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Commission
on the Black Sea

Democracy and Good Governance in the Black Sea Region

Policy Report IV

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About this report

The Black Sea region is increasingly becoming a priority on the international agenda. In fact, a regional approach is emerging as actors understand that common problems need to be addressed jointly. Nevertheless, cooperation efforts are hampered by a number of factors, such as uneven economic and political development within and among countries, nationalist forces, and longstanding animosities between regional players. In this context, it is imperative to foster sound policies aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation so as to contain and ultimately resolve conflicts with peaceful means. However, there is little policy-oriented research on the challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the Black Sea region. The Commission on the Black Sea aims to redress this imbalance by presenting a series of four policy-oriented reports which reassess the economic, social, regional political and military developments in the region. This report is the fourth one, providing a better understanding of the current status of transformation towards democracy and good governance in the countries of the Black Sea region. The Commission on the Black Sea does not take a collective position with this paper. This text represents only the views of its authors.

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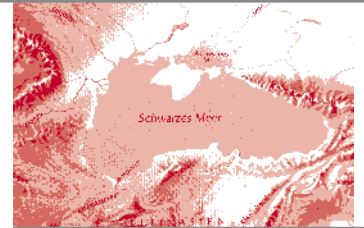
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Policy Report IV

Content

Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
BSEC	Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BSP	Bulgarian Socialist Party (Bulgaria)
BSR	Black Sea Region
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CHP	Republican People's Party (Turkey)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CoE	Council of Europe
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Turkey)
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Community
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERB	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (Bulgaria)
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KGB	Committee for State Security
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Turkey)
MP	Member of Parliament
MRF	Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Bulgaria)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OLAF	Office de Lutte Anti-Fraude / European Anti-fraud Office
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Greece)
PCRM	Communist Party (Moldova)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkey)
UN	United Nations
US	United States
YAP	New Azerbaijan Party (Azerbaijan)

Executive Summary

Black Sea region countries have diverse political systems, ranging from developed democracies to authoritarian regimes. Communist pasts and a lack of democratic experience have stalled or reversed democratisation processes in many cases. Flawed legal systems and a public distrust in institutions have been paired with growing executive power in many countries. Increasing inequality and unresolved conflicts undermine pro-democratic reforms as well.

The region's West and South, including Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey, contain relatively stable democracies. Reforms in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova have met with only limited success, hampered by conflicts with neighbours or separatist regions. Russia has shown substantial re-centralisation of power with authoritarian traits. The Ukraine's post-Orange Revolution momentum has been lost, but democratic procedures and the culture of an open society have taken root.

Elections in Greece, Turkey, Romania and the Ukraine are generally free and fair, but show serious flaws elsewhere in the region. Outside of Greece, political parties are weak. Parliaments in the West and South hold some power, but often show functional weaknesses, while elsewhere executives – often with authoritarian leanings – are little restrained by legislatures or opposition parties. With the exception of Turkey and Greece, judicial corruption or lack of independence is common.

Bribery and corruption is a problem across the region. In the post-communist states, this has undermined state legitimacy. Increasing inequality is a pressing problem throughout, also threatening regime credibility. The economic crisis may further undermine the attraction of Western democratic values, contributing to poverty and social unrest.

Civil society is hampered by a lack of democratic tradition. Outside of Turkey and Greece, domestic NGOs are scarce or face substantial state resistance. Ethnic minority issues and a persistent brain drain remain problematic, but a new technocratic generation offers the promise of change.

The EU has made numerous bilateral and multilateral overtures to Black Sea countries, but has not shown a clear regional policy. It risks appearing to prioritise a stable energy supply over true transformation. US interest has been focused on democratisation as well as regional energy security.

In seeking to enhance democratic transformation, civil society groups should be given broad practical support. Aid to states should be linked to democratic reforms, and combined with substantial assistance for institutional and administrative capacity building. Judicial reforms and a stronger rule of law will be critical in stabilising the region's political and economic systems. The EU in particular needs to develop a coherent regional policy, which must include cooperation with Russia and Turkey.
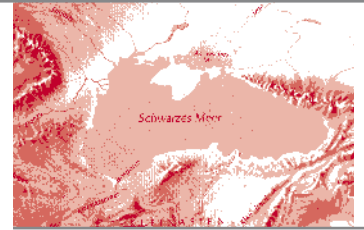
A Introduction

For decades the existence of the east-west conflict meant that the Black Sea was a systemic watershed. It was perfectly clear which of the riparian states took its bearings from which political philosophy and thus from which socio-economic and socio-political model. As a result the region was divided into two distinct parts. This did not apply only to security policy, but to the political and societal character of the nations involved in the conflict. The tectonic shifts which occurred after the demise of the Iron Curtain created new opportunities and the possibility of democratic reforms in the region, but also new dangers and a multiplicity of developments which were more confusing than anything that had been seen for decades.

In contrast to central Europe, where the countries dealt with the transition to democracy and a market economy in a fast and historically unique manner, the Black Sea region is still diverse and heterogeneous in political terms and dependent on the legacies of the past. It includes Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, which are European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states, Turkey, an EU accession candidate and a NATO member state, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia, states which emerged after the Soviet Union collapsed.

According to official pronouncements, all the states which can be deemed to belong to the Black Sea region now take their bearings from democracy and the rule of law. However, there are significant differences with regard to what this means in practice. The spectrum ranges from developed democracies and states which have almost completed the transformation process to defective democracies and authoritarian regimes. Yet even apparently consolidated states are in a state of flux. Greece, a democratic sheet anchor in the region, is going through a period which is difficult not only in economic terms but may well lead to a readjustment of its political identity, too. The unique transformation process in Turkey opens up new opportunities for further democratization, but it is fragile and the final outcome is far from certain. Although Bulgaria and Romania became members of the EU in 2007, they are still trying to surmount the final obstacles in their transformation processes.

On the other hand, the revolutionary élan of the Orange Revolution and the Rose Revolution in Ukraine and Georgia seems to have petered out. Hopes that it would initiate an irresistible wave of regional democratization have not been fulfilled. There is, however, evidence that the ongoing state of emergency in Ukraine will finally end. The Presidential elections in early 2010 have been free and fair following the international observing agencies, and will hopefully pave the way for a more stable development under the rule of law. But in general, the transformation processes in the region have run out of steam, and it is possible to detect trends moving in the opposite direction. Stagnation and regression, especially in Azerbaijan and Russia, but also in Armenia, which seems to revert to autocratic mechanisms, go hand in hand with negative changes in the still defective
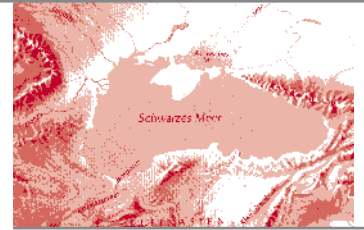
democracy of Georgia. In Moldova, the utterly political stalemate doesn't come to an end since the pro-democratic alliance took the lead in summer 2009.

All over the region, nation-building and the quest for state identity interfere with attempts to stabilize the young democracies. In particular, the stalemated conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh, the 2008 war in Georgia and the irrevocable (?) secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia keep aggressive discourses of national unity alive and allow policy makers to postpone necessary reforms until the days the cows come home. An honest and open dialogue about democracy and the basic elements of good governance within the secessionist regions didn't even start.

External actors try to exert influence in the region. Russia has voiced harsh criticism of the attempts to promote Western democracy within the self proclaimed Russian "sphere of influence" and has sought to justify its "steered democracy" approach. The US on the other side supports pro-democratic movements, and the EU provides assistance to the region through its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the so called Eastern Partnership (EaP) so that it can gradually begin to integrate its economies into the EU, and promote democracy building and good governance.

The political and societal consequences of the ongoing global economic crisis are not foreseeable. But growing economic disparities in the societies of the region may well lead to a loss of trust in the institutions and the political and societal elites. It still remains to be seen whereto social tensions and rising pressure on the state will lead. More transparency and participation of the people in democratic processes may be one possible outcome in some countries. But political radicalism and authoritarianism are already gaining momentum and will be the most likely winners.

This policy report assesses the quality of the existing democratic institutions and identifies common structures in the political and societal development of the Black Sea region by comparing ten countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Greece (the consolidated west and south of the region); Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova (the conflict-ridden states); and Russia and Ukraine. This cross-national comparison shows that in recent years persistent weaknesses in the legal system and popular distrust of democratic institutions in most of the countries have been accompanied by an increase in executive authority. By and large successfully managed (though as yet incomplete) democratization processes in Bulgaria and Romania contrast with authoritarian tendencies in Russia and other countries in the region. In many parts of the region there is still a very real threat of internal and cross-border conflicts. Sizeable and growing socio-economic inequalities not only limit the capacity of societies to cope with the economic crisis, but may also weaken support for liberal, pro-Western political groups.

The first part of this report gives a picture of the political dynamics of the countries in the region. The second part focuses on the challenges facing the ongoing development of the rule of law and democracy in the region. Both parts draw on the country reports of the Transformation Index of the German Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI 2010), an expert survey of democratic and economic reforms. This survey is based upon a detailed questionnaire that structures the country studies and facilitates a systematic cross-national comparison. All the country studies analyze the situation in early 2009 and the preceding two years. Other sources, such as the European Commission's yearly progress reports, and data provided by democratic watchdog institutions such as Transparency International and Freedom House have also been consulted. The third part of this paper attempts to define the extraneous challenges to democracy in the region. Finally, there are policy recommendations on how to deal with the persisting democratic deficiencies.
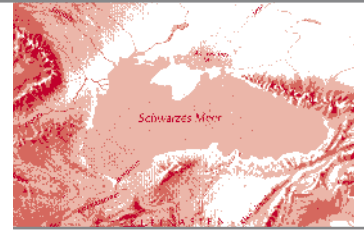
B The Political Dynamics of the Region

The Consolidated West and South of the Region

The states in the west and south of the region either have long democratic traditions (Greece), have been moulded for decades by Western development models and by economic and security policy integration into the West (Turkey), or in the last two decades have become consolidated (though not in every respect perfect) democracies (Bulgaria and Romania). Bulgaria and Romania also share the legacy of communism with the parts of the former Soviet Union bordering on the Black Sea. Both countries are still in the midst of a transformation process and a very large part of their basic political and societal syntax resembles the structures found in the other countries with a communist past. Nevertheless, they are the most successful Black Sea states in terms of state-building and democratic reforms. For this reason they can be assigned to the same category as Greece and Turkey, since, as members of the Euro-Atlantic structures, they are governed by the EU and Western development model.

Bulgaria is still not a fully-fledged and sustainable democracy. The Economic Intelligence Democratic Index 2009 evaluates Bulgaria as a flawed democracy, the government of which is only a semi-functioning one (score of 7.02 compared to Sweden's 10.00). According to Nations in Transition 2009, Bulgaria's democracy rating has actually declined since it became a member of the EU. Political corruption and the inability of the judiciary to deliver concrete results and thus meet its citizens' expectations have deepened social frustration and mistrust in the democratic institutions. The second half of the last electoral term witnessed an unprecedented number of street protests and the emergence of a new civil society activism supported mainly by young people. The weakness of the political parties which had been created in the 1990s and the continuing erosion of the classical left-right cleavage have led to the emergence of new civil society and populist movements, some of which have already transformed themselves into political parties. One of them, the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), led by Boyko Borisov, won the parliamentary elections in early July 2009.

Romania's political track record since joining EU has been mixed. After years of externally imposed political discipline which preceded EU membership, a highly personalized conflict between Prime Minister Popescu-Tariceanu and President Basescu started immediately after Romania had joined the EU. This paralyzed political life and diverted attention from completing the transition process to dirty and parochial infighting. The dispute was accompanied by instability and squabbling within the ruling coalition. This demonstrated profound shortcomings in the political culture, since dubious offensive strategies were employed by all of the parties involved, including representatives of the main constitutional bodies. In early December 2009, Basescu won the second round of the Presidential elections with a narrow margin. Once more, the Constitutional Court had to take the final decision. The electoral outcome was contested by the Social Democratic Party.

Turkey is located in geographical and historical terms at the strategic political and cultural crossroads linking Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. It has a Muslim majority, but an explicitly secular political system. Thus Turkish identity was and continues to be a mixture which contains west European, Middle Eastern and Asian elements. Its process of transformation, which led from the Islamic culture of the former Ottoman Empire to the secular state of Atatürk, and then, after the Second World War, and in particular since its association with the European Community resp. the EU, to the adaptation of its constitution and institutions to comply with west European standards, can only be described as unique, and has so far been mainly successful.

In recent years one-third of the Turkish constitution has been changed. Over two hundred new laws have been passed, most of which deal with the modernization of the penal code, the protection of freedom of expression, religious pluralism and human rights. State security courts have been abolished. Recently the first civilian was appointed to the post of chairman of the National Security Council. An important step was taken on 13 November 2009, when, under the motto of "More Freedom for All," the Minister of the Interior, Besir Atalay, told the Parliament that there would be substantial improvements for the Kurdish population, in particular the reintroduction of Kurdish names of villages, the use of the Kurdish language in religious contexts and daily life, and, most important of all, permission for privately owned Kurdish radio and TV stations to be on the air for 24 hours a day. However, many "construction sites" are still unfinished, and the political culture remains saturated by the clash of different and seemingly excluding interpretations of the nation and the very notion of secularism. Regrettably, the fights encroach on the stability of democratic institutions. This includes the contestation on the Presidential election of Abdullah Gül and the constitutionality of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The recent arrest of some dozens of high ranking militaries under the allegation of planning a coup d´état challenges the role of military élite as self-proclaimed custodian of the secular democracy in Turkey.

The **Greek** state was established on the basis of an ideology derived from the historical presence of Greeks in the so-called Historic Hellenic land, and on the continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present day. Greeks have always considered themselves to be the most civilized and economically and financially powerful people on the Balkans. These two traits mean that the self-image of the Greeks makes it impossible for them to identify with any other nationality or to admit that there are any non-Greek ethnic minorities on Greek soil. As in other Orthodox states, the autocephalous Church plays an important role in political life. It supports the ethno-nationalist character of the modern Greek state, although, in contrast to the 1980s, nationalism and populism are no longer endemic in the middle classes. The frequent references to ancient Hellenic civilization were important for the development of democracy after seven years of dictatorship (1967-74), and are still essential parts of the political culture of Greece. The democratic institutions and the political structure have consolidated. But in difference to most of the other European democracies, deep-rooted discontent and mistrust vis-à-vis the state administration and the political élite as a result of mismanagement and clientelism paired with wide spread corruption has split the society

to an extent that part of the basic political and economic-societal controversies are now carried out openly in the streets through habitually repeated strikes and even violent protests.

The Conflict-ridden States

The transformation processes in the four from a geographical perspective small states of the Black Sea region, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova, were initially rather similar. All four were successor states of the Soviet Union, and, after becoming independent, had to grapple not only with the question of how to develop into democracies and market economies, but also of how to manage difficult state-building and nation-building processes. All four have in common that their political and economic development is being retarded by (territorial) conflicts either internally or with neighbouring states.

Although there has been some progress with political reforms in recent years, **Armenia**'s democratic transition remains incomplete. The development of a more resilient pluralist and participatory democracy in Armenia is held back by the inherently self-contained nature of its political system and institutions. A separation of powers does not actually exist. In reality the executive dominates the legislative and the judiciary, and there is a lack of important checks and balances. The judiciary is not independent. Decision-making is largely centralized. There are authoritarian tendencies within the executive branch, which continues to dominate economic and political life in Armenia. In general the position of the media is weak. They are controlled by the governing elite, and during the last electoral campaigns they showed a bias in favour of the ruling political party. Since the elections in February 2008 Armenia has been unable to overcome an internal political crisis. Lingering discontent among a large part of the population and the government's lack of legitimacy have fostered a deep crisis of confidence. Armenia is at the crossroads. It can either continue to consolidate the autocratic political system under the cloak of democracy, or move towards real reforms and democratization. The conflicts with neighbouring Azerbaijan and Turkey and the strong support for their Armenian compatriots in Nagorno-Karabakh absorbed much of the development potentials of Armenian society during the last two decades.

Azerbaijan lies at a strategic crossroads between East and West, sandwiched between Iran and Turkey and sharing a border with Dagestan in Russia. Despite the global financial and economic crisis, Azerbaijan is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Its economic and political stability has mainly been due to the high level of growth as an oil-producing country. It has continued to reap the benefits of oil and gas projects, and of skyrocketing revenues deriving from the export of energy products. This has allowed massive investments in projects such as the construction of new public schools, new hospitals, new highways and other kinds of public infrastructure. However, Azerbaijan is an example of the fact that economic development does not necessarily lead to more democracy. The opposite is the case. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy
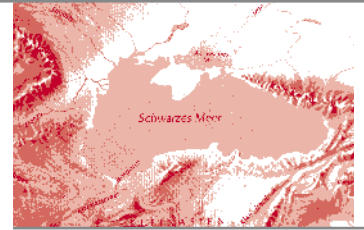
Index 2008, Azerbaijan is an authoritarian state with a ranking of 135 out of 167 countries (even worse than Belarus, which comes in at 132). The Council of Europe (CoE), of which Azerbaijan has been a member since 2001, has urged the Azerbaijani authorities to remain on track with regard to democratic reforms. Democracy continues to be a challenge in Azerbaijan.

After regaining its independence, **Georgia** faced the difficult task of managing a four-pronged transition involving democratization, the institutionalization of a market economy, state-building and nation-building. Georgia had almost become a failed state by the time of the "Rose Revolution" in 2003. One of President Mikheil Saakashvili's main achievements was to initiate the state-building process after he came into office in 2004. Transforming this post-Soviet country into a modern state with effective, transparent and accountable institutions is a gigantic task. The crisis in November 2007 was a serious setback for Georgia's fledgling democracy. Tens of thousands of demonstrators in Tbilisi called for early parliamentary elections in 2008 and for amendments to the electoral legislation. The largely peaceful demonstrations were dispersed with a massive use of force by the government, which responded with nine days of emergency rule. The concentration of power has held up the development of parliamentary democracy, and, as a result, Georgia, according to the 2009 Freedom House Nations in Transit report, is now even less democratic than in the last ten years. A significant slowdown in economic growth caused by the global financial crisis and by a serious deterioration of the overall investment climate in the aftermath of the war with Russia in August 2008 may well play a part in undermining stability and the democratization process. Since 2004 anti-Russian feelings have been the main political factor in the state-building process, and stability has been the most important goal. Now, in the wake of the war in August 2008, there is a need for a clear commitment to adopt EU policies and to pursue a coherent reform agenda with regard to the implementation of democratic standards.

Moldova's transformation process differs from that of otherwise similar countries in the western Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for two interlinked reasons. These are Transnistrian separatism and out migration. Geographically wedged between Ukraine and Romania, Moldova's identity as a state is still being called into question. About 78 per cent of the population are ethnic Moldovans (Romanians). At the beginning of the transition period, the future of the Moldovan state and the existence of a Moldovan nation distinct from the Romanian were hotly disputed, and the elite initially favoured "reunification" with Romania. The secession of Moldova's eastern province, Transnistria, still poses a serious problem for Moldova's policymakers. The issue of establishing a nation-state absorbed almost all the energies of the Moldovan people in the first years after independence. It led to considerable polarization and the postponement of economic reforms. However, Moldova has often been praised by international organizations for its swift and courageous economic reforms (compared to other post-Soviet states with the exception of the Baltic republics). The sluggish transformation process and its partial failure were due to the fact that the Moldovan elites did not have the requisite management skills. Furthermore, Moldova's transition was aggravated by the secession of Transnistria and Russia's overt support for the regime in

Tiraspol. The situation remains complex and conflict-laden still after the take-over of power by the liberal and pro-democratic opposition in 2009. The country is at stalemate after the failure of the Presidential elections in December 2009, and it is not sure whether new elections (most likely to be held in fall 2010) will change the situation fundamentally.

Unresolved disputes and frozen conflicts

A set of frozen conflicts and unresolved disputes jeopardizes the long-term stability and democratic development of the countries concerned and of the entire Black Sea region. Although they are primarily internal conflicts, they nevertheless influence relations with neighbouring states on account of the direct or indirect support for the conflicting parties from abroad. Conflicts by their very nature hold up the development of democracy because they regularly involve the use of military force and/or authoritarian tactics, at least by one side, in order to keep the situation under control. Internally displaced citizens and refugees pose specific problems for local societies.

The unresolved conflict in **Transnistria** is a serious problem for the Moldovan state. Residents of the former have been denied free elections and excluded from the (albeit slow) transition to democracy. Any kind of political opposition is suppressed or prohibited. Over the past ten years, the existence of the self-proclaimed Dniestr Republic and the associated stalemate have contributed substantially to the weakness of the Moldovan state and its institutions. Moreover, the Dniestr Republic, which no state in the world has recognized, has become a black hole in the global economy, a hotspot of organized crime, trafficking and bootlegging. The population of the state is deprived of basic political rights.

The protracted **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict poses the biggest security threat to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and significantly influences the policies adopted by their governments. The ceasefire signed in May 1994 effectively cemented Armenian military gains, and Armenian forces continue to occupy Nagorno-Karabakh and large areas of adjacent territory which together comprise 16 per cent of Azerbaijan. Because of the unresolved conflict Azerbaijan has prevented landlocked Armenia from improving relations with its three neighbours, Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is a highly sensitive one among the electorates of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and has an important influence on the political situation. It often serves as a convenient excuse when the political elites try to avoid introducing reforms or to cover up their failures and shortcomings. The current ruling Armenian elite has its origins in Nagorno-Karabakh. This factor has a significant impact on Armenian domestic politics. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, is being forced to shoulder the burden of the ongoing occupation of its territory and to provide for over 700,000 refugees. However, Armenia also has approximately 400,000 refugees. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have continued to conduct negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (co-chaired by representatives from Russia, the US and
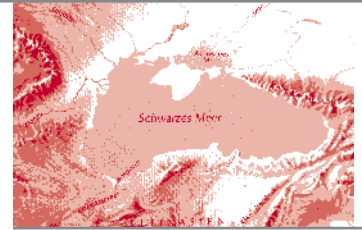
France), though without any tangible results. In November 2008 Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to speed up the negotiation process over Nagorno-Karabakh and to intensify their efforts to find a political settlement. It is still not sure whether the young process of rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey will lead to an easing of tension. Interested groups in Armenia and in Azerbaijan try to block this process.

Separatist conflicts in **Abkhazia** and **South Ossetia** culminated in the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008, and brought both regions under the control of Russian forces. So far four United Nations (UN) member states, Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and the remote insular state of Nauru have recognized the independence of the breakaway regions. The UN Mission to Abkhazia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission to Georgia (which had a mandate to deal with the Georgian-South-Ossetian conflict) had to leave the country after Russia had cast its veto in the UN Security Council in June 2009, and as a result of the Russian refusal to extend the mandate of the OSCE mission after the end of June 2009. The EU Monitoring Mission began to operate in October 2008 and to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreements between Russia and Georgia. It still cannot operate in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both the declaration of independence and the presence of Russian forces have undermined Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while the Geneva talks on post-crisis management have not as yet produced any tangible results. Although the war is over, Russian troops are still stationed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, albeit in a new political framework.

59 per cent of the Georgian population believe that the government's number one priority is the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity. But, despite all the rhetoric, both breakaway regions have been under Russian control since August 2008, and there seems to be no genuine belief in a return to the status quo. The authorities in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Tbilisi refuse to participate in a dialogue. Thus civil society has had to jump in to fill the gap. The situation is explosive, especially since Russia, in contravention of the ceasefire agreement, has still not withdrawn its troops. Furthermore, Georgia's attempts to build a sustainable democracy are being held up by the unresolved conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As a result of the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008 almost 20,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) now live in Georgia proper, and on top of this the country still has to support approximately 200,000 IDPs from the wars in the early 1990s. With the war, Georgia did effectively lose its two provinces but also any prospect of joining the Western institutions like NATO and EU in the near future. Efforts towards more democracy and a more efficient rule of law within Georgia fade under these circumstances.

Information on the status of democracy and good governance in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is hardly accessible. Democratic development and the rule of law are not part of the policy priorities of the driving forces in politics and society of both entities.

Table 1: Political Rights and Civic Liberties in Disputed Territories in the Black Sea Region 2010

	Political rights	Civic liberties	Freedom Status
Abkhazia	5	5	Partly Free
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free
Transnistria	6	6	Not Free
South Ossetia	7	6	Not Free

Source: Freedom House „Freedom in the World 2010". Countries and territories with a combined average rating of 1.0 to 2.5 are considered „Free", 3.0 to 5.0 „Partly Free" and 5.5 to 7.0 „Not Free".
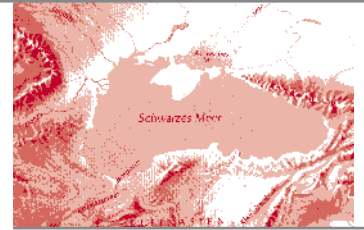
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Russia

In the course of the past decade, Russia has seen a progressive re-centralization of political and economic power. This is often said to have brought about greater political and social stability, to have prevented a further disintegration of the country, to have facilitated economic growth, and to have allowed Russia to regain the status of a regional power seeking to halt a further erosion of the status quo in its neighbourhood, and in fact to reverse some of the changes that occurred during the 1990s. With the introduction of top-down management, the channels dedicated to the articulation of political interests on the basis of a bottom-up approach no longer function properly.

There is a strong belief among the Russian political class that the establishment of the present political system completes the painful transition process of the post-Soviet era and that no further systemic transformation is required. The political class has become impervious to internal and external pressures, and resists calls for a more open, inclusive and genuinely pluralistic political process. The current regime is based on a substantial reduction of political competition. This is the result of the introduction of high legal barriers relating to the establishment of political parties and their ability to secure parliamentary representation. After elections which were deemed to be free (but hardly fair), the ruling United Russia party enjoys an uncontested and overwhelming majority in the federal and most of the regional and local parliaments.

The growing assertiveness of regional elites who claim that wealth has been distributed unfairly during the global financial crisis represents another challenge for the current regime. Furthermore, the Russian government is becoming increasingly concerned about the mounting and often radical and violent protests in the various republics of the North Caucasus. At the same time, growing pressures of the kind often associated with extremist and terrorist activities provide the proponents of a get-tough policy with a welcome excuse to resist any meaningful liberalization of the current political regime.

Ukraine

Ukraine is one of the largest and most populous states in Europe. It is rich in natural resources, possesses fertile agricultural regions, and is wedged between Russia and the EU. This geopolitical position is reflected by political predilections within Ukraine. The eastern part of the country cultivates good relations with Russia, whereas the western regions clearly wish to belong to Western and Central Europe. In Crimea there is an active pro-Russian secession movement (which receives support from Russia). This societal cleavage, which is also demonstrated by the predominant use of the Russian language in the east of the country, makes it difficult to reach a consensus with regard to foreign policy issues, and creates a great deal of instability in domestic politics, e.g. in the introduction of constitutional and economic reforms. In ethnic, linguistic and religious terms Ukraine is amazingly diverse. However, ethno-political conflicts are rare.

After independence Ukrainian transformation was largely in the hands of old nomenklatura groups which retained their positions in the government and the economy. They shaped the new institutional framework so that it was to their advantage, and circumvented conflict-laden economic policies. Thus, whereas various influential societal groups did not have to endure significant hardships, it proved impossible to take collective action. Victor Yushchenko's inauguration as President in 2005 and parliamentary approval of Julia Tymoshenko's appointment to the post of Prime Minister marked a significant alteration in the balance of power. A shift towards more democracy, transparency and political accountability seemed imminent, as did socioeconomic change.

However, only a few of these promising opportunities have been seized. Opinion polls conducted since 2005 point to a growing disillusionment among the electorate, which had displayed a high level of civil engagement in the so-called Orange Revolution. After 2005, there has been a series of constitutional and political crises that have had a deleterious effect on policymaking and on the public trust in the institutions of the state. The ongoing conflict with Russia – which led to the brief stop of gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 – absorbed much of the political and public attention since 2005. The Presidential elections of early 2010 and the victory of Viktor Yanukovych showed on the one side that the dichotomy between the western and the eastern parts of the country still persist and that trust in the protagonists of the Orange Revolution evaporated. On the other side, the 2010 Presidential elections can be seen as a step towards a more calm and stable political system. All international observing agencies including the OSCE assessed the elections as being fair and a correct reflection of the voters' intentions. Defeated Julya Tymoshenko finally withdrew her appeal to suspend the elections and was deselected in Parliament from her post of Prime Minister. The fact that new President Yanukovych chose Brussels as first official visit could indicate his intention to perform balanced politics between Ukraine's big neighbours, the EU and Russia.
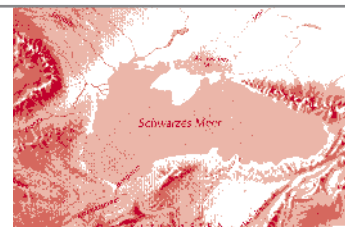
C Democracies Under Scrutiny

Democracy throughout the region is still influenced by the heritage of **communism** (with the exception of Greece and Turkey). For example, members of the old nomenklatura managed to retain key positions in political life and in the world of business and commerce. Although they quickly adapted their behaviour to the changed environment, much of the political culture is nevertheless moulded by their past. However, this is made possible by the fact that these societies have no experience of how to organize effective **party structures**, how to formulate appropriate electoral platforms, and how to build consensus, which is an essential ingredient of democratic systems. Most of the states in the region have **weak and volatile party systems** with highly fragmented and personality-driven opposition parties. Political Parties are often characterized by top-down hierarchical structures. Furthermore, the political and business elites tend to try to establish a symbiotic relationship. Oligarchs intervene in politics either by running for parliament themselves or by financing individual deputies or entire parties. **Clientelism** is helping to support the emergence of a new upper class. In some countries (Moldova, Georgia, Bulgaria (vote buying) **elections** have subsequently been called into question or were the subject of pre-election manipulation (Armenia).

The debate about the essential elements of democracy and the quest for the "right" constitution is quite different in the various countries (with the exception of Greece). What they have in common is a feeling of insecurity and numerous ideas which did not exist during the communist epoch (and in Turkey during the military dictatorship). This certainly has an influence on the political culture in the Black Sea countries, and makes people sceptical about whether democracy can also provide stability.

a) The Quality of Democratic Institutions

Horizontal and vertical accountability remains a central challenge in most countries of the region. The executive has an ongoing monopoly on power that has been confirmed either in informal or formal terms. The principle of the separation of powers is enshrined in each constitution, but the **institutions** which exist to implement it **are weak**. Strong leaders display a "winner takes it all" attitude, and many actors in these states do not play by the rules, but with the rules. The prosecution of the abuse of **power and corruption** is another challenge which has as yet not been tackled. This reflects the low level of commitment to democratic institutions by relevant actors in many of the countries in the region.
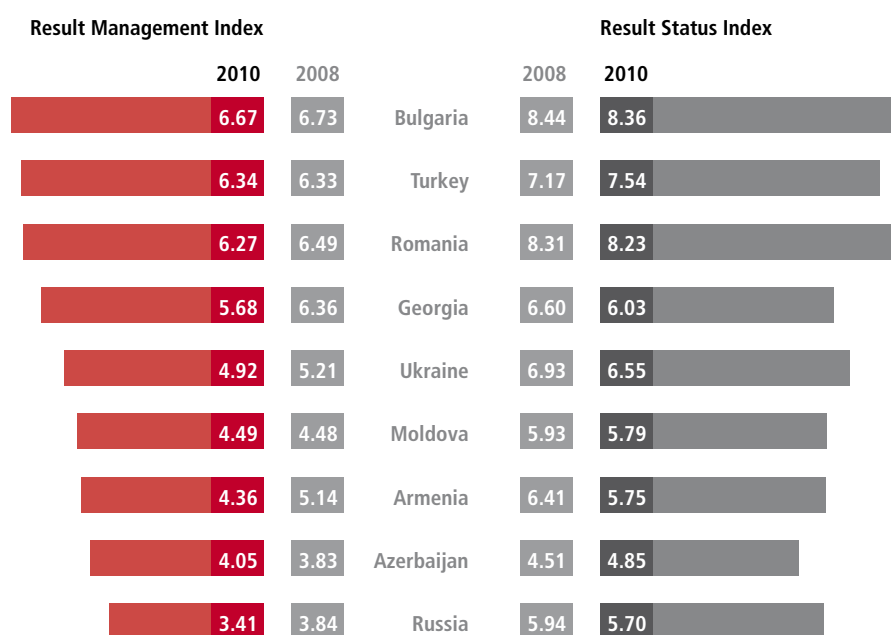
The judiciary is the area most affected area by **corruption** in practically all of the countries in the Black Sea region. The reasons include the low salaries, understaffing, inadequate qualifications, and insufficient professional experience.

Government control of the **media** in general and of the electronic media in particular makes it difficult to discuss different political opinions. The print media are to a great extent neither professional nor serious-minded, and rely on populism and low standards in order to survive economically. Unequal access to the media and the abuse of administrative resources before and during elections have been a matter of concern in certain countries in the region.

Democracies with such defects are constantly in danger of being taken over by formal or informal interest groups. They cannot react adequately to external shocks and are always on the point of falling into a state of permanent instability.

Figure 1: Democracy in the Black Sea

Result Management Index				Result Status Index	
2010	2008		2008	2010	
6.67	6.73	Bulgaria	8.44	8.36	
6.34	6.33	Turkey	7.17	7.54	
6.27	6.49	Romania	8.31	8.23	
5.68	6.36	Georgia	6.60	6.03	
4.92	5.21	Ukraine	6.93	6.55	
4.49	4.48	Moldova	5.93	5.79	
4.36	5.14	Armenia	6.41	5.75	
4.05	3.83	Azerbaijan	4.51	4.85	
3.41	3.84	Russia	5.94	5.70	

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung: Transformation Index oft he Bertelsmann Stiftung / BTI 2010". Advocating reforms targeting the goal of a constitutional democracy and socially responsible market economy, the Transformation Index BTI provides the framework for an exchange of best practices among agents of reform. Within this framework, the BTI publishes two rankings, the Status Index and the Management Index, both of which are based on in-depth assessments of 128 countries. Distributed among the dimensions democracy, market economy and political management, a total of 17 criteria are subdivided into 52 questions. The Status Index ranks the countries according to their state of democracy and market economy as of spring 2009; the Management Index ranks them according to their leadership's management performance between 2007 and 2009. The rating scale for each ranges from 10 (best) to 1 (worst).
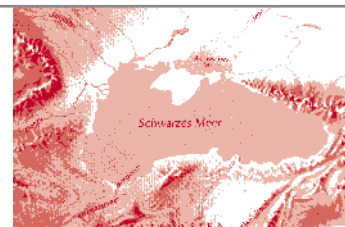
Bertelsmann**Stiftung**

Elections

In **Bulgaria** the results of both the European elections in June 2009 and the parliamentary elections in July 2009 reflect a deep loss of confidence in the political system. In these ballots the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) was defeated by the GERB, a relatively new party that had emerged from a civic movement registered in 2006. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) party, which represents the Turkish minority and was an integral part of previous coalition governments, is not included in the new cabinet. Voting manipulation and vote buying during the elections in 2009 did even more to discredit democracy in the eyes of Bulgarian citizens.

Recent elections in **Romania** have been free and generally fair, despite mutual accusations and allegations of fraud, attacks on political opponents, and vote rigging. In particular the Romanian Media Monitoring Agency criticized biased radio and TV coverage of the parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the fact that the elections went off without a hitch and a coalition was formed without endangering the system of democratic representation is indicative of both the consolidation of the Romanian political landscape and the acceptance of democratic procedures. There are no legal voting restrictions and no groups are barred from making use of their passive and active electoral rights.

In **Turkey** the recent elections have been free and fair, even though after the 1980 military coup party programmes have had to conform to rules determined by the armed forces. The high threshold of 10 per cent needed for parties to be admitted to the parliament is still a contentious issue in Turkey, but smaller parties have managed to get round this barrier by declaring their candidates to be "independent". Once elected to parliament, they are allowed to re-join their parties, or even to form a parliamentary faction if their number exceeds 20. In this way four more parties (in addition to the three which have surmounted the 10 per cent threshold) are now represented in parliament.

In **Greece**, where the democratic institutions and political structure have consolidated, the de facto two-party system has reduced elections to a competition between Nea Demokratia and Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), even though the nationwide threshold needed is only 3 per cent. At the last parliamentary elections in October 2009, the two big parties obtained 77.5 per cent of the votes, whereas the third largest party, the Communists, obtained no more than 7.5 per cent. The Ecological-Green Party was remarkably weak, with a 2.53 per cent share of the vote, although ecological problems are visible everywhere in the country. Furthermore, the present electoral law reserves 40 seats in parliament for the "first past the post" party or coalition. This is said to enhance the stability of the government.

The intimidation of voters and pre-election bribes have influenced the outcome of elections and are partly the result of **Armenia's** social structure. International observers, i.e. the OSCE and the

CoE, have stated that, despite some irregularities, the parliamentary elections in May 2007 were held in accordance with international standards. The opposition disputed the election results. It staged demonstrations and asked the Constitutional Court to order fresh elections, a request which was denied. The Presidential elections in February 2008 led to the invocation of a state of emergency and to the most profound political crisis in Armenia since independence. After the flawed elections there was a spate of civil unrest. It left at least ten people dead and more than a hundred others wounded. In its final report on the Presidential elections the OSCE referred to procedural shortcomings relating to the counting of the votes and cast doubt on their legitimacy. Recent developments indicate that Armenia's backsliding with regard to the maintenance of democratic standards and the political stalemate between the governing elite and the opposition is continuing. As a result of constitutional amendments adopted in 2007, municipal elections were held in Yerevan in May 2009 for the first time since the adoption of the constitution in 1995. The ruling Republican Party won the elections, and again the opposition disputed the results, alleged that there had been various kinds of fraud ranging from bribery to intimidation, decided to boycott the council, and referred the matter to the courts.

There were serious irregularities in almost all of the elections held in **Azerbaijan** after it became independent. International observers witnessed numerous examples of electoral fraud such as ballot stuffing. The ruling party controls the election commissions, and has rejected calls from the opposition and international organizations such as the OSCE and the CoE to reform these bodies so that there is parity between the ruling party and the opposition. In the pre-election and post-election phases the government refused to allow the opposition to hold rallies in the centre of Baku, and the police forcibly broke up opposition demonstrations. Both the OSCE and the CoE concluded that the elections did not meet a number of international standards relating to democratic elections. Some opposition parties have boycotted the parliament since 2003, and did not participate in the Presidential elections on 15 October 2008, when President Aliyev was re-elected with 87 per cent of the votes. Although the OSCE stated that there had been some progress if the elections were compared with previous ones, they did not comply with international standards – the incumbent, Ilham Aliyev, was the only candidate.

The landslide victory of President Saakashvili's United National Movement party in the parliamentary elections in May 2008 was also due to the electoral system in **Georgia**, which is to the advantage of the ruling party. The opposition refused to accept the results of the extraordinary Presidential elections in January 2008 and the parliamentary elections in May 2008, claiming that they had been rigged. The OSCE assesses both elections as basically free but states that polarization, lack of trust, allegations of violations, and speculation about post-election demonstrations did not foster constructive, issue-based election campaigns. The government distribution of social benefit vouchers before the Presidential elections was perceived to overlap with the campaign of Mr. Saakashvili. This fact raised concerns about an unequal campaign environment on the part of the OSCE.

In **Russia** elections which have been described as free, though certainly not fair, have given the ruling United Russia party an undisputed and overwhelming majority in the federal and most of the regional and local parliaments. Ever since Vladimir Putin became President, there has been growing criticism of Russian elections by international observers. In 2007 the OSCE was barred from monitoring the parliamentary elections. Freedom House described the electoral process as unfair and non-competitive, and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the results achieved by Putin´s party in the Duma elections in December 2007 and for Dmitry Medvedev in the March 2008 Presidential elections. Amnesty International has criticized laws which restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations, the fact that the police broke up demonstrations, and the lack of a genuine electoral campaign in the run-up to the Presidential elections. Opposition politicians have complained about personal harassment. The abolition of single-mandate constituencies and the simultaneous increase from 5 to 7 per cent in the threshold that parties have to surmount in order to enter parliament also restricts the room for manoeuvre available to the political parties. The fact that governors of the federal subjects are no longer elected strengthens the vertical power.

Ever since **Moldova** became independent in 1991, the country has had a rather good track record, being one of the few post-Soviet states where elections have been relatively fair and free. The April and July parliamentary elections in 2009 mark a democratic and electoral transition of power from government to opposition. The EU, Moldova's main trading partner, had heavily criticized the political elite on account of widespread electoral fraud and irregularities during the elections in April 2009. For the first time the opposition parties closed ranks and forced the incumbent President, Voronin, to dissolve the parliament. Early parliamentary elections were held on 29 July 2009. A new liberal-democratic coalition rules the country since then. The country remains in a political deadlock nevertheless, because the parliament was not able to come to a compromise on a new President. It is most likely that Moldovans will go for parliamentary elections once more. However, the constitution does not allow that the parliament is dissolved twice within one year so that the earliest date for new elections will be fall 2010 unless there is an amendment of the constitution before.

In **Ukraine** elections are generally free and fair, though the election campaigns are financially uneven playing fields, since many parties are sponsored by so-called "oligarchs," while others, such as the Communists, have rather meagre financial resources. Election campaigns are based largely on populist slogans. Further characteristics of political life include the country's notorious regional diversity. This is reflected in the strength of regional elites. In this area business and politics have become interwoven, or have been encouraged to merge by the oligarchs.
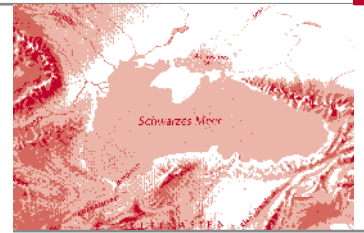
Political parties

A legacy of the Soviet system was the fact that the transformation process in all of the newly independent states was largely in the hands of the middle and lower ranks of the old Communist Party nomenklatura, who continued to occupy key positions in the civil service, the economy, and in the political establishment. They were not particularly interested in a stable and effective party system, although in certain respects it had its uses. This explains the lack of transparency and the absence of internal democratic procedures and external accountability within the parties concerned, as well as the unclear differentiation between the party platforms. Political parties are top-down and hierarchical organizations in which the chairperson is the single most important figure. The polarization of the political landscape is between parties that identify themselves either as "pro-government" or as "the opposition." The lack of party structures and programmes is compensated for by charisma and populism. In Georgia 62 per cent of the electorate consider the party leader to be more important than the party programme. Unchecked use of administrative resources between and during elections, control of access to the media and insistence on favourable news coverage for those in power are clearly to the disadvantage of the opposition parties. In **Georgia** and the **Ukraine** the colour revolutions led to an increase in political pluralism.
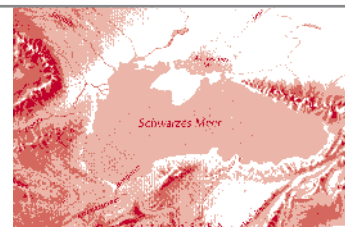
In the new EU member states the political systems have not as yet produced stable political parties. In **Bulgaria** disputes and disagreements within the centre-right spectrum and the erosion of the classical left-right cleavage contributed to what the electorate considered to be the lacklustre performance of the political elite. As a result Bulgaria experienced some dramatic changes in voter preferences. The political culture is dominated by the notion of enmity, and citizens are becoming increasingly suspicious and critical of the political elites and of leaders who pretend to be working for more democracy, even though this may not be the case. Prime Minister Sakskoburggotski was the first ex-monarch to come to power in post-communist eastern and southeastern Europe. Although the constitution bans the formation of political parties along ethnic or religious lines, the MRF represents de facto the interests of the Turkish minority, even though it is open to non-Turkish actors and members.

Over the past two years the composition and structure of the **Romanian** party landscape has changed in a radical manner. The decision to elect mayors directly is generally considered to be a positive step leading to more accountability on the local level. The amendment of the electoral law has increased the incentive to create political parties that are broadly-based parties and not dependent on one or several leaders. The electoral reform changed the voting procedure from proportional representation to a system that combines proportional and first-past-the-post elements. Thus the paralysis caused by the cleavage between the post-communists and the democratic opposition is giving way to a European-style range of parties, and extremist, leader-based and one-issue parties are being marginalized. Elections have generally been seen as free and fair, and no groups have been barred from exercising their passive or active electoral rights.

In **Turkey** parties still have to cross the high 10 per cent threshold in order to enter parliament, but smaller parties have succeeded in getting round this barrier by declaring their candidates to be "independents." The party system in Turkey is still rather unstable and voter volatility is very high. One of the main reasons for this is undoubtedly the absence of a socially rooted party system. However, the ongoing success of the AKP (which has been in power since 2002) seems to point to the emergence of a more stable Turkish party system. The fundamental controversy about the identity of the Turkish nation and state however damages institutions and parties as the essential means of communication between the state and the populace time and again. A 2008 closure case put into question the constitutionality of the governing AKP. The opening of the case at the Constitutional Court can be interpreted as sign of a mature democracy where the separation of powers is taken seriously. But a ban of the ruling party could have provoked a new era of instability. In December 2009, the Constitutional Court outlawed the Democratic Society Party (DTP), stating that the party has become „focal point of activities against the indivisible unity of the state, the country and the nation". The ban has been widely criticized within Turkey and by external observers. Within parliament and within Turkish society, the DTP represented the moderate and peaceful part of Kurdish speaking groups within Turkey. An essential interlocutor for the very necessary debate on the future of Turkey disappeared from one day to another. The political and societal damages are not foreseeable.

In **Greece** the party system has stabilized, and in addition to the PASOK and Nea Demokratia (both with family ownership) Communists, Ecologists and a number of smaller parties play a part in political life. Clientelism and nepotism are a part of the political system, and have transformed the parties into job machines. A widespread culture of corruption and tax evasion which originates in the political culture is one of the causes for the harsh economic and political catastrophe Greece is undergoing since February 2010.

In **Russia** the regime is based on a substantial reduction of political competition as a result of the introduction of high legislative barriers for the establishment of political parties and for their entry into parliament. The Communist Party is the only party with an organized mass base, a state of affairs that does not make a positive contribution to democratic consolidation. United Russia is the largest parliamentary party. It came into being in 2001 as a result of a merger of the two main rivals of the previous elections, both of which had been founded only in 1999. Of the nine parliamentary parties which participated in the parliament elected in 1999, only three were represented in the parliament elected in 2003. The electorate is very sceptical about political parties. This is demonstrated by the fact that no more than 10 per cent of the population has ever said that they can be trusted.

The Role of Parliament and of the Opposition

Parliament plays a very specific role in a properly functioning democracy as the legislative body and by exercising political control over the executive. However, government and opposition should also be able to reach compromises and a consensus on vital national issues. This implies mutual respect and not antagonism for its own sake. To describe the opposition as the enemy of the state is just as undemocratic as holding up legislative work by boycotting the parliamentary sessions.

The **Bulgarian** Parliament faced the problem of putting an end to the practice of Members of Parliament (MPs) voting on behalf of colleagues who were not present in the parliamentary chambers. There have been occasions when more than half of the decisions of the National Assembly were not in compliance with the law because there had not been a quorum. Recently new voting technology was installed in the parliament. It monitors the exact number of deputies present at any given moment. The new system requires MPs to vote only with their own cards.

In **Romania** the various powers accorded to the state are unrelated, and a system of checks and balances is stipulated by the constitution. However, the bad habit of passing legislation by means of government ordinances which bypass the parliament persisted after Romania joined the EU. Executive bias and the urgent nature of the accession process can no longer justify such practices, even though they have become institutionally ingrained. Trust in the parliament decreased when the deputies voted against transparency and lustration with regard to MPs and the government.
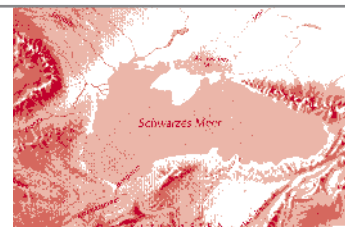
The separation of powers is a reality in **Turkey**, and the parliament plays its role accordingly. However, the influence of the armed forces, which dominate the National Security Council, is substantial. Furthermore, the Office of the General Staff in practice operates without reference to the elected civilian authorities, and is not under parliamentary control except with regard to budgetary matters. The character of this "defective democracy" becomes apparent when one examines the military operations against the "Kurdish separatism" of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which are completely under the control of the military establishment. This is in accordance with existing laws and regulations, but there is no civilian guidance, and therefore no control either by the government or the parliament. However, all military land operations against alleged PKK bases that are not on Turkish territory (e.g. in Iraq) have to be approved by parliament. Only three parties were actually able to surmount the 10 per cent threshold and gain admittance to parliament in July 2007. The AKP obtained 46.58 per cent of the total votes, and formed the new government. In addition to the two opposition parties, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), 26 independent candidates were elected. 24 of them were affiliated with the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) which has been banned by the Constitutional Court in late 2009.

Dissatisfaction with the lacklustre performance of the political system, including that of the parliament, led to violent street protests in **Greece** since the turn of the year 2008/09. It was not only the usual leftists and anarchists who held their regular annual rallies. "Normal" and non-partisan students also gave vent to their anger and despair, and their opposition to the work of the parliament. Thus, in October 2009, the people voted already for a change of government in favour of the PASOK, at a time when the sheer magnitude of the administrative and in particular economic mismanagement of the political élite was not yet fully disclosed. The new government will now be forced to apply extremely burdening austerity measures against the declared unwillingness of many powerful groups of the Greek society to accept deeper cuts into their vested socio-economic rights and achievements. Strikes and protests, maybe again even violent demonstrations, will accompany a painful process where the conservative opposition has lost any carryover of trust.

In **Armenia** the opposition is fragmented and so far has not demonstrated that it constitutes a real alternative. Business and politics are closely intertwined, corruption is endemic, and more and more oligarchs are being elected to parliament. The deep divide between the groups which are for and against the government led to massive extra-parliamentary protests and street rallies after the 2007 elections and the 2008 Presidential elections. The opposition and its supporters disputed the results, and there were allegations of electoral fraud. The government used interior ministry forces to disperse the demonstrators and many opposition supporters were arrested. A total of ten people were killed. On 1 March 2008 a state of emergency was declared, and this lasted until 21 March.

Azerbaijan's parliament, the Milli Mejlis, tends to adopt a low profile. The parliament is usually not well informed and properly prepared for its legislative and oversight work. Laws are often drafted by the Presidential administration and put hastily on the agenda without any prior debates, either in the Milli Mejlis or among the electorate. It is also difficult to obtain copies of draft laws since they are often not publicized before being adopted by the parliament, which leads to a lack of public awareness and discourages debates about proposed legislation. The opposition is extremely fragmented and demoralized by past defeats. It does not provide an alternative political platform, or for that matter strategies which the electorate might find attractive. On the whole it looks back to past and repeats the National Front rhetoric from the early 1990s. The authorities have significantly restricted the opposition's ability to campaign and gain access to the media. Opposition activists are regularly prevented from holding not only public rallies, but also smaller events such as meetings with their supporters in the provinces on the pretext that they have not received permission from the local authorities. The ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) has an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly. Thus it controls the parliament, and the legislature is virtually unable to work independently of the Presidential administration.

Georgia's political problems also stem from the weakness of the disunited opposition. The legislature is dominated by the ruling party, the National Movement. For this reason decisions are made by an inner circle around the President. Ever since May 2008 some of the opposition parties

have refused to take their seats in parliament on the grounds that there have been allegations of electoral fraud. This has prompted them to mount street protests in order to press their political demands. Georgia's politics are characterized by serious polarization between the opposition and the government. The political deadlock between the President and the opposition may lead to political instability and even violence.

In **Moldova** the parliamentary opposition has tended to be rather weak. It failed to make the best use of its possibilities and had a very limited influence on the political process. Its inability to overcome its rivalries, to reach compromises, and to use legislative power in an effective way and to modify government proposals were the main reasons why it proved difficult to introduce real reforms. After the closely contested elections in April 2009 the opposition parties closed ranks, forcing the incumbent President Vladimir Voronin to dissolve parliament and hold fresh elections on 29 July 2009. In the wake of the victory of the opposition parties Voronin resigned, though a parliamentary majority for a new President has not as yet emerged and new elections will most probably be held in fall 2010.

Since the team of the President and the Prime Minister in **Russia** has a stable majority in parliament, the legislature exercises its control functions to no more than a very limited extent. In the parliaments elected in 2003 and in 2007 the political opposition was clearly marginalized. Political differences − if there are any − exist to a minor degree between the President and the Prime Minister.

Due to institutional and personal competition between Prime Minister Tymoshenko and President Yushchenko, parliament (Verkhovna Rada) in **Ukraine** was unable to function for most of 2008 and 2009. Whereas the Prime Minister favoured a purely parliamentarian system, the then President was attempting to strengthen the powers of his office. Important reforms and political decisions have been held up. When the President dissolved the Verkhovna Rada on 8 October and announced fresh elections, the government challenged the legality of its dissolution. There was a similar situation already in April 2007. The ongoing struggle between the three main political institutions in Ukraine, the President, the Prime Minister and the parliament, has led to recurring disagreements and instability. It is not yet sure how the situation will evolve under the newly elected President Viktor Yanukovych.
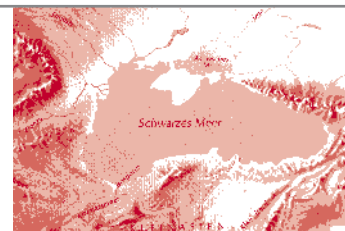
The Executive and Good Governance

The idea of the separation of powers presupposes an independent executive which is entrusted with the conduct of public affairs and the management of public resources in order to guarantee the well-being of society and respect for human rights. A democratic government must ensure that there are an effective decentralized administration and accountable and transparent decision-making processes.

Figure 2: The Political Management of Transformation in the Black Sea

	BTI 2006	BTI 2008	BTI 2010
	Average Management Index in Democracies		
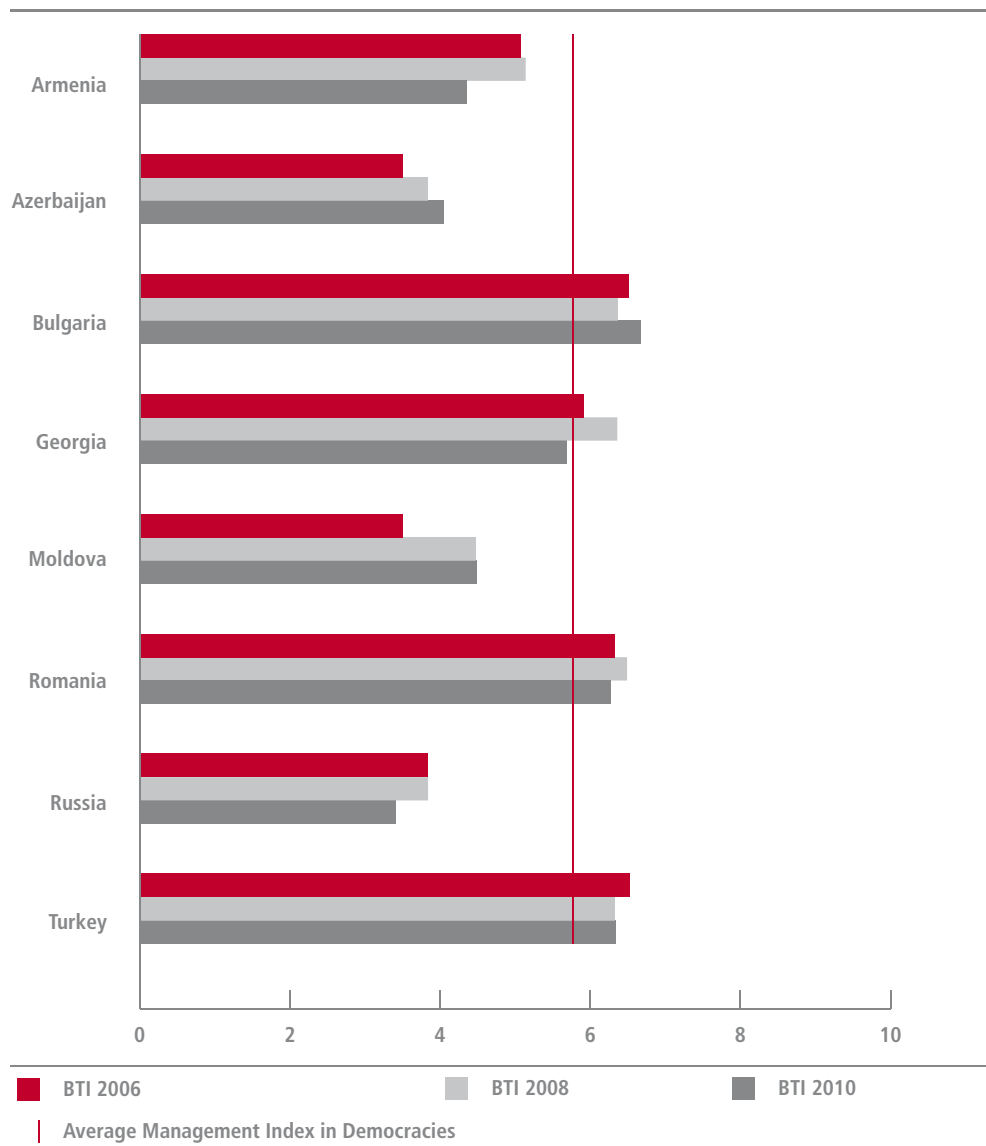
Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung "Transformation Index of the Bertelsmann Stiftung/BTI 2006, 2008 and 2010". The BTI focuses on the steering and management of development and transformation processes. The Index reviews and evaluates the reform activities of political decision makers, thus providing valuable information on the key factors of success and failure for states on their way to democracy and a market economy. Governments must be determined in pursuing their goals, they must be prudent and effective in using their resources, and they must combine the capacity to govern with consensus-building while cooperating reliably with neighboring states and external support organizations. The BTI is the only ranking worldwide to focus so thoroughly on political leaders' management performance with self-collected data. The rating scale for each area ranges from 10 (best) to 1 (worst) and is subdivided into response options, each of which describes an empirical assessment that corresponds to a particular rating.

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Bulgaria is a parliamentary democracy, and the executive powers vested in the Prime Minister and the government mean that they wield a great deal of influence. A major feature of the former BSP government coalition was its council, a political body not provided for by the constitution, in which the three ruling parties reached agreement on most of the important government decisions. This situation came about because it was both difficult and necessary to strike a balance between the diverging political programmes of the coalition partners. However, this council had no democratic legitimacy, was not accountable to parliament, and thus completely opaque as far as the electorate was concerned. Since July 2009, Boyko Borisov serves as Prime Minister in a minority GERB-dominated centre-right government. Bulgaria has well-established civil-military relations. The President has limited powers, mainly with regard to foreign policy, defence and the right to veto legislation. However, President Georgi Parvanov, a former BSP leader who was elected for a second term in 2006, has managed to play a more significant role in political life and in wielding influence and power.

In **Romania** the government is committed to democracy and a market economy, but has only been partially successful in implementing reforms and abolishing structural obstacles. In many cases the main problem was simply following through with the changes. After the correct initial policy choices had been made and accepted by the European Union and international financial institutions, the government failed to pay the same kind of attention to their actual implementation, and allowed special interest groups to sabotage the strategic orientation as a result of party politicking or simulated implementation. External pressure and conditionality (mainly emanating from Brussels) has declined markedly since January 2007, and the implementation of policy measures previously adopted has declined correspondingly. In autumn of 2009 the interminable power struggles finally led to the first successful vote of no confidence in a post-communist country.

In principle the democratically elected government in **Turkey** possesses the power to govern, although it has often been over-ruled by the armed forces, which play an important role in Turkish politics. The political leaders have succeeded in initiating reforms aimed at improving democratic and human rights standards by aligning Turkish legislation with international and especially EU norms. EU harmonization undoubtedly plays a crucial role in speeding up this process, and in the period under review the European Commission classified the reforms and improvements as being in line with the Copenhagen criteria. However, many civil servants are insufficiently qualified or do not have the requisite skills. It is a commonly held view in Turkey that the selection process for such jobs is influenced by one's political affiliations. This certainly seems to be the case, particularly with regard to high-ranking officials. There have been attempts to modernize the government's administrative branch, though there are (as yet) no plans to introduce comprehensive reforms that would include decentralization.
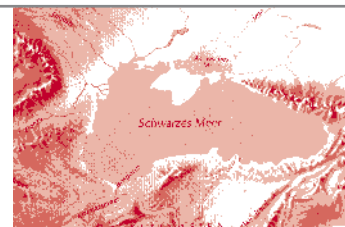
One of the constituent elements of good governance is fiscal discipline. **Greece** is a negative example of this. Its high budget deficits have been offset by substantial subsidies from the EU´s agricultural and structural funds. However, the deficiencies in the infrastructure, the public health

service and in particular in the education system have not been overcome. In fact, in recent years they have worsened. The urgently needed reform of the higher (university) education system has been held up and effectively postponed for years. Another example of weak performance are the summer fires. None of the various governments was able to resolve the problem of the devastating and recurring outbreaks of wildfire, which are mainly due to the hopeless waste management situation and the existence of many illegal waste dumps. The lack of an appropriate land registry system encourages property speculators to burn off an area in order to be able to "develop" it. In early 2010, the new government led by socialist George Papandreou made public that preceding governments had falsified national statistics to a large extent. Membership in the euro zone was obtained by fraud, and the basis for core data like the national debt was simply false. The "new" and unexpected high level of national debt of Greece led to a crisis of confidence between Greece and other euro zone members and to a daily increase of risk insurances on credit default swaps. As a consequence, a national bankruptcy of Greece is not unlikely threatening the stability of the common European currency which had already lost vis-à-vis the US-Dollar. The European Union and the Papandreou government are trying to handle the situation by imposing a harsh austerity programme on Greece.

In **Armenia** the separation of powers does not actually exist. The executive dominates the legislative and the judiciary, and significant checks and balances are not in evidence. The administration is reasonably sophisticated, though the legacy of the Soviet era means that it is rather cumbersome and inefficient. Furthermore, the lack of an independent judiciary has a negative effect on the efficiency of the government's administrative departments and engenders a general public mistrust of the civil service.

Decision-making in **Azerbaijan** is highly centralized. President Ilham Aliyev has virtually unlimited power over the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The National Assembly merely approves the Prime Minister, whilst the other cabinet members are directly appointed by the President. There is a fundamental lack of transparency and accountability with regard to government decisions. The most profound changes to the Constitution were introduced in March 2009 after Aliyev's political party, YAP, held a referendum to remove the clause stipulating that a President can only serve two consecutive five-year terms. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee reported that the referendum on the amendments to the Constitution took place in "an atmosphere of intimidation of voters and in particular those who opposed the reform of the Constitution". In the absence of open discussions and of political alternatives, the amendments were approved, perpetuating the dynastic rule of the Aliyev family and conferring practically unlimited powers on the President.

In **Georgia** political life is personalized and determined by the leadership and not by the voters. This is also reflected in the relationship between the government and the administrative departments. The ruling National Movement has established a powerful network which enables it to draw on administrative and financial resources. Concerns expressed about increasingly authoritarian

tendencies in the Saakashvili government by both external and internal commentators in the aftermath of the war with Russia have to some extent been confirmed by recent developments. Constitutional amendments adopted in 2004 have considerably strengthened the President's power and diminished the parliament's influence on the executive. Saakashvili believed that "an effective Presidential system" was important for Georgia, especially during the war in August 2008, but this no longer applies to the current situation. There is an urgent need for constitutional amendments designed to strengthen the power of the parliament.

In **Moldova**, where people were accustomed to a single-party system and top-down administration, the autocratic legacy is still an obstacle in the transformation process. President Vladimir Voronin of the Communist Party (PCRM), who resigned in September 2009, had been in power since 2001, and was a good example of the power vertical structure. He and his network decided the rules of the game and were able to consolidate political and economic power within a small group. This enabled the party to have access to unlimited financial and administrative resources. The balancing act between paying lip service to the West and the unavoidable reliance on the Russian market and on Russian energy supplies coupled with the failure to implement reforms has brought the country to the brink of collapse. Reforms initiated by the new liberal-democratic majority in the parliament have not yet developed their full impact.

The comprehensive economic and social reforms that were supposed to facilitate transparent competition and the modernization of **Russia** have come to a halt. Over the past decade a bureaucratic state that is largely non-transparent and displays very little accountability emerged at the tail end of the transformation process in Russia. It expanded its control over major economic assets at all (e.g. federation, regional and local) levels. When Dmitrii Medvedev became President in May 2008, there were expectations of a forthcoming liberalization of the political and economic regimes which would pave the way for more competition. The new President withdrew a number of draft laws which were designed to reduce even further the freedom of the press and the activities of non-governmental organizations. He suggested that it might be possible to ease some of the requirements for the registration of political parties and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and to allow the representation of small political parties in the parliament, and to reverse some of the stringent provisions introduced under Putin. President Medvedev's agenda is dominated by issues such as restoring the rule of law, emancipating the judiciary, combating corruption and limiting the activities of the bureaucracy. However, the changes that are forthcoming or have already been introduced are rather modest and take care not to encroach on the essential features of the current political regime which was established under Vladimir Putin. The prospects for more competition and liberalization remain vague and uncertain.

A recent Gallup poll conducted in August 2009 showed that only 4 per cent of **Ukrainians** were satisfied with the work of their government. The appended commentary suggests that the Ukrainians' low approval ratings may reflect the fact that they are frustrated by the bitter political

struggle between President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. The conflict between these two former allies has essentially paralyzed policymaking for a year and a half. Ukrainians gave each of the leaders bad marks. Yushchenko's 7 per cent approval rating was less than half of the 17 per cent he garnered in 2008. (Gallup did not ask Ukrainians to rate Tymoshenko in 2008.) The Prime Minister's 20 per cent approval rating was nearly three times higher than that of the President. Analysts suggested already in 2009 that the low approval ratings could well put pro-Russian opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich in the lead in the 2010 Presidential elections. The analysts have been proved right.

The Judiciary

Assessing the quality of the judiciary is a wide-ranging task which has to take into account its independence, impartiality, efficiency and effectiveness, the honing of its professionalism, its management system, and measures designed to improve confidence in the judicial system. The difficulties encountered in trying to obtain access to the courts, the undue length of cases before the courts, and the state of the prison system are constantly being criticized throughout the entire Black Sea region.

Bulgaria was scrutinized by the European Commission under the "Cooperation and Verification Mechanism" on account of its defective judicial system. The Bulgarian judiciary has been in a state of constant reform for years, but the results hitherto have been rather modest. Amendments to the constitution adopted in February 2007 confirm the independence of the judiciary. However, in general the reforms have concentrated on legislative and procedural changes, while measures designed to improve judicial performance have so far been of a piecemeal nature. In **Bulgaria** and **Georgia**, according to the 2009 Global Corruption Barometer of Transparency International, the judiciary is the most corrupt of all the sectors.

The situation in **Romania** is similar. The Interim Report of the European Commission of February 2009 concentrates in its criticism of the judicial system on the ongoing conflict between the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. It was primarily perturbed by the close ties between the judiciary and certain politicians, and also by the slower pace of judicial reform. In particular it criticized the Romanian Parliament's longstanding habit of blocking the investigation of cases of corruption in high places. The dismissal of the popular and pro-active Minister of Justice Monica Marcovei in February 2007 demonstrated the unwillingness of the political class to pay more than lip service to the objective of suppressing corruption. Since then parliament has amended the relevant legislation in order to strengthen the position of politicians and civil servants accused of corruption. Moreover, the parliament has intervened in a number of cases to exert its influence on legal proceedings or to secure a mistrial verdict ostensibly for procedural reasons. Criticism was also levelled at the arbitrary nature of certain verdicts, and the large backlog of cases.
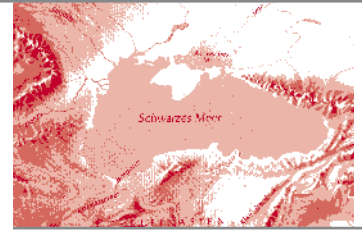
The judiciary in **Turkey** is relatively free of direct influence or intervention by other institutions, though there are some structural weaknesses. Cases proceed slowly and inefficiently, and there are backlogs. Furthermore, the judiciary has been often criticized for allowing itself to be influenced by its conservative members, and this has held back reforms and the democratization process in Turkey. For example, the Supreme Board of Judges has been involved in controversial efforts to replace judges and prosecutors assigned to the so-called Ergenekon trial, a clandestine "deep state" network. In July 2008 the governing AKP narrowly escaped from being banned by the Constitutional Court for allegedly being a "focal point of anti-secular activities". The DTP, a moderate party representing interests of the Kurdish speaking part of the population was banned in late 2009. The EU and many external observers criticized these trials, saying that such political issues should be debated in parliament and decided at the ballot box, and not in the courts. However, decisions of the High Military Council concerning personal matters, especially expulsion from the armed forces on account of "political non-reliability" cannot be subjected to judicial review. The draft judicial reform strategy presented in April 2008 was described as being "comprehensive" in the 2009 Report of the European Commission. In March 2010, the ruling AKP unveiled plans for a new constitutional change that would curb the powers of its opponents in the judiciary and military. The new legislation would make it harder to close political parties. Critics accuse the AKP of using reforms as a cover for efforts to consolidate its power and promote an Islamist agenda.

In **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** an independent judiciary exists only on paper. The governments have to an important extent retained control over the judiciary and have deliberately used it for their political goals. For example, in both countries trials of opposition and youthful activists are widely believed to be politically motivated. The independence of the courts has also been compromised by a lack of professionalism and numerous cases of bribery among the judges.

In **Moldova** political interference in the judiciary is endemic. It lacks independence and does not provide any checks and balances whatsoever. The process for appointing and dismissing judges was reorganized in 2005 in an attempt to improve the judiciary's independence from political pressure. Moldova's 2005 judicial reform is generally considered to be a substantial improvement to the architecture of the system and the way it functions. However, certain deficits such as corruption and an enormous backlog of cases continue to be a problem and have had a negative effect on public trust in the courts.

Russia. The judiciary has become increasingly dependent on the executive. As a result the imperfect separation of powers and system of checks and balances virtually disappeared. Electoral confidence in institutions such as the parliament, elections, courts, or law enforcement has declined dramatically.

In **Ukraine** the weakness and lack of independence of the judicial system (which exists on paper, but is meaningless in practice), and especially of the Constitutional Court, do nothing to improve the overall situation. A serious problem is the lack of funding for basic equipment and staff training. Constantly changing laws, which are the result of the political wrangling, and the need to comply
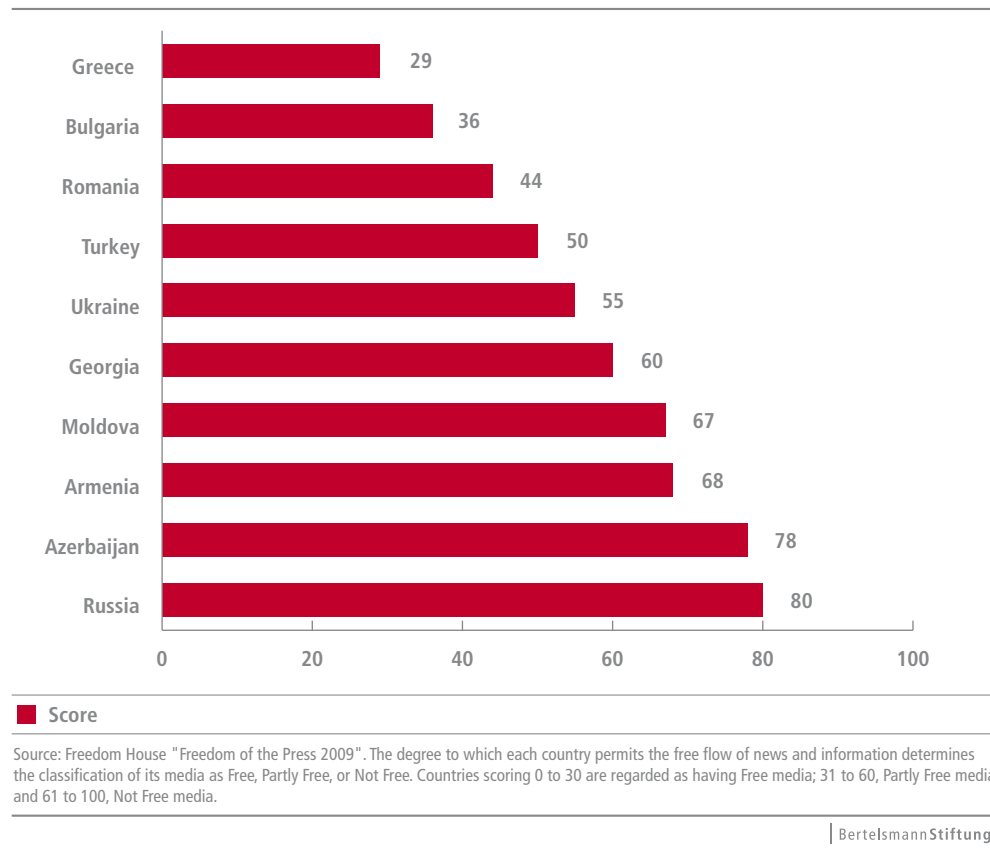
with international standards and EU law have a negative effect on the work of the courts. Although a substantial number of anti-corruption regulations and programmes have been launched, it is difficult to perceive a systematic approach or a long-term strategy.
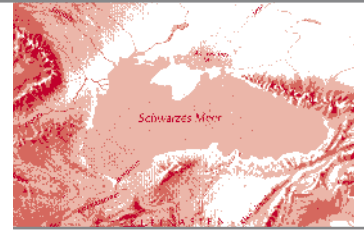
The Media and the Internet

Control of the media, intimidation during electoral campaigns, inequality of media access and misuse of administrative resources have been a matter of concern in all post-communist states. **Azerbaijan** holds the record of all the OSCE member states with the highest number of imprisoned journalists.

The Global Press Freedom 2009 ranking conducted by Freedom House groups the 195 countries of the world on the basis of the number of (negative) points (0-100) obtained. Up to a total of 30 points the press in a country is considered to be "free." Between 31 and 60 points it is "partly free," and from 61 points onwards the situation of the press is described as "not free." The places of the Black Sea countries in the rankings for 2009 are as follows:

Figure 3: Freedom of the Press in the Black Sea Region 2009

Country	Score
Greece	29
Bulgaria	36
Romania	44
Turkey	50
Ukraine	55
Georgia	60
Moldova	67
Armenia	68
Azerbaijan	78
Russia	80

■ Score

Source: Freedom House "Freedom of the Press 2009". The degree to which each country permits the free flow of news and information determines the classification of its media as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. Countries scoring 0 to 30 are regarded as having Free media; 31 to 60, Partly Free media and 61 to 100, Not Free media.

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Internet users are bypassing local servers and using other platforms where there is respect for freedom of expression. This is because the freedom of the press has been curtailed and the electronic media are to a large extent controlled by state authorities and/or specific interest groups. A recent example was the "Twitter Revolution" in Moldova.

Civil Society

Every democracy is embedded in an environment that stabilizes and facilitates the operations of the democratic regime. The most important of these basic preconditions is a properly functioning civil society. Most of the countries in the Black Sea region have passed legislation that permits citizen participation and outlines either basic or even rather sophisticated citizen action. However, this legislation is either shoddily implemented and ignored by government officials, or insufficiently understood by both citizens and civil society organizations. **Democratic activities initiated by individuals, NGOs** or associations in the wider sense **are still fairly rare in the region**. Even special interest groups such as trade unions are merely of marginal importance. There seems to be consent for democratic norms, though it is not expressed in a forthright manner. The civil societies in the Black Sea region still suffer from the lack of a democratic tradition, and this may well be the most striking difference to the countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

Bulgaria did not have any ponderable dissident movements, and in 1989 its grassroots movements and civil society activities came from environmental groups. Street protests and rallies by predominantly young people, but also by professional groups, environmentalists and civil society organizations over the last two years indicate a bottom-up increase in collective action, as well as a rising level of public awareness and a willingness to change the political culture and discourse.

In **Romania** the political system still lacks the incentives and points of access which can facilitate the participation of civil society organizations in the political decision-making process. This is especially true of larger NGOs with international connections, which tend to be isolated from the political constituencies of Romanian society. This is partly due to the socialist tradition of relying on state assistance and guidance rather than on societal self-help organizations. Although the constitution provides all the usual political rights and civil liberties, in reality civil society associations are often prevented from doing their work as a result of obstruction by the authorities, which frequently try to muzzle NGOs and their unwelcome criticism.

In **Turkey** there is a closely knit network of interest groups devoted to promoting the growth of participatory democracy. Such autonomous groups and voluntary associations are traditionally well-developed and well-organized. They also work together and cooperate with each other. These organizations have built up a high level of trust among the electorate. Among the important factors shaping civil society and the nature of the democratization process are the problems associated

with a highly polarized society, the ongoing disputes, and the efforts to find a modus vivendi between different value systems and lifestyles.
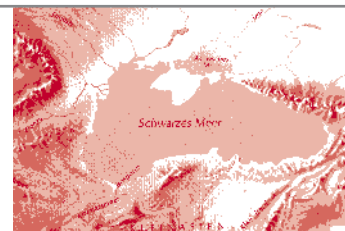
Greece has numerous NGOs, most of them charities. They have recently been joined by environmental organizations, a response to the obvious reluctance of the authorities to take action in this area.

Although civil society in **Armenia** is made up of a wide array of civic groups and NGOs, there has been a clamp-down during the last two years on political groups and parties which seek to exercise their rights, especially after the wave of demonstrations and public protests which followed the Presidential elections in 2008. However, while there continues to be progress with regard to both the number and the activities of NGOs, only a handful of them operate in a consistent manner.

In **Azerbaijan** government pressure on the non-governmental sector continues to increase. The government has frequently refused to allow independent NGOs to be registered and in some cases has even revoked the registration of certain NGOs. Thus, for example, in May 2008 the authorities revoked the registration of the Election Monitoring Center, which is the largest non-partisan domestic monitoring organization. The Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE expressed serious concern about the government's attempt in June 2009 to adopt controversial amendments to the NGO legislation that would place significant constraints on the development and operation of independent NGOs. The amended law still contains several controversial elements, such as a provision which requires the NGOs to submit a list of their members to the authorities, and restrictions on the work of foreign NGOs.

Moldova is deeply polarized and people were becoming more and more disgruntled with the political elite. However, since the parliamentary elections in July 2009 a new spirit is beginning to emerge in Moldovan society. About 70 NGOs joined forces in the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 2009 and monitored the elections. For the first time both the political opposition and civil society organizations were able to do something about the undue concentration of power. And despite numerous attempts by the ruling elite to discredit the protesters during the demonstrations after the April elections, it was the younger generation which embarked on the "Twitter Revolution" and showed the international community that it is keen to break with the communist past. "Promising and proactive involvement of the civil society actors in Moldova happened with the new coalition government of Filat in office. The present constellation is one of close cooperation between civil society and politics, with the National Council in place since February 2010.

In **Russia** tighter rules relating to the registration and reporting of NGOs have been introduced. The funding of non-governmental activities from abroad is now subject to strict controls.

In **Ukraine** the political elite shows little willingness to cooperate with civil society organizations, and their access to government information remains poor. Moreover, only about 10 per cent of roughly 40,000 registered NGOs in Ukraine are actually active.

Nomenklatura and Clan Structures

The survival of the former socialist nomenklatura and the influence of interest groups (clan structures) are characteristic of most of the Black Sea countries. Manipulating the transformation process was essential for the political survival of the old ruling class. Often the former Communist Party was given a new name, which made it easier to survive in the new era of democracy. Thus during the privatization process certain groups succeeded in acquiring the financial resources which enabled them to secure economic and political influence. A new and younger generation of politicians is slowly beginning to emerge, though the appeal of clan structures still seems to be rather strong. However, clientelism and nepotism also occur in consolidated Western democracies such as **Greece**, where they contribute to a widening rift between rich and poor.

In **Romania** and **Bulgaria** citizens are also critical of the fact that former cadres still play a decisive role in major businesses and in political life. In **Turkey** the influence of the armed forces (a quasi-clan) continues to be of importance, and policymakers find themselves in a position where they are always (though not always visibly) under surveillance.

Armenian society is characterized by a clan structure which depends on strong personal ties and connections. Group relationships dominate the everyday life of the people, and the activities of policymakers and the business community. For this reason the political class is made up of representatives of the different Armenian groups. The so-called Karabakh group is the main political player. Political analysts have discerned a "captured" society within a "captured" state.

Azerbaijan set a precedent for a dynastic transition of power when Azerbaijan's President Heydar Aliyev handed over the reins to his son Ilham Aliyev in 2003. Heydar, a former local Committee for State Security (KGB) chief, ruled Azerbaijan for more than 30 years, first as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, and then, after Azerbaijan became independent, as President (1993 to 2003). Power is in the hands of the ruling elite, which walks warily between Russian and Western geostrategic interests. The political system is based on a "divide and rule" approach and the concept of the state as a patrimonial mechanism. Power is distributed among a small elite around the President who are often holdovers from the Communist period.

In **Russia**, many people welcomed the partial reintroduction of the familiar Kremlin-centred paternalistic system. It counteracted the increased and unchecked influence of people who had benefited most from the transformation process, i.e. entrepreneurs who were also trying to use

their economic clout in order to become involved in politics. The administrative system, a legacy of the past, is highly personalized and relies heavily on an informal structure of personal networks.

After **Ukraine** had become independent, the transformation process was largely determined and implemented by the middle and lower ranks of the old Communist Party nomenklatura that continued to hold key positions in the administration, the economy, and the political establishment. In the course of the transformation a group of entrepreneurs who are usually called oligarchs became especially powerful in eastern Ukraine, not only in the economy, but also in the political sphere.
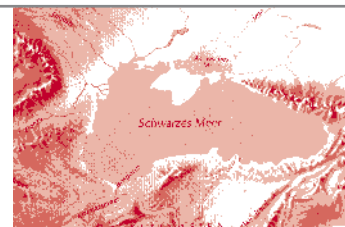
b) Special Features

Minorities

Generous minority rights are an essential element in the stabilization of the new Black Sea societies and therefore deserve special attention. The development of democracy in the region is going through a difficult phase, and this is due to factors which are not part of the framework of the democratic system and the challenges of transformation. Nearly all of the countries in the region are confronted with **ethnic minority problems**, though admittedly these are not all the same. There are different ways of dealing with them, and these are dependent on internal and external pressures. They emanate from the fact that in some cases the policies pursued by the mother nation (e.g. Hungary with regard to its co-nationals in Romania and Ukraine, Turkey with regard to its co-nationals in Bulgaria and Greece, Armenia with regard to its people in Azerbaijan and in Turkey, etc.) can either pacify or exacerbate the situation in the host country. On the other hand Russia has resorted to "passportization" policies by granting dual nationality to the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was recently used to justify its military intervention, which was ostensibly designed to protect its "co-nationals."

The Brain Drain

The brain drain is a phenomenon which occurs in all societies that are confronted with difficult employment situations and with political and societal structures that hamper honest competition of qualified persons. The transformation from centrally planned socialist economies with secure jobs to market economies that are finding it difficult to keep up with international competition has led to high rates of unemployment. At the same time the transition countries have been forced to open their borders, not only for political reasons (they are now free societies), but also as a way of responding to the pressure of domestic unemployment. Temporary migrants with low qualifications who work abroad in the harvest season can help to alleviate the parlous income situation at home

by sending back money. Whereas this actually props up the domestic economy, e.g. in **Moldova** and **Romania**, a serious problem has developed with regard to emigrants with higher education qualifications who often remain in the diaspora for good. In such cases the countries have invested in education which does not pay off. This is a real dilemma because education is a must for sound socio-economic development.

An example of this kind of brain drain is **Bulgaria**. Approximately 600,000 mainly young and well-educated citizens have left the country in order to work abroad. The brain drain not only impedes economic development, but has a serious impact on electoral results. The future middle class, the cornerstone of the political centre, is no longer present in its home country.

Today almost three million people live in **Armenia**, whereas about eight million Armenians live in the global diaspora. Armenia's economy is critically dependent on the receipt of remittances and is thus very much at the mercy of the global economic and financial crisis. Since the country became independent, more than one million Armenians have left the country. According to Gallup 2008, 23 per cent of the population of Armenia is prepared to leave the country.

Demographic Shifts and the Twitter Generation

However, a **new generation of technocrats** educated in Europe or the US seems to be entering the political stage. The demonstrations in the wake of the recent elections in **Armenia** and **Moldova** mark important turning points, since it was mainly the younger generation which was becoming politically active. The so called Twitter Revolution may be an indication that a generational change is in progress, which will involve more young people in politics and in civil society movements.
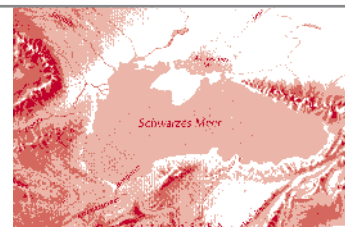
D The Danger of Losing Control

Nepotism, Corruption, and Organized Crime

Nepotism and corruption occur in societies in which the implementation of the rule of law is proceeding at a slow pace and a weak judiciary is confronted with difficult socio-economic circumstances. In formerly communist countries people were used to making "extra payments" for services and goods that were not easily available. Low incomes, especially in the public services sector, make people willing to accept bribes. Nepotism produces split societies in which a small group or self-proclaimed elite distributes jobs among its members. Nepotism and corruption can have deleterious effect on society. They can cause ordinary citizens to become disappointed and to distrust policymakers, and provide a breeding ground for the spread of organized crime. There are often links between the latter and corrupt parts of the administration. Furthermore, the existence of unrecognized 'states' with weak administrative structures and open borders promotes the development of illegal cross-border activities that often end up by becoming organized crime networks.

There is endemic and systematic bribery and corruption in all post-communist states, but it is also in evidence in **Greece** and **Turkey**. A lack of institutional and human resources, state capture and pervasive corruption are the main obstacles with which the transitional countries are confronted. The legitimacy of governments is declining, and this goes hand in hand with an ongoing loss of public confidence in governance and the transparency of decision-making, particularly with regard to the allocation of funds. **Azerbaijan** ranked 143, **Russia** and **Ukraine** equally 146 (out of 180 scored countries) in the latest Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2009. The slow pace of reforms in **Bulgaria** and high-profile corruption cases are a challenge to the EU and have called into question the effectiveness of Euro-Atlantic policies for fragile post-communist states. In 2008, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) reported that there was evidence of a connection between organized crime and the ruling elite. About 150 homicides linked to organized crime have not been solved for years. The last Bulgarian government (2005-2009) was hit by allegations of corruption and by the subsequent withdrawal of EU funding amounting to millions of Euros.
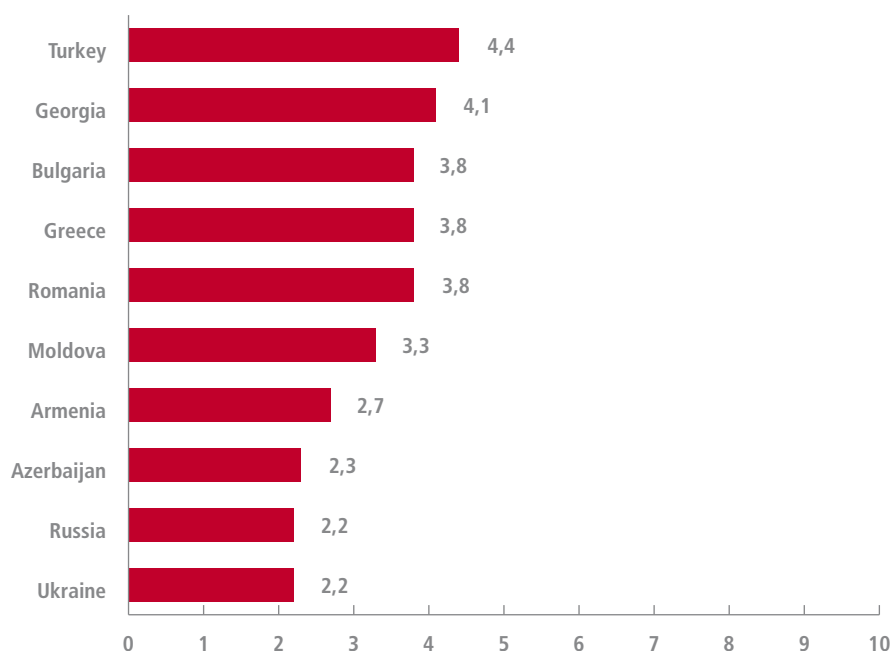
Public Discontent and Distrust

Electoral support for democracy is becoming increasingly dependent on government performance, especially in former socialist countries. People in the Black Sea region are dissatisfied with the slow progress being made in the socio-economic sphere and see the increasing gap between rich and poor. The lack of accountability by politicians and the public administration endangers the legitimacy of the authorities, and the electorate is becoming more and more indifferent to electoral

processes which it believes do not represent its will. A striking feature is an obviously widespread feeling of political discontent, disaffection, scepticism and even cynicism. The net result is low turnouts at the polls. Discontented voters are more likely to make unstable electoral choices which may lead to the growing presence and support for radical political parties and/or outsiders who are willing to play the populist and nationalist card. The lack of confidence in political institutions raises the question of whether people are willing to be law-abiding, to pay taxes, or to embark on administrative careers.

Figure 4: Corruption Perception in the Black Sea 2009

Country	Score
Turkey	4,4
Georgia	4,1
Bulgaria	3,8
Greece	3,8
Romania	3,8
Moldova	3,3
Armenia	2,7
Azerbaijan	2,3
Russia	2,2
Ukraine	2,2

■ Score

Source: Transparency International "Corruption Perceptions Index 2009". A score between 1 - which implies little trust - and 10 - which implies a high amount of trust - can be achieved. Transparency International defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain".

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It will be interesting to see whether this rather negative trend strengthens the readiness of people to engage in non-governmental activities, or whether it will simply motivate people to take part in violent streets protests now and then.

The Socio-Economic Divide within the Region and within the Countries, and the Impact of the Economic Crisis

Politicians in democracies must be able to communicate to the electorate that they can ameliorate the undesirable effects of markets on the basis of understandable criteria of fairness and that neither individual life chances nor social security are determined solely by the markets. If they cannot do so, they risk losing their credibility and the support of the electorate, and in particular from the so-called 'losers'. For two decades many indicators have shown a **growth in inequality between rich and poor**, in the extent and consolidation of poverty, and in economic and social exclusion of large parts of the population. This is a burden which weighs heavily on the entire Black Sea region. The mounting disparities and inequalities with regard to welfare and income discredit the transformation to democracy and market economy. People believe that, whereas democracy has improved the lives of the political and economic elites, it has done nothing for them.

Greater differences also exist between the countries in the region with regard to the level of economic development measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, and thus the level of personal prosperity of their citizens. Economic development policies differ as a result of the diversity of the socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, within individual Black Sea countries there are various kinds of regional differences. A country such as Moldova is economically much more homogeneous than Turkey, where there are differences between the western and Black Sea coastal provinces on the one hand, and inner eastern Anatolia on the other.

The **economic crisis** has exacerbated this scenario. It may also help to undermine the credibility of Western democratic values and the whole notion of democracy. Nationalism and populism are gaining momentum in Europe and in the entire Black Sea region. The crisis could fuel nationalistic and anti-Western sentiments as well as radical movements, including Islamic fundamentalism. A dangerous kind of democratic disillusionment could spread among the losers, and feelings of disappointment and alienation with regard to democracy, its institutions and its representatives could gain ground. The social costs of the economic and financial crisis may have a serious impact on the stability of the various countries and of the entire region thus. All kinds of illegal migration, including human trafficking, organized crime and illicit arms sales will flourish as the economic crisis hits its societies.

Regimes which concentrate primarily on the growing revenues derived from the export of natural resources in general and energy in particular which are state-owned (e.g. Russia and Azerbaijan) are facing quite specific problems. The drop in oil prices means that the resources needed to maintain their redistributional policies have shrunk considerably, thus depriving the regimes of their erstwhile placidity and stability.
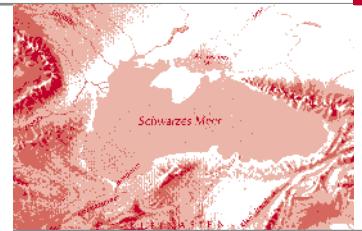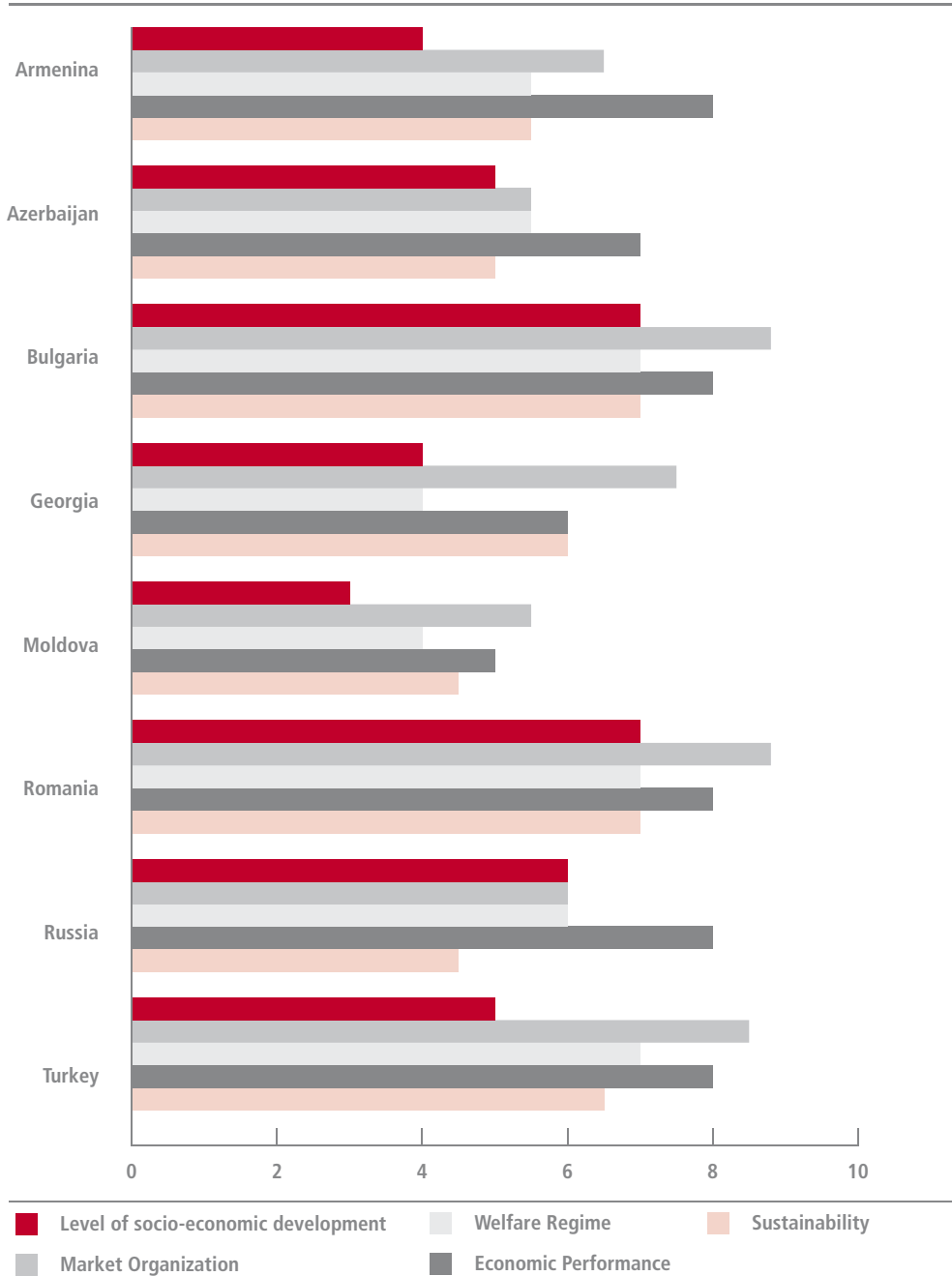
Figure 5: Status of Market Economies in the Black Sea Region

Legend:
- **Level of socio-economic development**
- **Market Organization**
- **Welfare Regime**
- **Economic Performance**
- **Sustainability**

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung "Transformation Index of the Bertelsmann Stiftung/BTI 2010". The rating scale for each area ranges from 10 (best) to 1 (worst) and is subdivided into response options, each of which describes an empirical assessment that corresponds to a particular rating.

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Table 2: Social Disparities in the Black Sea Region

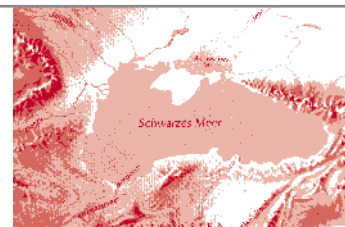| Country	GNI per capita	Poverty ratio	Gini coefficient	Employment rate
ARM	3350	43,4	33,8	61
AZ	3830	<2	36,5	65
BG	5490	2,4	29,2	51
GE	2470	30,4	40,8	64
GR	28650			54
MD	1470	28,9	35,6	
RO	7930	3,4	31,5	54
RU	9620	<2	37,5	63
TR	9340	9.0	43,2	48
UKR	3210	<2	28,2	58

Sources: GNI per capita: Worldbank 2008; Poverty: BTI 2010; Gini coefficient: Worldbank 2008;
Employment rate: United Nations Statistics Divisions 2007

Comment: Poverty: Percentage of population living on less than $2 a day.

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There might be an increase in poverty and social unrest and disturbances. This possibility applies equally to the more recent and to the consolidated democracies in the region. The socio-economic barriers have been high ever since the demise of the Iron Curtain, and the impact of the economic crisis can still be felt throughout the region. Very much depends on how quickly the major EU countries in Western Europe can recover from the crisis on account of their important role for exports from the Black Sea region, for remittances from migrant workers, and for a resumption of foreign direct investments. Many countries of the Black Sea region depend on the inflow of remittances. Furthermore, if workers were to return to their home countries, they would exert additional pressure on the labour markets. Governance and institutional capacities need to be very much improved in order to meet the challenges of the crisis. Democratic political systems are better prepared to respond to such effects. However, democracy can be strengthened or weakened, and this depends on the political will and the response of governments and their willingness to embrace or not to embrace reform.

The **gender dimension of the crisis** must also be mentioned here, since most of the poor who have to bear the brunt of the crisis are women. Some of the consequences are raising female unemployment, girls being forced to leave school so as to save school fees, prostitution, and an increase in human trafficking.

E External Actors. The Effectiveness and Limits of External Democratization

IV

E External Actors. The Effectiveness and Limits of External Democratization

There are three major powers in the region. Russia and the EU – which are also regional actors – and the United States (US), an external actor. Of course, there are substantial differences between these three players with regard to their interests and policy approaches. All of them are finding it hard to deal with the enormous difficulties with which they are confronted.

The **EU** in particular has made bilateral offers of support and offers for the region as a whole which among other things are intended to promote democracy and economic recovery. On the other hand the EU is in fact unsure of itself and its policies reflect more the diverging and often enough opposed interests of member states than any holistic or coherent approach to the chances and challenges emanating from the region and its ongoing transformation processes. The EU finds it thus difficult, especially in the case of the EaP countries, but also with regard to Turkey, to state clearly whether the process will or will not lead to membership in the EU. The EU's mild response to electoral fraud and severe democratic backsliding (e.g. as in Azerbaijan) conveys the impression that the institution and its member states are more interested in superficial stability and in securing stable energy supplies and transit agreements than in faultless adherence to the basic tenets of democracy. The bunch of agendas, strategies, policy frameworks the EU set up in order to shape its own policy towards the European and Non-European countries in its Eastern and Southeastern neighbourhood is confusing and often enough contradicting in itself (see only the plethora of offers and programs of ENP, EaP, Black Sea Synergy, bilateral agreements, Enlargement instruments etc.). Some initiatives like the Civil Society Forum may well have an impact on the democratic processes in the region. But it remains to be seen which kind of effect this instrument will create.

Other actors such as the **OSCE** and the **CoE** also give the impression of being rather weak. The CoE has recently stepped up its criticism of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, though it has little or no leverage with which to influence domestic policymaking in these countries.

The weakness of the OSCE and the CoE seems to reflect Russia's criticism of the democratization assistance provided by these organizations, which it considers to be illegitimate interference in the domestic affairs of CIS countries. The issue of the promotion of democracy is currently perceived by Russia as an activity which has a negative effect on its sphere of influence.

The **US** is interested in the Black Sea area for two geopolitical reasons in addition to providing general support for democratization and the development of civil society. On the one hand there is the question of political and military security and stability, which means NATO enlargement in the region. On the other, the US wants to guarantee energy security for its European allies, which means access to the gas and oil reserves of Central Asia via the pipelines through the Black Sea region.

Policy Recommendations for Democratic Development in the Black Sea Region

There is no such thing as a perfect democracy. Scrutinizing and improving existing structures should be part of normal political life. In the Black Sea region the various societies have implemented democratic standards to very different extents. Clearly, support for fledgling democracies must not only take the form of persuasive rhetoric, but must also consist of committed action. The following set of recommendations does not claim to be complete, but may form a point of departure for further discussion.

- The transformative role that **civil society** can play in raising public awareness, and also its impact on institutions, e.g. the executive, the legislative, the judiciary, and the media, not to mention reconciliation and conflict resolution, etc. is not really in dispute. **Parliaments** have the potential to function as a bridge between governments and civil society. This was in fact one of the positive lessons from the Western Balkans. The crucial precondition if this is to work in the Black Sea region is, of course, the democratic legitimacy of the parliaments. Civil society can play an advisory role for parliament, and this may strengthen the reputation of parliament in society by providing increased transparency and a debate among the general public.

- Furthermore, in **conflict resolution** civil society actors can jump in to fill the gap in cases where national and/or international bodies are unable to deliver. Confidence-building and the promotion of reconciliation are areas where civil society can become involved with help from the international community and international think tanks in order to lay the foundations for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Black Sea region. The Independent Civil Minsk Process, which was launched in May 2009 to discuss possible ways of reaching a peaceful settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh is a potentially promising initiative of this kind.

- It will be a shining example for the entire region if Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey can take advantage of the window of opportunity provided by Armenian-Turkish rapprochement. Civil society can also make an important contribution to the negotiations on the political status of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. Russia, the EU and local civil society actors (including representatives from the secessionist entities) could enter into a regular dialogue on conflict resolution and the promotion of democracy. The international community and internationally active civil society organizations can support civil society engagement in this area by capacity building and strategic planning assistance. To ensure policy coherence, the EU as key actor in the region can refer to the positive results of the involvement of civil society in conflict resolution and peaceful settlements on the Balkans and emphasize the importance of regional cooperation in the framework of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe. It has inaugurated the Civil Society Forum within the ENP framework. The effect of the Forum is not
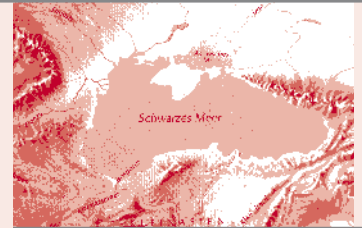
yet foreseeable but it may well develop to a helpful tool for NGO's and Civil society groupings all over the region. The Forum itself must clearly resist attempts of infiltration by state-led institutions which via the Forum could try to enhance control and influence in their respective country.

- Most of the countries in the region are faced with challenges related to **free elections**. Despite intensive monitoring activities by international observers (OSCE and CoE), the international community has not done enough to address electoral fraud, vote buying and invalid ballot papers. In fact, the political crises in many countries of the Black Sea region have been caused by elections. Disputes between the government and the opposition have worsened, parliaments are unable to operate on account of contested electoral results and opposition boycotts. Distrust of politicians is a common feature throughout the region, and is coupled with low voter turnout and growing political apathy. This highly unsatisfactory state of affairs is largely due to the fact that the international community is perhaps more interested in stability than in democracy. Electoral processes were seen as the benchmark for a successful or unsuccessful transition to democracy. However, by neglecting irregularities the proponents of liberal democracy will lose their credibility and Western standards and values will no longer act as an incentive. The EU in particular needs a clear-cut definition of democracy in its dealings with non-EU states. EU assistance to the South Caucasus countries ought to be linked to democratic reforms and should be based on a clearly defined roadmap designed to achieve these goals. However, the democratic nature of the institutional framework cannot be separated from elections. Elections legitimize political power, and this needs to be transparent, accountable and effective. The institutional setup is crucial for sustainable and legitimate governance. The international community should shift its predominant focus from the electoral process to more profound assistance for institutional and administrative capacity building on the local, regional and state levels in the Black Sea region.

- In almost all of the Black Sea countries the legislation relating to **political parties** lacks clear regulations governing transparent party financing. Furthermore, political parties do not act as channels between the government and society. Instead of populist slogans there is a need for issue-oriented platforms which motivate the citizens to participate more actively in political life. Support from European political parties for the establishment of democratic parties in the Black Sea region must not be based on labels, but on programmes, party structures and personalities. The relationship between a government and the opposition is one of the major characteristics of political culture. Compromises on important policy issues and respect for political opponents should transcend purely adversarial constellations and action.

- However, there has been a revival of **public involvement in political life**. These are positive changes, but they are fragmentary and unsystematic. Mobile phones and internet blogs were recently used in an impressive way as a tool for communication and action in Moldova, and also in Bulgaria. The use of such modern technologies may soon lead to revolutionary changes.

While the public sphere has been regulated almost everywhere, the private sphere has not as yet been subjected to social control. Internet users are bypassing government servers and using platforms which offer far greater freedom of expression. This because the freedom of the press leaves much to be desired, and the electronic media are to a large extent controlled by governments and/or certain interest groups. Civil society activists can also use the new technologies in order to organize various kinds of action and to provide information to the general public at home and abroad. Instead of top-down modernization, it is a reactive and grassroots process which should be used as a new way of promoting democracy in the Black Sea region. For this reason E-democracy initiatives of the kind devised by the CoE deserve more support and financial backing. They will be of benefit to people and the authorities, and help to promote democratic values.

- Respect for **minority rights** is an essential element in the process of stabilizing the new societies and preventing the rise of separatist sentiments, and therefore deserves special attention. In general terms there should be fair access to political, social and economic life. The introduction of various ways of guaranteeing or improving collective group rights should not only be the duty of supranational institutions such as the CoE or the OSCE. Special attention must also be given to resolving the problem of the repatriation of refugees and of internally displaced persons.

- A free market economy and transparent competition are generally considered to be the indispensable prerequisites of democracy. However, the global **financial and economic crisis** may call this connection into question. In fact, it may even pave the way for authoritarian regimes, Russian "steered democracy" or Chinese "administrative democracy", where economic achievements are not linked to political freedom. Yet if the Kremlin (or Baku) can no longer deliver positive economic progress throughout the country as a result of the impact of the global crisis, it may encourage the opposition to mount a challenge to the government. The middle class that has emerged in the recent past and is now the backbone of stability might withdraw its support and ask for specific measures designed to ensure the prosperity of the business community. Policymakers should be prepared to introduce domestic stimulus packages, which could include social benefits and policies aimed at stability and economic recovery. If better checks and balances are implemented, and if politicians behave in a more transparent and accountable manner, there will be greater public confidence in the government. Furthermore, the parliaments will play a crucial role in the debate and the adoption of appropriate legislative measures designed to deal with the effects of the crisis. Thus the reform of the judiciary and the implementation of the rule of law are indispensable in order to incorporate these economies and political systems into the international business community. On the other hand, the EU needs the political will to assist the post-Soviet countries in these areas.
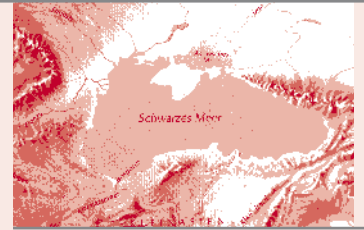
- Coming to terms with the past is not or should not be the same as using or abusing history for the purpose of creating national identities. However, **good neighbourly relations** require the resolution of old disputes, negative sentiments, and ancient prejudices. A good example is the recent signing of the protocols between Armenia and Turkey which may well lead to the opening of borders, the establishment of normal diplomatic relations, and the appointment of a Joint Historical Sub-Commission. The work of international groups of experts such as the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia can be a boon and should be accepted by the conflicting parties.

- The constricted **political vision of the EU** could weaken its existing relations with the Black Sea countries and Europe's ability to influence political developments in a positive manner. Although all of the countries are members of the CoE and the OSCE, the willingness to adhere to their standards is rather limited in some of the countries in the region. As a key player in the region, the EU needs to develop a coherent policy which at one and the same time takes into account energy security, the promotion of democracy, and respect for human rights. It also needs to find ways of including and cooperating with Russia in order to ensure the stability of the region. Existing regional initiatives such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) should be encouraged to interact more intensively with the EU and its new Eastern Partnership programme. **Russia and Turkey** are key actors in the region. Their potential should be used more constructively, in particular since both regard the EU as a major partner.

- Although all the countries in the region have signed the Bologna process, expenditure for **education** is still far below the objective needs. Investing in education and professional training is investment in the future. Target-oriented financial support from Western financial institutions and non-governmental donors in this area would yield immediate and long-term benefits for the recipient countries.

- Finally, in a properly functioning democratic society an effective balance between vertical and horizontal power and administrative structures (**good governance**) is indispensable. In this respect the deficiencies in most of the Black Sea region countries, despite the EU´s support for the modernization of the institutions concerned, are still a matter of concern.

The Commission on the Black Sea

The Commission on the Black Sea is a civil society initiative, jointly developed and launched in January 2009 by the German Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh; the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST – GMFUS), Bucharest; the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Ankara; and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Athens.

Among members of the Commission on the Black Sea are a former vice Prime Minister, former ministers, current and former parliamentarians, public intellectuals and scholars from the whole Black Sea region, the European Union and the United States. The Commission's work has been supported and complemented by several individuals from different countries, who wish to remain anonymous due to their current official affiliations or for personal reasons. The names of those members who are willing to associate publicly are listed below. They all serve on the Commission in a personal capacity. Neither this report nor other publications of the Commission should be construed as reflecting the views of the states, governments, organizations or institutions with which the members are associated.

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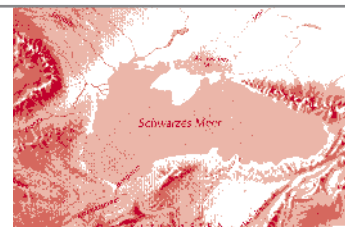
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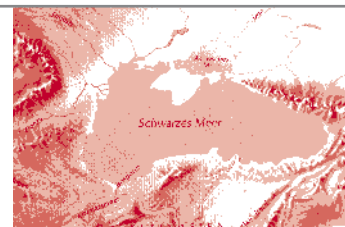
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