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[Freedom House Report | Democracy in the Caucasus](#)

In June Freedom House released its 2008 annual Nations in Transit Report covering January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007. The Nations in Transit Report covers the democratic performance of the former Soviet Union, the former Soviet satellite states and the former Yugoslavia.

Let's take a look at how the nations of the South Caucasus have been depicted this year. Georgia has worsened on several of the indexes this year. This is not surprising given the events surrounding November 7, 2007 (the police violently disrupting protestors, the institution of a nine-day state of emergency and the state taking control of one media channel). Note the counter-intuitive grades: 1 represents the best level of democratic performance and 7, the worst.

Georgia Country Report 2008

Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Electoral Process	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.25	5.25	4.75	4.75	4.50	4.75
Civil Society	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Independent Media	3.75	3.50	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.00	4.25
Governance*	4.50	4.75	5.00	5.50	5.75	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
National Democratic Governance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.75
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.00	5.75	5.50	5.50
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.50	5.00	4.75	4.75	4.75
Corruption	5.00	5.25	5.50	5.75	6.00	5.75	5.50	5.00	5.00
Democracy Score	4.17	4.33	4.58	4.83	4.83	4.96	4.86	4.68	4.79

* With the 2005 edition, Freedom House introduced separate analysis and ratings for national democratic governance and local democratic governance to provide readers with more detailed and nuanced analysis of these two important subjects.

After two years of slight improvements in performance, Georgia slid backwards in three categories: Electoral Process, Independent Media and National Democratic Governance. Overall Georgia (4.79) fares far worse in the rankings than the Baltic States (Estonia 1.93, Latvia 2.07 and Lithuania 2.25) and the Eastern European States (i.e. Czech Republic 2.14). Georgia is also worse than the former Yugoslavia (i.e. Macedonia 3.86 and Bosnia 4.11).

In comparison to the other non-Baltic, former Soviet countries however, Georgia is only bested in the rankings by Ukraine (overall 4.25). And while Georgia's ranking for corruption (5.00) is impressively the best among the non-Baltic former Soviet states it still clearly struggles with both local and national democratic governance according to this rating system.

The non-Baltic former Soviet states rankings have deteriorated towards further authoritarianism and curtailment of media freedoms and the South Caucasus nations are no strangers to these trends.

Armenia and Azerbaijan's rankings remained exactly the same this year as last year with the former

receiving an overall 5.21 ranking and the latter a high, 6.0, putting it in the company of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

A separate question remains as to how we can compare these ratings over time. Georgia interestingly has a better overall rating in 1999 than now and the corruption levels after spiking in 2004 have now returned to the level of 1999. Perhaps current assessments are based on more skepticism than in the past?