in Central Asia and US assistance. Uzbekistan has also become an active member of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and looks toward Turkey – a NATO member – as a Western country that can be the supporter of Uzbekistan in international activities.

By and large interest is growing in Western values and life style among the younger generations. Liberal ideas are taking deeper roots in public conscious-

ness. More students, scholars, and teachers are going to Europe for studying, researching, capacity building, and doing business. Notably, students from Uzbekistan who receive Erasmus Mundus scholarships⁵⁵⁶ usually go to study in European countries, such as Germany, France, Italy, Estonia, Hungary, the UK, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Netherlands, Austria, and the Russian Federation. The most popular subject areas chosen are: Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering, Politics, and International Law. The new ERASMUS program's budget for 2021-2027 is totaling €26.2 billion, compared to €14.7 billion for 2014-2020. With this substantially increased budget, Erasmus+ will be even more inclusive, digital and greener, that is, more supportive of green energy sectors and climate change issues⁵⁵⁷.

The US, in turn, has also provided grants for many years within such programs as Fulbright, Muskie, USAID, the Eurasia Foundation, and others.

2 | LEGAL WESTERNIZATION 8.5/25

2.1. CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VENICE COMMISSION 2/6

The Government of Uzbekistan, and Parliament in particular, are aware of the Venice Commission and respect its recommendations. However, in practice, the Constitutional Court and Ministries are not giving them serious consideration or implementing them, though Uzbekistan's laws on international

treaties guarantee the prevalence of international law over national law. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament of Uzbekistan have begun an active conversation about cooperation with the Venice Commission through the EU Delegation in that country.

2.2. INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS 2/7

Courts are not independent for many reasons, though the Government took a number of steps to ensure judicial independence. This was the conclusion of the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers after its country visit

in 2019, as well as the conclusion of the report on access to justice in 2021 by the International Commission of Jurists⁵⁵⁸. Freedom House graded Uzbekistan as 2/40 for “Political rights” and 9/60 for “Civil liberties” with a total of 11/100⁵⁵⁹.

2.3. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION 2.5/6

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees the protection of human rights⁵⁶⁰. Moreover, Uzbekistan has ratified all core UN treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁵⁶¹, the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁵⁶², the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁵⁶³, the Convention on Rights of Children,⁵⁶⁴ the Convention on Rights of Persons

with Disabilities⁵⁶⁵, International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions⁵⁶⁶, etc. Moreover, the National Strategy on Human Rights⁵⁶⁷ was adopted in 2020, illustrating a strong political will and legal intention to meet, protect, and respect human rights. However, implementing these documents still remains challenging, as is shown in the above mentioned reports from HRW, Freedom House, and other international organizations.

2.4. NUMBER OF ACQUITTALS 2/6

The government began speaking publicly about acquittals in 2018, which was not previously the case. Over the last three years, the number of acquittals has sharply increased, demonstrating the humanity of the judiciary. On the other hand, sta-

tistics are vague and not discriminatory, as courts consider suspending a case for various reasons as an acquittal. In almost all cases, defendants who have been “acquitted” do not have access to a formal remedy and compensation scheme.

3 | ECONOMIC WESTERNIZATION 7/25

3.1 EU AND WTO MEMBERSHIP OR ASSOCIATION 1.5/7

On April 10, 2021, Uzbekistan was included as a beneficiary country in the EU special system of preferences for sustainable development and efficient governance (“GSP+”). The “GSP+” implies additional possibilities for increasing trade between the EU and Uzbekistan, since import duties on 6,200 types of products were canceled, including fabrics, clothes, plastic products, foods, agricultural products, construction materials, ceramics, and other important export positions.

According to a statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov on November 16, 2021, the Extended Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was expected to be signed during President Shavkat Mirziyoev’s visit to Brussels in 2022.

Regarding WTO membership, work towards Uzbekistan’s membership in the WTO is generally underway. After a 15 year break, in July 2020, the WTO and Uzbekistan resumed meetings of the Joint Working Group on the Uzbekistan’s accession to this organization.

3.2 EASE AND TRANSPARENCY OF DOING BUSINESS 2.5/6

The Heritage Foundation's 2020 Index of Economic Freedom for Uzbekistan is 108. According to a Harvard University study, Uzbekistan has the capacities it needs and an advantageous position to produce more than 50 types of industrial products⁵⁶⁸. In particular,

branches of industry such as oil-gas chemistry, metallurgy, mechanical engineering, electro-technics, pharmacy, construction materials, textiles, leather shoes, food, as well as the "green economy" can be drivers of the national economy.

3.3 WESTERN SHARE IN THE SALES OF GOODS 1/6

Currently, Uzbekistan has trade relations with 156 countries around the world. Its largest foreign trading partner is China (20.5%), followed by Russia (17.8%), and then Kazakhstan (11.8%), Turkey (9.3%), and the Republic of Korea (4.8%). Among Western countries, Uzbekistan exports its products mostly to Turkey, Canada, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Germany⁵⁶⁹.

One of Uzbekistan's main export items is textiles, which are exported to 27 European countries, and eight countries in the Americas, including US and Canada.

Among Western countries, Uzbekistan imports mostly from Turkey, Germany, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Italy, Latvia, USA, Netherlands, France, and Poland.

3.4 WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY 2/6

According to the Ministry of Investments and External Trade, Uzbekistan's main investors, are Russia, China, Germany, and Turkey. The total

number of countries investing in the Uzbek economy has now reached 37⁵⁷⁰.

4 | LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL WESTERNIZATION 7/15

4.1 USE OF THE LATIN ALPHABET IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE 2/2

The Latin alphabet is widely used in the local language, substituting the Cyrillic alphabet. This process is not easy and has caused different critical reactions from the Russian speaking population.

Meanwhile, in July 2021, the government of Uzbekistan ordered that the full transition to the Latin script be accelerated. According to the government's decision, by August 1, 2021, state bodies must ensure that streets names, signboards, and other signs are written in the Latin script⁵⁷¹.

In 1993, the Uzbek parliament adopted a law on the rejection of Cyrillic and transition to the

Latin script, which was supposed to have been fully implemented by 2000⁵⁷². However, this reform had not been completed because of the lengthy preparation processes and a lack of political will. Subsequently, the deadline was prolonged until 2005. By that date, again, the transition still had not been completed, and the deadline was again prolonged until 2010. The overall process has been very slow. Finally, it was officially announced that the country will fully pass to the new Uzbek alphabet based on the Latin script by January 1, 2023⁵⁷³.

4.2 PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION PROFICIENT IN THE MOST COMMON LANGUAGES OF THE WEST (ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH) 2/6

World languages are taught in primary and secondary schools, as well as in universities. At the same time, special private foreign language courses are provided by various education centers for people intending to go abroad. According to the EF English Proficiency Index, Uzbekistan's rank in 2021 is 88/112⁵⁷⁴.

The United States Embassy in Tashkent announced funding through the Embassy's English Language Small Grants Program. This funding opportunity seeks to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in the country by identifying key factors to promote innovative and interactive English teaching methods⁵⁷⁵. More specifically, this opportunity seeks creative English language educators and to establish centers, clubs, and programs that can boost not only the English language abilities of university students, but also to develop their

critical thinking and decision making skills and show their potential. This funding opportunity also seeks to find talented students who can develop and implement ideas to motivate their peers.

In August 2021, the Advisor to the Minister for International Donors & Projects at the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the US Embassy Tashkent Cultural Affairs Officer welcomed 25 American English Teacher Experts to Uzbekistan as part of the English-Speaking Nation: English Summer Excellence Training⁵⁷⁶. These 25 English Teacher Experts had to join seven locally embedded American Teacher Coaches in conducting a 108-hour English language training for over 420 secondary school English teachers from Uzbekistan. The objective of the 18-day training was to help Uzbek English teachers refine their English speaking, writing, listening, and presentation skills.

4.3 SHARE OF WESTERN PRODUCTS IN THE NATION'S MOVIE THEATERS AND ON TV CHANNELS, SHARE OF WESTERN INTERNET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER) 3/7

TV news channels broadly highlight international events and Western films. Many of these films are translated into the Uzbek language⁵⁷⁷. Western films in Uzbekistan are broadcast mostly on Russian TV channels in the Russian language. Facebook, Insta-

gram, Twitter, Youtube, Telegram, WhatsApp, and other social networks are very popular in Uzbekistan. For instance, the number of Facebook users in 2021 reached 4,438,000; of whom 30.2% are women and 69.8% are men⁵⁷⁸.

5 | LIFESTYLE WESTERNIZATION 5/10

5.1 PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO HAVE VISITED WESTERN COUNTRIES 1/5

This share has been rising due to three trends, that is, education, tourism, and labor migration. Currently, a majority of migrants from Uzbekistan go to Kazakhstan (65.6%), Russia (25.3%) and Israel

(2.2%), as well as other countries (about 5%)⁵⁷⁹. Although Covid-19 led to a decrease in overall foreign migration from Uzbekistan, currently this process is reversing with regard to labor migration to Russia.

5.2 PRESENCE OF WESTERN FRANCHISE COMPANIES 2/3

Coca-Cola, KFC, McDonald's, European restaurants, Zara, M&C, H&M, Adidas, Nike, and fashionable Turkish shops like Waikiki LC are very popular in Uz-

bekistan. Uzbekistan assembles such cars as Chevrolet, Hyundai, KIA, and Mercedes (buses). Many other Western companies and firms work in Uzbekistan.

5.3 MOBILE INTERNET COVERAGE, SMARTPHONE USAGE 2/2

96% of Uzbekistan's residents of Uzbekistan have a mobile connection, and 70% have access to Internet networks⁵⁸⁰. Internet is also provided in railway stations, airports, tourist attractions, and subways.

In 2020, 12,000 km of fiber-optic connection lines were laid, and 2,200 new basic mobile con-

nection stations were installed. Currently, 22 million of people use Internet; out of them 19 million use mobile Internet⁵⁸¹.

However, some Internet connections are slow and interruptions are common.

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WESTERNIZATION

Westernization is a process whereby societies adopt Western standards for cultural norms and codes of conduct, such as individual freedom, liberal democratic governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law, secularism, and protection of private property in areas such as industry, technology, law, politics, economics, and lifestyle.

In the last few centuries, Westernization has served as a catalytic influence in the acceleration of global growth in equatable ways as with modernization.

Rather than reflective of a single society's values, however, Westernization is more than a unidirectional influence of one country over another. Over time, the process of Westernization can produce a two-sided exchange. As a country becomes more Western, it, in turn, can also produce reciprocal influence on countries in which Western ideas originated.