GEORGIA IN PERSPECTIVE
An Orientation Guide

Technology Integration Division
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Chapter 1: Geography

Introduction
Georgia straddles the geographical and political boundaries between Europe and Asia in Southwestern Asia. However, some newer sources now consider Georgia part of Europe. Covering approximately 69,700 sq km (26,911 sq mi), Georgia is roughly the size of West Virginia.\(^1\) Georgia is bordered by Turkey to the southwest, Russia to the north, Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the southeast. The long coastline on the Black Sea forms Georgia’s western border.

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features
Georgia is a land of diverse geography that ranges from snow-capped mountains in the north to the semiarid south and from semitropical beaches in the west to the continental climate of the east. The Caucasus Mountains, considered the dividing line between Europe and Asia, form the entire northern border. Georgia controls many important routes through this range. At 5,201 m (17,064 ft), Mt’a Shkhara, the third-highest peak in the Caucasus range, is the nation’s highest elevation point.\(^3\) The Black Sea coastline region of Georgia has long attracted tourism. The westernmost part of the Kolkhet’is Dablobi lowlands has a subtropical climate suitable for cultivating tea and fruits.\(^4\) Farther inland, frequent frost makes such agriculture impossible. The Kartli Plain of central Georgia is a world-renowned center of viticulture. Georgia has long been identified as the “homeland of winemaking.”\(^5\)

\(^2\) Worldatlas, “USA States (ranked by size),” http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/usabysiz.htm
Climate
Georgia's climate is as varied as its landscape. It is influenced in the west by the subtropical effects of the Black Sea and in the east by the drier, less humid effects of the Caspian Sea. Georgia is largely protected from the colder air found on the other side of the Caucasus Mountains.6

Precipitation varies depending on the distance from the Black Sea. The Kolkhet’i Dablobi lowlands receive more than 1,500 mm (59 inches) per year. In this area of the country, the average winter temperature is 5°C (41 F). The average summer temperature is 22°C (72°F). In contrast, the Kartli Plain of central Georgia, has a more continental climate. Temperatures vary from an average summer temperature of 22°C (72°F) to an average winter temperature of 3°C (37°F).7 The climate of the Caucasus Mountains varies according to altitude, with year-round snow and ice at many elevations above 2,000 m (6,562 ft).8 A frequent complaint about the Black Sea coast and the city of Batumi is the high humidity.9

Rivers/Bodies of Water
With approximately 25,000 rivers, several hundred lakes, and an extensive coastline along the Black Sea, Georgia is rich in water resources. Many of its rivers have been dammed to provide hydroelectric power.10

Black Sea
The Black Sea is a massive saltwater inland sea which stretches between Europe and Asia. Its only connections to the rest of the world’s seas are the Turkish straits, the Bosporus and the Dardanelles. The sea measures about 1,014 km (630 mi) from east to west and approximately 531 km (330 mi) from north to south, except for the area where the Crimean peninsula juts into the sea, cutting the north-south measurement in half.11

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The Black Sea greatly influences the climate, agriculture, and economics of Georgia. Noted for its citrus, tea, and wine production, Georgia owes much of its agricultural success to the subtropical winds generated by the sea and the protection from colder, northerly winds afforded by the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The Black Sea coast has long been a tourist area, with Russian, Turkish, Armenian, and other tourists flocking to its beaches and resorts. The city of Batumi, in the autonomous republic of Adjara, ranks as one of the most popular destinations along the Black Sea.

Once considered an endless source of life and natural resources, the Black Sea now suffers from both manmade pollution and an overabundance of organic matter deposited by the many rivers that flow into it. Bacteria that normally feed on the organic matter can no longer do so. They resort to a process that creates a deadly gas, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), instead of oxygen. This gas, reeking of rotten egg, is known to be hazardous. Because of these problems, 90% of the Black Sea is a sterile environment, devoid of life beneath its seemingly calm waters.

Inguri River

The Inguri River flows from its origins in the Caucasus Mountains and boasts the world’s tallest arch dam, 272 m (892 ft). The dam serves as a significant hydroelectric facility. It is the sole source of electricity for the breakaway republic of Abkhazia, making it a strategic resource for both sides of the ongoing Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Since the War in Abkhazia (1992–93), both Georgia and the Abkhazian separatists have maintained troops along the river. Furthermore, Russia, one of only a handful of countries to recognize Abkhazia as an independent state, has maintained a significant peacekeeping presence along the Inguri. The Inguri Bridge, which is the only legal border crossing between Georgia and separatist-held territory in Abkhazia, is frequently closed and otherwise open only to pedestrian and diplomatic traffic. Visitors should never leave or enter Georgia through its borders with the Russian Federation or the rebel-held territory of Abkhazia.

16 Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia's Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 355.
**Kodori River**
The Kodori runs its entire course within the autonomous republic of Abkhazia, which is now under separatist control. The river runs an estimated 105 km (65 mi) from its origins in the glacial runoff of the Caucasus Mountains to its terminus in the Black Sea. The Kodori flows to within less than a dozen kilometers of the capital of Abkhazia, Sokhumi. Thus, it is a strategically important waterway in the ongoing Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

**Mt’k’vari River**
The largest of the Transcaucasian rivers, the Mt’k’vari, known as the Kura in Turkish and the Kür in Azeri, originates in the Lesser Caucasus Mountains of northeastern Turkey, near Kartsakhi Lake. It flows through the greater part of Georgia, watering the Kartli Plains, and then turns southeast, passing through the capital of T’bilisi on its way to Azerbaijan and its terminus at the Caspian Sea. Besides providing extensive irrigation, the Mt’k’vari and many of its tributaries generate hydroelectric power.

**Rioni River**
The main river of western Georgia and second-largest in the country, the Rioni flows westward from its origins in the Caucasus Mountains toward its end in the Black Sea. It passes through the Kolkhet’is Dablobi lowlands and by Kutaisi, the second-largest city in the country and ancient capital of the Colchis kingdom. The Rioni is highly polluted, carrying substantial industrial, municipal, and agricultural waste.

**Paravani Lake**
The largest of Georgia’s more than 800 lakes, Paravani Lake is located in the south, about an hour and a half west of T’bilisi. The lake is a favorite fishing spot for many people. According to the Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, the government plans to develop Paravani Lake as a site for "ecological tourism and resort infrastructure."

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Autonomous Republics and Disputed Regions

Abkhazia
At 8,660 sq km (3,343 sq mi), the autonomous republic of Abkhazia is about two-thirds the size of the U.S. state of Connecticut. Abkhazia’s population is estimated to be around 180,000.24 The Greater Caucasus Mountains make up much of the eastern and northeastern region and dominate the landscape. The Black Sea shoreline defines both the republic’s reputation and its character. Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia was central to Georgia’s tourist industry.25

In 1992, Abkhazian secessionists—both overtly and covertly supported by the Russian government—staged an armed rebellion. Known as the War in Abkhazia, the rebellion was against the Georgian central government in an effort to achieve Abkhazian independence.26 By December 1993, the rebellion was successful enough that Georgia was pressured into a temporary ceasefire agreement, which was later followed up with a more permanent agreement in May 1994. The Russian Federation subsequently deployed troops, designated as peacekeepers, throughout Abkhazia.27 Resumption of hostilities occurred in 1999 and 2008, and the region remains a point of contention since Georgia and the international community refuse to acknowledge Abkhazian independence. Russia, however, has not only recognized Abkhazian independence but has conferred Russian citizenship on over half the Abkhazian population.28 Abkhazian forces conducted ethnic cleansing of the predominantly Georgian population of the area, which resulted in a substantial demographic shift.29

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26 Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 58–59.
28 Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 77–78.
**South Ossetia**
Covering roughly 3,900 sq km (1,506 sq mi), South Ossetia is about the size of the U.S. state of Delaware. South Ossetia is one of the two breakaway territories of Georgia. Considered by the Georgian government and most of the international community to be part of Georgia, South Ossetia has pursued a separatist path for the past three decades. Following the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the separatist government in Tskhinvali declared independence. However, Russia and only a few other nations have recognized it as such. Even the Georgian government does not refer to the area by its more familiar name. Instead it refers to the area using its ancient name of Samachablo, Shida Kartli, or (most recently) the Tskhinvali Region.

South Ossetia is noted for its production of cereals, fruits, and viticulture; however, less than 10% of the land is under cultivation. Close cultural and familial ties have been maintained between Ossetians living in the autonomous republic and those living in North Ossetia, which is part of the Russian Federation. Tremendous demographic shifts have followed successive waves of ethnic cleansing against ethnic Georgians, most recently during and after the Russo-Georgian War.

**Adjara**
Located in southwestern Georgia, Adjara is one of Georgia’s two autonomous republics. Although long an integral part of the Georgian nation, Adjara was ruled from the seventeenth century until 1878 by the Ottoman Empire. Idjara rejoined Georgia under the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano which ended the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). Under Soviet rule, it was designated an autonomous republic. Following the dissolution of the USSR, Adjara became part of the newly independent Georgia. After suffering for more than a decade under rule of the anti-federalist strongman Aslan Abashidze (ruled 1991–2004), Adjara has reemerged as a vital component of the Georgian nation. Its Black Sea coastline is a main attraction of Georgia’s tourism industry.

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## Major Cities (& Population)

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<td>T'bilisi</td>
<td>1,106,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutaisi</td>
<td>188,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batumi</td>
<td>122,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rust’avi</td>
<td>117,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zugdidi</td>
<td>72,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gori</td>
<td>50,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukhumi</td>
<td>43,716(^{38})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tskhinvali</td>
<td>42,934(^{39})</td>
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**T’bilisi**

Founded in the mid-fifth century C.E., T’bilisi is capital of the Republic of Georgia. The city is situated along the Mt’k’vari River in the eastern part of the country. Originally built as the capital of the Georgian kingdom, the city has had a chaotic history throughout which control slipped from the hands of the Georgian people to successive conquering empires: the Persians, Byzantines, Ottomans, and Russians.\(^{40}\) During the brief period of Georgian independence between the World Wars, T’bilisi reemerged as the capital and remained so throughout Soviet rule and into post-Soviet independence.

A thoroughly modern city, T’bilisi boasts the oldest university in the Caucasus, T’bilisi State University, as well as numerous other state and private institutions of higher learning. Once the heart of Soviet research, the city continues that tradition, with more

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\(^{37}\) City Population, “Georgia,” 30 April 2010, [http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html](http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html)

\(^{38}\) This figure is taken from the disputed 2003 Abkhazian census and represents a tremendous decline from pre-war figures. [http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html](http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html)

\(^{39}\) This number is based on the last Soviet era census and does not reflect the significant impact of the ongoing conflict between the Georgian government and the rebels of South Ossetia which has resulted in major displacements of peoples and a radical depopulation of the city similar that found in Sokhumi. [http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html](http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html)

than a hundred research facilities. Additionally, it serves as the political, economic, intellectual, and cultural center of the country. While the population of many other Georgian cities has either precipitously declined or remained the same since independence, Tbilisi’s population is growing, partly because of the influx of people displaced by the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Kutaisi
Kutaisi, the country’s second-largest city, lies along the Rioni River where the river emerges from the Caucasian foothills. Among the most ancient of Transcaucasian cities, Kutaisi functioned as the capital for some of the autonomous Georgian kingdoms before being replaced by the more strategically secure Tbilisi. The distinctive eleventh-century Bagrati Cathedral sits perched upon the Umerioni Hill near the center of the city. A religious complex containing a twelfth-century monastery, the Gelati, and other churches stand nearby. These religious sites are listed as a combined UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today, Kutaisi serves as an important center of mining and textiles, as well as other industrial production. A hydroelectric plant situated on the nearby Rioni River generates the city’s power.

Batumi
Georgia’s most important port, Batumi, is the country’s third-largest city and the capital of the autonomous republic of Adjara. The city is located on the gulf of the Black Sea, roughly 15 km (9.3 mi) north of the border with Turkey. Its history dates back to the first millennium BCE. The city, like many in the region, has been under various conquering empires vying for control. These different influences have left a profound mark on the city and its peoples. Batumi has emerged as the center of the tourism industry in Georgia, especially since the country has lost control of Abkhazia.

Batumi is in the fruit- and tea-producing region along the Black Sea shoreline. As of February 2011, the city was experiencing significant redevelopment both of its port

43 BBC, “Anger as Georgia evicts refugee families from capital,” 20 January 2011
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12239326
facilities and within its tourist industry. Thus, one can expect to find a great deal of construction underway.47

Rust’avi

Rust’avi is a southeastern city situated on the Mt’k’vari River about 25 km (16 mi) from the capital, T’bilisi. It is an ancient city associated with the legendary founder of the Georgian nation, Kartlos. However, it was not until Joseph Stalin, who was born in Georgia, began industrial redevelopment in his home country during the post-WWII era that the city emerged as an important city of the modern era.48 During this period, an enormous steel mill was built in the city, and the population exploded—a matter the city is still dealing with today.49

Zugdidi

Situated just across the Inguri River from the rebel-held territory, Zugdidi has long been a city where political passions run deep. Many Georgians who were forced out of Abkhazia have relocated to the city and its immediate environs.50 The city was occupied briefly by Russian forces during the Russo-Georgian War of 2008.51

Zugdidi is the capital of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti mkhare (administrative region) and is located approximately 318 km (198 mi) west of T’bilisi in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. The city is historically associated with the aristocratic Dadiani family who rose to be the preeminent nobles in western Georgia during the sixteenth-century occupation by the Ottoman Empire. Much of the architecture in the city dates back to that era.52

**Gori**

Heavily damaged in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, Gori is an eastern city near the border with South Ossetia and serves as the capital of the Shida Kartli mkhare. The city is strategically important because it is situated along the principal highway connecting the country from east to west, and is home to the Gori Military Base. Gori is located a mere 76 km (47 mi) west of T’bilisi, and thus serves as a trip wire against potential Russian and/or separatist invasions from South Ossetia. As was Zugdidi, Gori was briefly occupied by Russian and South Ossetian troops during the hostilities of 2008. This occupation led to a mass exodus of citizens from the city, some of whom have not returned.

**Sukhumi**

Sukhumi, the capital of the separatist-held autonomous republic of Abkhazia, was built on the ruins of an ancient Greek Black Sea colony, Dioscurias. Having once been the center of Georgia’s tourist industry, the city boasts several former Soviet resorts, spas, and dachas (vacation homes). However, following the onset of ethnic conflict and rebellion after the fall of the Soviet Union, much of the city’s allure as a resort destination has diminished. Facilities are in a state of severe disrepair because of damage inflicted during recurring clashes with the central government of Georgia. Prior to these hostilities, the city had a thriving multiethnic population of nearly 120,000. However, by 2002, that number plummeted to less than 45,000. As in most of Abkhazia, nearly all citizens of Georgian ethnicity were forcibly expelled or killed in a wave of ethnic cleansing.

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57 Tim Burford, *Georgia* (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 197.
59 City Population, “Georgia,” 30 April 2010, [http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html](http://www.citypopulation.de/Georgia.html)
Tskhinvali
Located in the Shida Kartli mkhare and a mere 100 km (62 mi) northwest of T’bilisi, Tskhinvali is the administrative headquarters for the separatists who hold the territory commonly referred to as South Ossetia. In the waning years of the Soviet Union, the town became the center for the emerging Ossetian separatist movement. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, these separatists launched an armed conflict, covertly supported by the new Russian government, against the Georgian government. Separatists declared South Ossetian territory under their control to be an independent republic, and the city became the “capital” of their enterprise. The city has served as a flash point ever since. After the 1992 ceasefire that ended the ethnic warfare, Russian troops were stationed in the disputed territory. These same peacekeepers were among the Russian troops who entered Georgia during the Russo-Georgian War of 2008.

Tskhinvali has seen a drop in its population because of the recurrent conflict and associated ethnic cleansing which drove out ethnic Georgians. As of February 2011, the city has a population of scarcely 43,000, a number that may be much lower considering the large number of displaced persons after the 2008 conflict.

Environmental Issues
The major environmental problems in the Republic of Georgia involve industrial pollution and the impact of repeated armed clashes on the environment.

Air pollution is an increasing problem in cities with large industrial complexes, most notably in Rust’avi where the Soviet-era steel mill is a major polluter.

The Mt’k’vari and other rivers, as well as the Black Sea, suffer from industrial and agricultural pollutants and municipal sewage. These problems create the related problem of soil contamination.

The impact of armed conflict on the environment is difficult to gauge. Chemicals associated with explosives have found their way into the environment, contributing to soil and water contamination. Guerrilla units associated with decades of fighting in Georgia and surrounding areas have poached animals and wildlife, thus endangering certain species in the Georgian ecosystem. However, guerrilla units are not solely responsible for this endangerment. Overhunting and poaching have long been prevalent in Georgia.

Natural Hazards

The Alpine-Himalayan collision belt is most active in the Caucasus Mountains. As a result, Georgia, as well as most of Transcaucasia, is highly prone to earthquakes. In the mountains, avalanches are a potential danger. Given the significant number of rivers, flooding can be a concern as well.

Chapter 1: Assessment

1. Georgia is known for its homogeneous landscape.

**False**

Georgia is a land of a diverse geography that ranges from snow-capped mountains in the north to the semiarid south and from the semitropical beaches in the west to the continental climate of the region in the east.

2. The Russian Federation supported Georgia’s attempts to suppress the post-Soviet separatist movement in Abkhazia.

**False**

The Russian Federation provided both overt and covert support for the Abkhazian separatists’ fight against the Georgian government.

3. Most of the international community recognizes the independence of South Ossetia.

**False**

Russia and only a few other nations recognize the region as independent. Even the Georgian government does not refer to the area by its familiar name, South Ossetia.

4. Only a thin sliver of Georgia touches the Black Sea.

**False**

Georgia’s entire western border is defined by its Black Sea shoreline.

5. The Caucasus Mountains are of great geographic and strategic importance to the Republic of Georgia.

**True**

The Caucasus form Georgia’s entire northern border and the country controls many important routes through this range. The mountains help block the cool, northerly winds and thus provide much of the country with a favorable climate.
Chapter 2: History

Introduction

Ancient History

Anthropologists estimate that human habitation of what is present-day Georgia dates back 1.8 million years. The 2002 discovery of a fossilized skull thought to be of a transitional species between Homo habilis and Homo erectus supports this date.72

The advent of viticulture and winemaking emerged in today Georgia around 8000 B.C.E. This is a major point of pride for Georgians and in certain regions of Georgia, “wine is still made in the traditional way by being fermented, sometimes for years, in large jars (kvevri) buried up to their necks underground or in artificially created hillocks (marani).”73 Georgian wines are a much-desired commodity among enthusiasts, especially in the former Soviet Union republics. They continue to play a significant role in Georgian social and domestic foodways.

Although the peoples whom historians refer to as proto-Georgians first emerge in written history in the 12th century B.C.E., ancient place names, archaeological evidence, and language indicate continuity in the ethnic composition of the region since prehistory.74 The languages of the various Georgian ethnicities appear to be completely unrelated to any language outside of Transcaucasia, which lends support to the theory of isolated evolution.75 This information indicates that the various Georgian peoples lived in the area long before their existence was documented in the historical record.

Two ancient Georgian kingdoms, referred to in Greco-Roman historiography as Kartli (or Iberia) and Kolkhis (or Colchis) emerged in Georgia.76 Kolkhis was the home of the Golden Fleece in the famous Greek legend of Jason and the Argonauts. Following the Roman Empire’s subjugation of Transcaucasia in 66 B.C.E., these Georgian kingdoms were ruled as vassal states for hundreds of years.77, 78

76 Not to be confused with the Iberian Peninsula of Western Europe.
Early Medieval History
In the early 4th century C.E., the west Georgian kingdom of Kartli was the second country to officially accept Christianity. Initial conversion would fluctuate according to the political climate. The Sassanid King of Persia, Yazdegerd II (438–457), began to conquer the area and convert Georgians to Zoroastrianism. Caught between the powerful and ever-expanding Persian and Roman empires, Georgian rulers were frequently forced to choose or change sides and accept conversion. The ruins of a 6th century C.E. Zoroastrian atashgah (fire temple) still stand in Tbilisi today.

After the dawning of Islam, these religious power struggles shifted to Christianity versus Islam dichotomy.

King Bagrat III (reigned 960–1014) reunited Kartli, Abkhazia, and other smaller Georgian kingdoms. He is, however, perhaps most famous for building the Bagrati Cathedral in Kutaisi, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

King David IV (reigned 1089–1125), commonly referred to as David the Builder, followed the lead of his predecessors by reclaiming Georgian lands after expelling the Seljuk Turks and expanding Georgian power.

Late Medieval Period (13th–15th century)
Queen Tamar (reigned 1184–1213) was the first female monarch of Georgia. Her reign is considered the “Golden Age” of Georgian history. She led her forces to victory over invaders from surrounding Muslim territories and expanded the Georgian kingdom to include portions of present-day Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Russia. A consummate stateswoman, Tamar played a pivotal role in the creation of the Empire of Trebizond, lending Georgian troops to her cousin, Alexios I Megas Komnenos, and effectively creating a buffer state between the Byzantine Empire and Georgia.

However, Georgia’s rise to greatness was short-lived. During the reign of Tamar’s son, Giorgi IV, Mongol incursions began. Although Giorgi met the invaders with massive force at Khunani, the Georgians were soundly defeated and the young king was killed. By 1236,

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the Georgian kingdom once again sank into oblivion because of successive Mongol
invasions.

The fragmented territories of Georgia were subsequently ruled by various nobles, vying
for control with one another and courting foreign allies. Subsequent attempts to reunify
the kingdom throughout the 15th century met with failure because of internal dynastic
battles and continued attacks from hostile neighbors. Furthermore, important events in
Europe and Southwest Asia affected Georgia as well. In 1453 the Ottoman Turks took
control of Constantinople (the last bastion of the Roman Empire), and the Trebizond
buffer state followed shortly thereafter. Farther afield, European explorers had traveled to
the Western Hemisphere and sailed to the Far East. Thus the value of the land trade
routes passing through the Caucasus and Georgia’s strategic importance to the rest of
Europe lessened.83

Early Modern History

The early sixteenth century saw the internal squabbling between
royal families persist to the point that the Ottoman and Persian
empires were able to completely subject the Georgian lands. At
the Peace of Amasya (1555), the two Asian superpowers
formally delineated their respective spheres of influence, with
the western portion falling under Ottoman control and most of
the eastern portion going to the Persians. Many Georgians were
converted to Islam, and some, especially in Abkhazia and Ajaria,
remain Muslim today.

The treaty only briefly restrained the two sides. By 1578 the
Ottomans were once again determined to conquer all of Georgia.
They were met with swift resistance from Persian adversaries
and many nobles of eastern Georgia, but eventually proved
victorious. Amid renewed conflict, Prince Giorgi, the youngest son of King Aleksandre II
of Kakheti, sought assistance from a new power in Transcausia: “Beset by Moslems,
[Giorgi] begged to be accepted as a vassal of the Russian tsar. While Georgia lay too far
away for more than a nominal, transitory connection to be established in the sixteenth
century, the request pointed to one direction of later Russian expansion.”84

The seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century saw essentially the same
hardship in Georgia. The fight for domination became a struggle among the Ottoman,
Persian, and Russian empires and the occasional Georgian nationalist leader. However, it
was not until the death of Nadir Shah in 1747 that a concerted effort for independence by
the Georgian kingdoms found footing. At that time, the Kartli and Kakheti kingdoms
became unified under the Bagratid kings, who created a sizeable Caucasian empire that
transcended the traditional boundaries of Georgia. Seeking aid against the Ottomans once
more, Georgia was disappointed by Russia’s failure to fulfill its promises of protection.

83 Ronald Grigor Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University
With the death of Erekle II (reigned 1744–1798), Georgia’s independence vanished again.

**Nineteenth Century**

On 18 December 1800, in direct contravention of the Treaty of Georgievsk, Czar Paul of Russia annexed the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom, and the next year, his successor, Alexander I, abolished the kingdom altogether, fully incorporating eastern Georgia into the Russian empire.\(^{85, 86}\) The Georgian nobility strenuously objected to the Russian court and signaled a possible armed struggle until the Russian commander, General Bogdan von Knorring, gathered nobles together on 12 April 1802 at T’bilisi Sioni Cathedral of the Dormition and extracted oaths of fealty to the Russian crown.\(^{87}\) Within eight years western Georgia would also be brought into the Russian Empire, and throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, the other lands comprising of what is present-day Georgia were added.

Georgians of all classes chafed under Russian rule. A conspiracy within a cabal of Georgian nobles was quashed in 1832, as was a peasant revolt in 1841. Just as nationalism swept through much of Europe in the mid-19th century, so too did it take root among Georgians. Nationalism found fertile ground in the minds of the first generation of Georgian *intelligentsia* to be educated in Russian universities, especially in St. Petersburg. Most prominent among them was Ilia Chavchavadze. Using the Georgian language as a tool, he and other young intellectuals brought the nationalist literature of Europe to the Georgian masses and sought to instill a collective identity.\(^{88}\)

In 1881, Czar Alexander III ascended the Russian throne. Eschewing the more conciliatory policies of his predecessors, Alexander was a militant Russian nationalist and expected the minority groups of the empire to “Russify.” However, this militance radicalized the Georgian nationalist movement.\(^{89}\)

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20th Century

Revolution in the Empire

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Georgian economy had become industrialized and shifted to capitalism. In reaction to these fundamental changes and the resurgent nationalism inspired by three generations of Russian-educated intellectuals, a strong Marxist movement was established toward the end of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth. Because of the economic servitude of the Georgian workers, who lagged behind Russians and Armenians in economic opportunity, the Marxist intellectuals were able to tap into a strong resentment toward the empire. Their timing was impeccable.90

One of the young recruits inspired by the Marxists was a young man named Ioseb Jughashvili. The world came to know him as Joseph Stalin. Born in 1878 in Gori (central Georgia), he came of age amid economic and political turmoil and rose to prominence not only in Georgia but also in Russia.

The Russian Empire gradually lost control over Georgia and the rest of Transcaucasia. Following the 1905 Russian Revolution, Czar Nicholas II was fighting for his political, and mortal, life. The Marxists who came to power in Russia’s new legislature were consumed by internal squabbles between rival ideologies. Georgia was simply too far away to be of great concern.91 Still, Georgia did not regain its independence for another 13 years. With the turmoil of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the ensuing Russian Civil War, Georgians took advantage of the situation and in 1918 declared themselves once more an independent nation.

Independence

On 26 May 1918, Georgia declared its independence from Russia. For the next three years, the Democratic Republic of Georgia was ruled by a Menshevik government, in contrast to the Bolshevik-dominated Soviet Republic established after the 1917 Revolution. This would foreshadow future confrontations between the two countries.

Although the government was popular among most Georgians, it was also flawed. The economy was in shambles. Having taken a pro-German stance toward the end of World War I, Georgia found itself on the losing side. To make matters worse, the government pursued policies hostile to ethnic minorities.

Armenians and Russians suffered economic discrimination. Military campaigns were launched against the Abkhazians and South Ossetians in an effort to bring them more firmly under central control. Likewise, Ajarrians were forced to study in the Georgian language, which they deeply resented. These difficulties formed the foundations of problems that haunt Georgia today.

Georgia struggled to maintain neutrality during the Russian Civil War. Nevertheless, the threat posed by the Bolsheviks led to a certain degree of support for the Czarist armies. Still, in May 1920 Vladimir Lenin signed the Treaty of Moscow which proclaimed Russian recognition of Georgia as an independent country. Numerous Western countries shortly followed suit.

*Soviet Invasion*

The illusion of peaceful coexistence with Soviet Russia, however, was naïve and short-lived. Against the direct orders of Lenin, Joseph Stalin (a native Georgian) orchestrated the Red Army’s February 1921 invasion of Georgia. The government could not mount any serious defense, and once again the Georgians were absorbed into another empire.

In 1922, as part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Republic, Georgia became a charter member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). To minimize nationalist tendencies in the region, this Soviet Republic combined the former independent states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. However, it did little to suppress Georgian nationalism, and within two years, the Soviets faced an uprising.

*The August Uprising*

The *Agvistos Adjank’eba* (August Uprising) of 1924 was the culmination of a conspiracy by anti-Bolshevik leaders in Georgia. For nearly two years, they plotted a widespread revolt they hoped would drive the Soviets out of Georgia. Support among the working class was overestimated and resulted in a harsh backlash from the Soviet government. An estimated 4,000 Georgians died in the uprising, which strengthened the resolve of the Soviet Union to eradicate all vestiges of Georgian resistance and provided an excuse to do so. It would be decades before the anti-Russian movement would surface again.

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94 Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158.
In the years that followed, Stalin and his allies killed tens of thousands of Georgians and deported many more in a campaign to purge dissidents. This strategy was part of a nationwide program in which tens of millions were killed throughout the Soviet Union. Although Georgia was not singled out, it did receive some special attention from Stalin, who saw an opportunity to reshape his homeland in the image he thought proper.97

The 1930s witnessed the rise of a politician who not only dominated Georgia but also helped Georgia maintain a degree of autonomy from Moscow. His name was Lavrenti Pavles dze Béria. In 1931, he was appointed first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia. The following year he was head of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Republic. In 1938 he was promoted to lead the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the dreaded forerunner of the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB). In this position, he continued to play an active and brutal role in Georgian politics.98

Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic

In 1936 the Soviet Union dissolved the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Republic, and Georgia became a full republic of the USSR (and would remain so until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991). However, it would continue to be a hotbed of dissent.

During World War II, however, Stalin was able to enlist different peoples to band together against the common enemy, Nazi Germany. Although Georgians fought on both sides during the war, the majority remained loyal to the Soviet defense and helped prevent the Germans from invading the Caucasus and gaining control of strategic oilfields.99

Following Stalin’s death in 1953, many changes swept through Georgia. Khrushchev’s rise and Béria’s execution paved the way for de-Stalinization to spread throughout the Soviet Union. While the USSR embraced the process, Georgia did not. Both Stalin and Béria had sheltered Georgia from the Russification program that prevailed elsewhere. In Georgia, the Georgification of minorities, such as the Abkhazians, Svans, and Ossetians, had prevailed. Furthermore, Georgians took pride in a countryman’s rise to leader of the entire Communist bloc.100 As a sign of continued respect for Stalin, an unofficial demonstration took place on 5 March 1956 in T’bilisi to commemorate the third anniversary of his death. For days afterward, students gathered along the banks of the Mt’k’vari River to hear speakers eulogize the former dictator. The Khrushchev regime responded with brute force. Government forces

opened fire on the unarmed, peaceful protesters, killing dozens and wounding hundreds.\textsuperscript{101}

Moscow’s use of violence to suppress the demonstrations led to schisms within the Georgian Communist Party leadership. Following this incident, Georgia pursued an increasingly independent identity, frequently ignoring directives from Moscow and refusing to integrate with the rest of the Soviet Union. Thus, the 1956 incident marked a fundamental transition toward a deeper national identity that would last throughout Georgia’s remaining time as a Soviet Republic.

The Final Decades of Soviet Rule

In 1972, Eduard Shevardnadze was appointed chairman of the Georgian Communist Party. He was charged with the task of dismantling the domestic power base of his predecessor and eradicating rampant corruption in the Georgian system. Shevardnadze’s rise to power coincided with the formation of the first dissident organizations in Georgia. These groups tended to be nationalist, staunchly anti-Russian, and deeply religious. Among the most prominent leaders of these dissident groups was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who had participated in the student demonstrations of 1956.\textsuperscript{102}

In April 1977, the KGB arrested Gamsakhurdia and other dissident leaders. However, instead of suppressing Georgian nationalism, these arrests widened its appeal among the populace. The following year, when Shevardnadze attempted to give minority languages equal status with Georgian in the constitution, thousands of protesters demonstrated against the motion, and Shevardnadze was forced to withdraw it.\textsuperscript{103}

Despite continued arrests, such acts of defiance persisted, long before the advent of glasnost and perestroika, which opened Soviet society. In 1983, major anti-Soviet protests took place in commemoration of the bicentennial of the Treaty of Giorgievsk, which had first annexed Georgia to the Russian Empire. Once again, dissident leaders were jailed.

At the same time, nationalism was rekindled among many ethnic minorities in Georgia, especially in Abkhazia. In response to what Abkhazians saw as concerted efforts by Georgian and Russian authorities to reduce the majority status of Abkhazians by settling


Georgians and non-Abkhazian minorities in the region, sporadic episodes of violence erupted.  

With the opening of Soviet society under Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies of glasnost and perestroika, the Georgian government was forced to make concessions to the nationalist movements. However, this emboldened those who sought greater autonomy or outright independence. The Georgian nationalist movement’s rise to power was viewed apprehensively by the ethnic minorities.

**T’bilisi Massacre**

When the Abkhazians petitioned Moscow, asking to become a Union Republic, which would remove the territory from Georgia, demonstrations erupted in T’bilisi and quickly became an anti-Soviet protest. On 9 April 1989 the government’s response was swift, brutal, and out of character in an era of openness. Soviet Special Forces units descended on the protesters and, wielding batons and spades, killed 19 demonstrators and wounded hundreds more. This event, known as the T’bilisi Massacre, is commemorated each year as an official holiday, the National Day of Unity.

The consequences of this act proved to be counterproductive for the Soviet government. Rather than quashing dissent among the Georgians, the massacre deepened resentment of Moscow. The Georgian Communist Party now called for greater autonomy and adopted an openly Georgian nationalist line.

**Independence, Again**

On 28 October 1990, in early elections forced upon the Georgian government by growing unrest following the T’bilisi Massacre, Gamsakhurdia and his nationalist allies won an overwhelming majority of votes. Gamsakhurdia became the chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia. These were the first multi-party elections in Georgia since the demise of the short-lived Republic of Georgia in the early twentieth century. The Communist Party retained only a handful of seats, and the nationalists quickly dismantled anything associated with Soviet domination of Georgia.

The new government’s belligerence toward ethnic minorities soon touched off a series of secessionist movements within the autonomous regions of the country. Subsequent ethnic violence, especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, presaged the troubles ahead, which still plague Georgia.

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However, Gamsakhurdia’s focus was more on independence. On 31 March 1991, Georgians voted on a referendum regarding independence. A staggering 98% voted in favor. Thus, on 9 April 1991, the second anniversary of the T’bilisi Massacre, the Georgian Supreme Council declared Georgia an independent country. Although the Soviet Union never officially recognized Georgia’s independence, several other countries quickly did. The USSR dissolved by the end of that year.

Rebellion and Civil War

On 5 January 1991, even before the declaration of Georgian independence, Gamsakhurdia ordered Georgian forces into South Ossetia to subdue opposition to central authority. This action sparked the South Ossetian–Georgian War (1991–1992). Repeated attempts by the Georgian military to regain control over the disputed territory failed. A Russian-brokered ceasefire ended direct confrontation and established a joint peacekeeping force composed of Russians, Georgians, and Ossetians and monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). However, scattered acts of violence continued, and tens of thousands were driven from their homes.

While dealing with the situation in South Ossetia, Gamsakhurdia was deposed by paramilitary units loyal to opposition groups. Many leaders of the opposition were former allies of the President but found his behavior to be erratic and despotic. They turned against Gamsakhurdia, who fled the country and led his faction from abroad as Georgia slipped into civil war. Eduard Shevardnadze, returned from serving as the Soviet Foreign Minister in Gorbachev’s cabinet, and was selected to lead the new government.

Although a ceasefire agreement with South Ossetia was reached in May 1992, Shevardnadze’s inability to control the Georgian paramilitary units operating in the area (with no particular loyalty to the central government) became clear. Soon the two sides were fighting with renewed vigor. To compound the situation, volunteer forces from related peoples of the North Caucasus were pouring into South Ossetia from North Ossetia-Alania, a republic of the Russian Federation. Faced with this added threat to security, Shevardnadze signed a more exacting ceasefire agreement in June.

After this ceasefire, trouble broke out in Abkhazia. With the Georgians defeated in South Ossetia and distracted by the ongoing civil war, the Abkhazian leaders seized an opportunity to declare independence. The Georgian military—beset by various problems and recognizing that Russia was actively engaged on the side of the Abkhazians—was

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not up to the task. The rebels gained *de facto* control of the autonomous republic.\footnote{Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon, 2001), 170–174.} As they had in South Ossetia, the Russians agreed to supply a peacekeeping force for Abkhazia.

*A Return to Normalcy*

Following the end of the civil war in 1993 and the wars in the autonomous republics, Georgia emerged as a failed state. Its territorial integrity was shattered. Its infrastructure and economy were in shambles. Given Russia’s support for the breakaway republics, Georgia’s continued independence was unsure.

However, Shevardnadze hoped for a return to normalcy. A new constitution was adopted in 1994. It created a more powerful chief executive and introduced a new currency, the *lari*.\footnote{Tim Burford, *Georgia* (Chalfont St. Peter, England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 22.} That same year, as part of the agreements with Russia to end the wars in the autonomous republics, Shevardnadze signed the Tashkent Treaty, a collective security agreement among the newly independent states of the former USSR.

Shevardnadze intended to steer his country in a more Western direction. In November 1995, he won the presidential election and his allies secured the majority in parliament. The President then used his reputation as a reformer to seek assistance from Western Europe and the United States, attracting the much-needed capital and aid for rebuilding Georgia. A centerpiece of this sales pitch was the proposal of building a Transcaucasian oil pipeline, the Baku–T’bilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, connecting the Caspian oil reserves of Azerbaijan to the Black Sea ports in Turkey, with Georgia serving as a conduit.\footnote{S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell, *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West* (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2005).}

By 1997, it appeared that Shevardnadze had succeeded in stabilizing the country. Although his repeated overtures to the autonomous republics were rejected, he managed to gain Georgia’s acceptance into some Western institutions. In October 1997, Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova formed the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUUAM) in order to retreat from Russian influence and strive for Western integration. Soon thereafter, Georgia withdrew from the Tashkent Treaty to pursue membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).\footnote{Tomas Valasek, *Military Cooperation between Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova in the GUUAM Framework* Caspian Studies Program policy brief, no. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Caspian Studies Program, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2000).} At roughly the same time, Georgia became the first Caucasian country admitted to the Council of Europe. In 1998, Georgia won concessions from Russia regarding the
withdrawal of Russian forces stationed in Georgia, except those in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Recent Events
After reelection in April 2000, Shevardnadze continued to court the West and pursued membership in NATO and the European Union. However, recurring conflict in the autonomous regions and the souring of the economy made the future of these aspirations unsure. Perhaps most troubling was the situation in the Pankisis Kheoba, a gorge in the northeast of the country along the border with Chechnya, a disputed territory in the Russian federation. Chechen refugees had settled in the gorge, having fled the deadly war in their homeland, but Russia insisted that Georgia was harboring Chechen fighters. Russian planes frequently bombed the area, and the Russian government pressured Georgia to expel the Chechens. In October 2002, Georgian forces mounted a major campaign aimed at removing any Chechen fighters from the gorge.

Earlier that year, U.S. Special Forces units began arriving in Georgia to train Georgian counterterrorism units. This effort was part of the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) to help Georgia bring its military up to NATO standards in order to gain membership.

In May 2003, work began on the Georgian portion of the Baku–T’bilisi–Ceyhan pipeline. It was hoped that this project would not only consolidate Georgia’s strategic importance to the West, but also help wean the country from its reliance on Russia for energy. Such reliance had long been used to force Georgia to comply with Moscow’s wishes.

Corruption and favoritism permeated the Shevardnadze administration. Many of the young, Western-educated intellectuals whom Shevardnadze had cultivated and groomed for governance were upset at his inability to counter these influences. Among those who joined the opposition in protest was Mikheil Saakashvili, Shevardnadze’s former Justice Minister. He used his new position as the chairman of the T’bilisi Sakrebulo, the city government of the capital, as a platform from which to criticize the Shevardnadze administration.

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The Rose Revolution

On 2 November 2003, Georgia held parliamentary elections. Closely observed by monitors from the OSCE and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the official results were found to be fraudulent. However, Shevardnadze, whose allies in parliament were named the winners, refused to correct the problem.

Claiming that his party had actually won the elections, Mikheil Saakashvili and other opposition leaders called upon Georgians to demonstrate against Shevardnadze’s government and use peaceful means to demand a new election. Soon, throngs of anti-government demonstrators filled the streets of the capital and then other towns and cities.118

On 22 November 2003, President Shevardnadze was presiding over the inauguration of the new parliament. Saakashvili, his former protégé, and a sizeable group of opposition members brandishing roses, barged into the proceedings and intimidated Shevardnadze off the podium. The Rose Revolution, as it came to be known, led to Shevardnadze’s resignation and the emergence of Saakashvili, an American-educated lawyer, as the preeminent opposition leader.119

In the presidential and parliamentary elections held in spring 2004, Saakashvili and his allies swept to power in staggering numbers. Saakashvili immediately embarked on a program to reunify the country. He faced down the longtime leader of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria, Aslan Abashidze. The latter fled to retirement in Russia. Saakashvili was confident that such a strong show of resolution would meet with similar results in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, he was soon to find that was not the case. Neither was either of the remaining autonomous regions receptive to reconciliation.120

Saakashvili turned toward the West in the hope of luring the EU or U.S. into the equation as mediator and minimizing Russia’s continued ability to manipulate situations in its favor. In May 2005, U.S. President George W. Bush visited T’bilisi and, in an appearance with Saakashvili, proclaimed that Georgia was a “beacon of liberty.” Bush promised U.S. assistance in dealing with Georgia’s struggles.121 During the speech, a hand grenade was thrown at the two presidents, but the device failed to detonate.122

122 Ronald Kessler, In the President’s Secret Service: Behind the Scenes with Agents in the Line of Fire and the Presidents They Protect (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 233–234.
Reescalation of Tensions
From 2006 through the summer of 2008, Georgia witnessed increased tensions with the autonomous republics and Russia. In late March 2006, Russia imposed a ban on the import of Georgian wines, claiming that the products were tainted with heavy metals and pesticides.\(^1\) Because Russia imported around 80% of all Georgian wine and because wine is one of Georgia’s major agricultural exports, the ban had a stifling effect on the industry and soured already strained relations.\(^2\)

On the brighter side, the first oil pumped through the Baku–T’bilisi–Ceyhan pipeline arrived in Ceyhan, Turkey, on 28 May 2006.\(^3\) Although the pipeline benefitted the Georgian economy, its presence aggravated Russia because it was the first pipeline in the region not to pass through Russian territory.

In September 2006, Georgian authorities arrested Russian Army officers on charges of spying. They became belligerent. On 2 October 2006, the officers were released.\(^4\)

In October, in retaliation for the arrests, Russia “severed air, sea, and postal links” with Georgia and froze Georgians’ work permits. In response, on 12 October 2006 Georgia blocked the next round of talks on Russia’s bid to join the World Trade Organization. Then, on 2 November 2006, Russia’s state-controlled natural gas monopoly said it would more than double the price it charged Georgia, a ploy frequently used by the Russian government to force its will on other countries.\(^5\)

Further exacerbating tensions, on 12 November 2006 South Ossetians passed a referendum in favor of independence.\(^6\)

On 11 March 2007, Russian air and ground units made a coordinated attack on three villages in Georgia’s Kodori Valley. Causalities included Chechen refugees. A Georgian

\(^3\) Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 247.
government building used by the pro-Georgia Abkhazian government in exile was also targeted.129, 130

In January 2008, President Saakashvili was reelected in an early presidential election called by the opposition. In April of that year, in its Bucharest Summit declaration, NATO welcomed the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine for membership in the organization, a move that deeply angered Russia.131

The Russo-Georgian War of 2008
On 29 April 2008, in seeming retaliation for NATO’s declaration, Russia declared it was deploying more forces in Georgia’s breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Russia claimed the Georgian government was preparing to attack the rebels of those regions.132,133 In April and May, Russia further increased tensions by expanding diplomatic relations with Georgia’s breakaway republics and deploying hundreds of additional troops.134

In this tense climate, skirmishes between Ossetian and Georgian forces during the first week of August led to a Georgian military campaign to bring the area back under government control. Russia responded quickly by repulsing the Georgian offensive and penetrating deep into territory beyond the autonomous republics. Russia occupied a number of key Georgian cities and bombed military and civilian targets in what has come to be known as the Russo-Georgian War.135, 136 Actual combat did not last long. Georgian forces were outnumbered by the Russian forces and received no direct assistance from their former allies.

136 Merle Wesley Shoemaker, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2009 (Harpers Ferry, WV: Stryker-Post Publications, 2009), 222.
This war was potentially damaging to the U.S. As a key ally of Georgia, the U.S. had troops in the country training Georgian units. During the fighting, the U.S. airlifted Georgian troops serving in Iraq back to Georgia.\textsuperscript{137}

Although brief, the conflict strained relations between Russia and the West. Even after signing a French-sponsored ceasefire, on 19 August 2008 Russian forces took 20 Georgian troops prisoner at Poti in western Georgia and confiscated several American Humvees awaiting shipment back to the U.S.. These vehicles had been used in U.S.-Georgian training exercises.\textsuperscript{138}

In another sign of its continued belligerence, on 26 August 2008 Russia recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent nations.\textsuperscript{139}

**Post-War Development**

After the Georgian defeat, Saakashvili was faced with significant demonstrations calling for his resignation. More worrisome, however, was an attempted overthrow in May 2009. The Interior Ministry easily quashed a military mutiny centered at a military installation near the capital. Initial reports named it a Russian attempt to disrupt planned NATO exercises and to assassinate Saakashvili.\textsuperscript{140,141} Because Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had earlier called for Saakashvili to be killed, these accusations seemed valid to the international community.\textsuperscript{142}

In July 2009, Russia vetoed an extension of the mandate for UN observers monitoring the Abkhazian ceasefire provisions, claiming that its own forces were sufficient.\textsuperscript{143}

In response to the war and the failure of its allies to come to its aid, on 18 August 2009, Georgia withdrew from the Commonwealth of Independent States, claiming that the organization failed to stave off Russia’s assault.\textsuperscript{144}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{139} Anders Åalund, S.M. Guriev, and Andrew Kuchins, *Russia After the Global Economic Crisis* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2010), 189.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Associated Press, “Russia Blamed for Georgia Mutiny,” *CBS News*, 05 May 2009, \url{http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/05/05/world/main4991573.shtml}
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Tony Halpin, “Georgian Leader Mikhail Saakashvili Claims to Have Crushed Army Mutiny,” *The Times (London)*, 06 May 2009, \url{http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article6229551.ece}
  \item \textsuperscript{142} Charles Bremner, “Vladimir Putin ‘Wanted to Hang Georgian President Saakashvili by the Balls,’” *The Times (London)*, 14 November 2008, \url{http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article5147422.ece}
  \item \textsuperscript{143} Janusz Bugajski, *Georgian Lessons: Conflicting Russian and Western Interests in the Wider Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010), 109.
\end{itemize}
On 16 February 2010, Abkhazia’s rebel government announced a deal to allow Russia to build a new naval base within its territory at the seaside city of Ochamchire. Another sign that Russia intends to stay in the region indefinitely and expects further confrontation with Georgia, Russia deployed surface-to-air missiles in Abkhazia in August 2010.

On 7 December 2010, the Georgian government announced the arrest of six suspects on charges of carrying out, under the direction of Russian military intelligence, a series of explosions in T’bilisi, including one outside the U.S. embassy.

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. One result of the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 was the reintegration of Abkhazia into the Georgian state.

False

After being repulsed by Russian forces, Georgia did not regain control of either of the breakaway republics. Russia signed an agreement with the rebel authorities in Abkhazia to build a Russian naval base in Ochamchire.

2. In August 2008, while in possession of Georgian territory, Russian forces commandeered several American Humvees awaiting shipment back to the U.S.

True

In violation of the French-sponsored ceasefire, on 19 August 2008 Russian forces took 20 Georgian troops prisoner at Poti in western Georgia and confiscated several American Humvees awaiting shipment back to the U.S. These vehicles had been used in earlier U.S.-Georgian training exercises.

3. Despite having been an ally of President Shevardnadze, Mikheil Saakashvili led the opposition groups to victory in the Rose Revolution of 2003.

True

On 22 November 2003, President Shevardnadze was presiding over the inauguration of the new parliament. Saakashvili, his former protégé and Justice Minister, and a sizeable group of opposition members brandishing roses, barged into the proceedings. This incident eventually led to Shevardnadze’s resignation.

4. U.S. military personnel have been training Georgian forces for a number of years.

True

Beginning in 2002, U.S. personnel began training forces under the Georgia Train and Equip Program. That program ended in 2007 and was replaced with the ongoing Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program.

5. The Autonomous Republic of Ajaria is one of the breakaway republics.

False

Although Ajaria is one of Georgia’s autonomous republics, it has been under constitutional control of the central government since spring 2004, when Aslan Abashidze was driven into exile in Russia. Even prior to this, Ajaria had not pursued its independence.
Chapter 3: Economy

Introduction
Georgia was one of the most prosperous republics of the Soviet Union, but ethnic and civil wars following independence devastated its economy and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{149,150} Widespread corruption in the government and private businesses coupled with a regional economic recession further weakened Georgia’s economy through the 1990s and early 21st century.\textsuperscript{151} Dissatisfaction among the people led to massive antigovernment demonstrations. One such demonstration, known as the Rose Revolution of 2003, brought to power a clique of young Western-educated reformers led by President Mikheil Saakashvili. This new generation of leaders has governed from their platform of promises to fight corruption; move from a command economy to a private, market economy; and steer the country toward greater integration into Western institutions.\textsuperscript{152}

Economic Ties with Europe
The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), concluded in April 1996, established comprehensive collaboration between Georgia and the European Union (EU) on economic, cultural, trade, and political matters. Signatories assigned one another the Most Favored Nation status, removing many of the previously existing barriers to free trade.\textsuperscript{153} In 1999, the EU granted Georgia the General System of Preferences benefits, removing many of the customs duties placed on Georgian exports to the EU. In 2005, as a reward for its progress in transforming its economy and moving toward political stability, Georgia was upgraded to the Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance status. This program provided strong incentives for Georgia to export goods to the EU at lower cost.\textsuperscript{154} In June 2004, the EU included Georgia in its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which aimed at breaking down barriers that had divided European nations and fostering security and economic relations. The resulting EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan spelled out specific objectives of the relationship and sought to assist Georgia in its aspirations for integration into Western

\textsuperscript{150} Lydia M. Pulsipher, et al., World Regional Geography: Global Patterns, Local Lives (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2006), 274.
\textsuperscript{152} Charles Piddock, Republic of Georgia (Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library, 2007), 38.
institutions and to help Georgia resolve internal conflicts. In May 2009, the EU launched a new program supported by the ENP. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) focused on Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia and its South Caucasus neighbors. It provided further integration into the EU economy, liberal travel visas, and assistance in fostering and maintaining democratic institutions.

**Future Relations with Europe**

Georgia has yet to apply for EU membership, but it has laid the foundation for doing so in the future. President Mikheil Saakashvili has stated that he hopes to achieve this goal within the next few years. Still, serious obstacles lie ahead.

The EU has consistently stressed the importance of conflict resolution in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Successful resolution of these conflicts must occur for Georgia to become an EU member. The EU has offered some assistance by providing monitors in conflict areas.

**Agriculture**

Agricultural production remains an important part of the Georgian economy. It accounted for an estimated 11% of the country’s GDP in 2010, which contrasts sharply with the 50% contribution during the Soviet era. However, in 2010, nearly 56% of Georgia’s labor force was employed in agricultural work. Wine, fruits, and nuts were three of the country’s major exports. Citrus fruits, grapes, vegetables, and hazelnuts are Georgia’s main products, along with livestock.

Given that less than 12% of its land is arable, it is not surprising that Georgia cannot grow enough food to feed its population. Georgia must import large amounts of grain and other foodstuffs. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that nearly 600 sq km

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157 “Saakashvili’s Dream Is to Have Easy Access to Europe,” EuroDialogueXXI, 26 May 2010, [http://www.eurodialogue.org/eastern-partnership/Saakashvili-dream-is-to-have-easy-access-to-Europe](http://www.eurodialogue.org/eastern-partnership/Saakashvili-dream-is-to-have-easy-access-to-Europe)
(232 sq mi) are used to cultivate tea; 1,295 sq km (500 sq mi) are used for vineyards. This cultivation uses a sizeable portion of arable land, which further reduces available farmland.\(^{163}\)

A Russian boycott of Georgian wines, instituted in 2006, closed the largest market for wine and greatly damaged the industry. The government has looked for alternative markets, with limited success.\(^{164}\) Further disruption to agriculture was caused by the 2008 Russo-Georgian War during which many farmers were driven from their properties.

Because the climate and soils vary greatly throughout the country, crops are highly regionalized in Georgia. On the Black Sea coast of western Georgia, citrus orchards abound. In the eastern Kakheti region, viticulture dominates. Between these two regions, Georgians engage in an array of other agricultural pursuits, including beekeeping, tobacco cultivation, and nut production.

**Industry and Service Sectors**

About 27% of Georgia’s GDP comes from manufacturing. Approximately 9% of the labor force works in manufacturing.\(^{165}\) Mining, chemical fertilizer production, and related manufacturing are the backbone of Georgian industry, representing 36% of all exports.\(^{166}\)

The industrial and agricultural sectors make up small portions of the overall GDP, resulting in trade imbalance. This is a significant economic handicap facing the nation. Most of Georgia’s imports are from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine. Although Russia has historically been a major trading partner, the difficult relationship between the two countries and the Russian ban on Georgian wine has caused a significant weakening of their economic ties. Today Russian goods account for only 7% of total imports. The newly fostered friendship with the United States has brought an increase of U.S. goods to Georgia, an increase that accounts for almost 7% of total imports.

On the other hand, most of Georgia’s exports go to Turkey, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Canada. These countries represent a growing market for items previously exported to

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nearby markets. Exporting to these countries is indicative of Georgia’s drive for Western integration.\(^{167}\)

A large portion of Georgia’s GDP, an estimated 62% of the total, is in the service sector.\(^{168}\) Automobile re-exporting is profitable and accounts for over 14% of total exports.\(^{169}, \, ^{170}\) Many of the vehicles shipped from Western Europe to the Georgian port city Poti are sent on to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and other Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan.\(^{171}\) Overall, the service sector accounts for just over one-third of all jobs in Georgia.\(^{172}\)

**Tourism**

By far the most important component of Georgia’s service sector is tourism. Georgia was once a tourism center for both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. In the years immediately following independence, Georgia’s tourist industry suffered greatly because many potential guests were frightened off by the ongoing ethnic warfare. To make matters worse, much of the tourism infrastructure was located in Abkhazia, along Georgia’s northwestern maritime border with the Black Sea. With the government’s loss of control over that territory, new infrastructure was needed in other Black Sea cities. Thus, Batumi and, to a lesser extent, Poti have emerged as centers of Georgian tourism.\(^{173},^{174}\) The warm subtropical climate and beaches are a major attraction.

T’bilisi is another attractive tourist destination. Situated on the Mt’k’vari River in southeastern Georgia, the capital serves as the cultural center of the country. It is home to

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the fourth-century Narkikala fortress, the Sameba and Sioni cathedrals, universities, museums, and state-sponsored arts. It is a quintessential modern European capital.  

Considered a UNESCO World Heritage site, Mtskheta is one of the oldest cities in the Caucasus. It is situated 20 km (12 mi) north of T’bilisi in the Kartli region and is considered an icon of Georgian culture. The 11th-century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral compound serves as the official seat of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, the leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Across from the cathedral is the most acclaimed place in the entire country, the sixth-century Jvari Monastery, built at the purported spot where Saint Nino, a woman who converted Georgians to Christianity, raised a cross.

The Bagrati Cathedral and the Gelati Monastery in Kutaisi, which are now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are also well-known attractions.

According to the Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, the government plans to develop other areas for eco-tourism. One such project cites Paravani Lake as a site for “ecological tourism and resort infrastructure.”

Natural Resources

While Georgia is a rather small producer and consumer of energy, important oil and natural gas transit routes traverse the country. The Baku-T’bilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline and the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) connect Azerbaijan’s oil fields with Turkey’s ports and pass through Georgia, which collects a substantial royalty for the transit of the commodities. Several Western oil companies are working to develop oil production in Georgia, including offshore sites in the Black Sea and the Taribani Field in the Kakheti region. Georgia has proven oil reserves of an estimated 13 million barrels and the potential for hundreds of millions more.

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Georgia has other abundant natural resources, nearly 40% of Georgia is forested. In Tqvarcheli, Abkhazia, and Tqibuli, in the mountains of the Imereti region, there are significant coal deposits. In Chiaura, in the mountain valleys of the Imereti region, there are major, high-quality manganese deposits. 

**Hydroelectric**

Georgia’s hydroelectric resources are extensive yet still underdeveloped. Thanks to its numerous and powerful rivers, the country has been able to generate enough electricity for its own needs and have a surplus to sell to neighboring countries. The largest of the dams is the Inguri hydroelectric dam near Jvari in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. The dam is a potential flashpoint in the ongoing conflict with the breakaway republics because part of the facility is in Abkhazia, under separatist control. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has approved tens of millions of U.S. dollars in loans to upgrade existing dams and build new ones.

**Banking and Finance**

The National Bank of Georgia is responsible for all central banking functions. One of the most important functions is the regulation of the national currency which, since 1995, has been the lari (GEL). The banking sector is open to foreign banks, many of which operate in the country. Many foreign banks also own substantial interests in Georgian banks. Despite the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the international recession, the Georgian banking sector has remained stable.

The World Bank has recognized Georgia for its concerted efforts to reform its banking and business policies. In 2010, it ranked Georgia “as the world’s 11th-easiest place to do business, an improvement from 115th in 2005, and now in the same tier as countries such as Australia, Norway, and Japan,” a remarkable achievement for a country just emerging from years of warfare and political instability.

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185 Tim Burford, Georgia (Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks, England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2007), 5, 35.
186 Shelly Han, Winsome Packer, and Kyle Parker, “Georgia Rebuilds: After the August Conflict with Russia, Political and Economic Challenges Remain,” Helsinki Commission Digest 40, no. 32 (19 November 2008), http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=152&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=G&ContentRecordType=G&CFID=3330361&CFTOKEN=82268146
188 GEL is the abbreviation for Georgian laris, the unit of currency used in the Republic of Georgia.
Because of concerns about the Russian invasion of Georgia during the 2008 war, foreign direct investment (FDI) plummeted in 2009 to USD 759 million and remains under USD one billion. In 2007 FDI was at a peak of approximately USD 2 billion. Countries making major investments in the Georgian economy over the past two years include the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Turkey, Panama, the United Kingdom, and the United States. During these same two years, the sectors with the highest levels of FDI were real estate, industry, transportation and communications, and construction.

Standard of Living

The Georgian economy performed well between 2005 and 2008, with the GDP steadily increasing. Even the 2008 war and global recession caused only a modest downturn in GDP in 2009, and the economy rebounded in 2010 with an estimated 5.5% increase. According to the National Statistics Service of Georgia, the country’s annual inflation rate sharply increased to 12.3% in January 2011, with food and fuel prices leading the trend. Wages continued to climb, with 2009 ending at GEL 556.8 per month (approximately USD 328), an increase of roughly 3.5 times the average monthly pay in 2004. Likewise, average monthly income continued to climb each year from 2004 to 2008, the last year for which numbers are available. However, average monthly expenditures were nearly identical to average monthly income, indicating that the average citizen has been unable to build savings.

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197 GEL is the abbreviation for Georgian laris, the unit of currency used in the Republic of Georgia.
198 This figure based on live currency rates on 23 February 2011 per the Universal Currency Converter™ at http://www.xe.com
Employment Trends

Despite the global economic recession that has caused unemployment to skyrocket in many countries around the world, Georgia’s official unemployment rate for 2009 was 16.9%, a figure nearly equal to the rate in 2008 and only about 4% higher than the rate in 2004.202

Public vs. Private Sector

Since independence, particularly after the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgia has pursued the deregulation and privatization of industry, moving from the command economy of the Soviet era to a free-market capitalist system. President Saakashvili and his reformist allies have greatly streamlined the process for starting new businesses, which has proved attractive to foreign investors. The number of government employees has been cut by half and the pay of those remaining has been increased. The government instituted a strict anticorruption policy to eliminate the graft and cronyism previously prevalent at all government levels. In response smuggling and the black market, the government removed nearly all tariffs, thereby making smuggling much less profitable. However, in the breakaway republics where Georgian authorities have no control, smuggling and the black market remain a problem.203

Outlook

Prior to the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Georgia was on a steady track of economic growth and prosperity. The aftereffects of the war appear to have weakened that progress, but the government has managed to steer the economy in a positive direction.

However, foreign direct investment has sharply decreased from its 2007 high of nearly USD 2 billion. The frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, coupled with the threat of continuing disputes with Russia, present a significant obstacle to Georgia’s attempts to reassure investors about the security of their potential investments.

Georgia has significantly altered its trade patterns as it works to further remove itself from the Russian sphere of influence. At the same time, Georgian leaders are working toward integration into Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union (EU). New economic relations are being fostered with the member nations of these institutions. One strong indication of such relations is

that the United States, Canada, and a number of EU countries have emerged as some of Georgia’s leading trading partners, offering alternative markets for goods once largely exported to and imported from Russia.
Chapter 3: Assessment

1. Georgia was one of the Soviet Union’s poorest republics.

False
Georgia was one of the most prosperous republics, but the violence of the years following independence devastated its economy.

2. Georgia is a member state of the European Union.

False
Although Georgia has aspirations of joining the EU, this is a long-term goal. Thus, Georgia’s leaders have signed numerous agreements promising cooperation with the EU.

3. Although it represented only 11% of GDP in 2010, agriculture remains an essential part of the Georgian economy.

True
While agriculture accounted for a small portion of GDP, over half the Georgian workforce is employed in the agricultural industry.

4. The industrial sector is the highest contributor to Georgia’s GDP.

False
The industrial sector accounts for only about 27% of GDP; approximately 9% of the labor force works in manufacturing. The service sector is the driving force behind Georgia’s GDP.

5. The re-exporting of automobiles is a key part of Georgia’s service sector.

True
Many of the vehicles shipped from Western Europe to Poti are then sent on to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and other Central Asian countries.
Chapter 4: Society

Introduction
Because Georgia is situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgian society reflects varied influences on the country’s culture. Protective of their unique heritage, Georgians have been highly selective about which influences they have adopted and which they have rejected. They have withstood centuries of foreign domination under the Roman, Persian, Ottoman, Russian, and Soviet empires, but managed to retain a vibrant and distinctive culture.

Ethnic Groups and Languages
Georgia has long been a multicultural society comprising different ethnic groups. However, with the reemergence of nationalism following years of Russian and Soviet domination, harmonious relationships existing among these ethnic groups have sometimes given way to open hostility.

Georgians (Kartveli)
Ethnic Georgians make up roughly 84% of the population in Georgia. This figure is somewhat deceptive because it includes groups that have historically considered themselves related but distinct: Kartleli, Imereli, Megreli, Kakheli, Guruli, Achareli, Rachveli, Svan. These ethnicities are all classified as Georgian (or Kartveli) for census figures. Many of the traditions that once distinguished these groups have disappeared over time. Many of these groups do, however, continue to speak dialects that vary from standard Georgian.

Abkhazians
Abkhazians are North Caucasians, in both language and ethnicity. Abkhazians have historically fostered relationships with the more closely related peoples of what is today southern Russia. At the same time, dynastic marriages and shared history have tied the Abkhazians firmly to Georgia—politically, economically, and socially.

Abkhazians are a small group within the larger population of Georgia. At the outset of their rebellion, Abkhazians were a minority within the territory they claim as their own. Ethnic

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205 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Georgia: Distinctions between the Population of Megrelia and Other Georgians, 1 September 1998, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6ab3d1c.html
cleansing of Georgians, carried out since the 1990s, has slightly increased Abkhazian numbers; however, Abkhazians remain the third-largest ethnic group in the territory, after Georgians and Armenians.

Abkhazians are concerned about the ethnic composition of the land they claim as their own. Repeated outbursts of ethnic hostilities in the area cause concern, not just locally but internationally.

**Ajarians**

Ajarians are ethnically Georgian but have their own spoken language. The language is similar to Georgian with a slight Turkish influence. Unlike other ethnic Georgians, who are primarily Orthodox Christians, many Ajarians are Sunni Muslims. Although they may speak their own language, Ajarians are educated in Georgian and use it on a daily basis. Ajarians are scattered throughout the country, with the majority living in the Ajarian Autonomous Republic in the southwest corner of Georgia.

**Armenians**

Armenians arrived in Georgia during the 12th century after an invitation from King David IV to settle in areas depopulated by war. They represent a small but economically significant portion of the Georgian population. Making up just fewer than 6% of the overall population, they are predominantly members of the One Holy Universal Apostolic Orthodox Armenian Church, also known as the Gregorian Orthodox Church. Armenians reside primarily in the Samtskhe-Javakheti mkhare (administrative region), where the largest city is Akhaltsikhe. They are also found in all the major cities of Georgia, and have a strong historical presence in and around the city Gori.

**Azeris**

Azeris make up roughly 6.5% of the population of Georgia. This number may seem small, but Azeris are the largest minority ethnic group in the country. Azeris are found

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predominantly in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions where their ancestors settled during the long reign of the Persian Empire over eastern Georgia. There are also about 11,000 Azeris in T’bilisi.213 The Azeris speak their own language, and many urban Azeris speak Georgian as well.214 Different branches of Islam predominate in the Azeri communities. Some communities are mainly Sunni; others, Shi’ite. Sufism is also a strong influence within the Azeri communities.215

Ossetians
The Ossetians are an Indo-Iranian people found in both the North and South Caucasus. They are unrelated to the other surrounding peoples.216 They see themselves as having nothing in common with the Georgian state. When the South Ossetia Autonomous Region was dissolved in the closing days of the Soviet Union, the Georgian government absorbed the territory into the Shida Kartli region. Immediately afterward, however, ethnic tensions increased to outright warfare, and the Ossetians declared their independence.217 They have repeatedly fought the Georgian Army, most recently in 2008, when, supported by the Russian Army, they prevailed against Georgian forces. While most countries have refused to acknowledge South Ossetia’s independence, the Ossetian separatists, and their Russian allies, have de facto control of the area.218

The South Ossetians speak their own language, Ossetic, and their customs and traditions set them apart from the Georgians. They adhere to one form of Eastern Orthodoxy or another: Russian Orthodox, one of its offshoots, or Georgian Orthodox.219

Others

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In addition to the above-mentioned groups, there are also Russian, Greek, Ukrainian, and Kurdish minority groups. Each of these groups makes up 1% or less of the overall population.  

Languages

Georgian
Georgian is the most prevalent of the South Caucasian languages. It is not part of any of the major European or Asian language groups. Its oral traditions reach so far back into ancient times, it is believed to have been among the earliest languages. It emerged as a written language in the fourth century C.E., primarily as a means of converting Georgians to Christianity. Georgian has historically been written in a wide array of different scripts. Today it is almost exclusively rendered in the mkhedruli (military) script. The script currently uses 38 letters; many others have fallen into disuse. There is no distinction between uppercase and lowercase. Numerous dialects are spoken both within and outside Georgia. However, the dialect spoken predominantly in and around Tbilisi is considered to be the standard and is used for instruction and in the media.

Azeri
Azeri is a Turkic language, spoken in various parts of Southwest Asia, especially in Azerbaijan. It served as a lingua franca in much of Transcaucasia during the Persian domination of the area. In Georgia, Azeris speak a North Azeri variant. The language has many dialects, with the Borçali dialect predominating in Georgia.

Armenian
Armenian is an Indo-European language with its own unique script and is the official language of Armenia. Armenians make up roughly 6% of Georgia’s population and speak

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the Eastern variant of the language. One is most likely to encounter the language in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of southern Georgia or in T’bilisi.

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Abkhaz
The Abkhaz language belongs to the Northwest Caucasian languages. It has no relationship to Georgian; instead, it is closely related to the languages of other Caucasian peoples living in southern Russia. Because of this distinction, Abkhazian nationalists have tried to use the Abkhaz language to support their separatist movement, dictating its mandatory use in their territory. This mandate, however, has not been successful, because most Abkhazians have little or no command of the language. Furthermore, Abkhazians are a minority within their own territory, and non-Abkhazians are seldom familiar with the language. Although Abkhaz was previously written in the Georgian mkhedruli script, Abkhazians have been using the Cyrillic alphabet since their declaration of independence.

Ossetic
An Indo-Iranian language spoken in the Northern and Southern Caucasus, Ossetic has been significantly influenced by the surrounding unrelated languages, most recently Russian. The language is divided into two dialects, with the eastern dialect Iron prevailing among the South Ossetians of Georgia. A modified Cyrillic script is used to write Ossetic. In Georgia, the use of Ossetic is confined almost exclusively to the Shida Kartli region, which encompasses the separatist-held territory referred to internationally as South Ossetia.

Russian
Russian was the official language while Georgia was governed by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Although Georgian remained the first language of most of ethnic Georgians, Russian did replace some of the minority languages and remains the official language of communication in Abkhazia. In Abkhazia, and to a lesser extent South Ossetia, most of the media is in the Russian language, even though separatist leaders require that a portion of the news be presented in Abkhaz. The steady stream of Russian immigrants after Russia’s recognition of Abkhazian independence in 2008 has

234 Hooman Peimani, Conflict and Security in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 237.
235 Tom Trier, Hedvig Lohm, and David Szakonyi, Under Siege: Inter-Ethnic Relations in Abkhazia (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 42.
contributed to the use of Russian. In South Ossetian and Abkhazian schools, many courses are taught in Russian.

Religion
Nearly 84% of the Georgian population belongs to the various Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity. Nearly 10% of the population is Muslim. The Muslim population is composed primarily of Ajarian, Azeri, and smaller ethnic groups. Within the Muslim community, Shi’ites, Sunnis, and Sufis appear to coexist in relative harmony. Roughly 4% of Georgians, mostly ethnic Armenians, adhere to the Armenian or Gregorian Orthodoxy.

Cuisine
The culinary traditions of the eastern and western parts of Georgia differ. They reflect the historical trends of conquest experienced by the Georgian people. Turkish and Mediterranean culinary influences are found in the western part of the country, and there is a propensity for vegetarian cuisine. Lobio, for example, is a simple dish made of different kinds of beans seasoned with herbs and spices. Another such dish is pkhali, “a mixture of finely chopped spinach or beetroot leaves, blended with walnut paste, pomegranate seeds and aromatic herbs.” Ground walnuts and walnut oil are found in many dishes and provide a unique nutty flavor. Foods in the western part of Georgia also tend to be spicy; they are seasoned with hot peppers, coriander, tarragon, dried marigold petals, and other spices.

Meals prepared in the eastern part of the country tend to be heavier and more meat oriented (typically lamb and chicken), reflecting Persian influence. Wheat bread is preferred over cornbread; sheep cheese is preferred over cheese made from cow’s milk.

Numerous dishes are served with each meal and

236 Dorota Gierycz, The Mysteries of the Caucasus (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp, 2010), 19.
are accompanied with Georgian beer or wine. Breakfast includes bread, cheese, eggs, and fruit. Lunch, dinner, and even snacks consist of heavier foods. Ge
genarian cuisine incorporates many sauces, which are frequently walnut-or fruit-based.

Popular vegetables include eggplant, beans, squash, onions, cabbage, and carrots. Popular fruits include oranges, plums, tomatoes, melons, pomegranates, and berries. Georgian produce is extraordinarily fresh because vegetables and fruits are harvested when in season and not before.

Wine is an essential element of the Georgian dining culture. Georgians are believed to have been the first people to engage in viticulture and winemaking. Stronger local alcoholic drinks include chacha, frequently referred to as wine vodka and often homemade. It boasts an alcohol content of nearly 50%.

Nuts are a common ingredient in many desserts. A popular dessert is churchkhela, a sausage-shaped candy made of walnuts, almonds, and raisins.

Traditional Dress

The chokha, a knee-length tunic made of thick fabric and tapered at the waist is considered traditional clothing for men in Georgia. The chokha is worn with high (often above-the-knee) boots of soft leather. The tunic is frequently accented with a khanjali kindjal, a double-edged dagger that frequently served as a secondary weapon for Georgian warriors of the past. The woman’s longer version of the chokha is decorated with chains and buckles of precious metals and worn with a headscarf. Today, the wearing of traditional dress is reserved primarily for special occasions, ceremonies and performances.

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248 Weissmann Travel Reports, Weissmann Travel Planner for Western and Eastern Europe, 1994–1995 (Austin, TX: Weissmann Travel Reports, 1994), 79.
Gender Issues

There is very little gender-based division of labor in Georgia. Nearly 60% of Georgian women work outside the home. Equal respect is shown to those who choose to work outside the home and those who do not. While the majority of women in urban areas opt to work, they remain underrepresented in certain fields such as law enforcement, the military, and government. In fact, of the one hundred fifty seats in the Georgian parliament, only six were represented by women in 2008.

According to the United Nations Development Programme statistics for 2006–2009, 83% of Georgian women believed that they were treated with respect. According to the same source, women had almost the same employment ratio as men from 2000 to 2008.

Arts

Folk Music and Dance

Georgia is known for its unique folk music, which is typically more vocal than instrumental. However, Georgian folk music often includes instrumental accompaniment, especially the guitar or a drum. Song motifs tend to be distinctly regional, and often are about agricultural, spiritual, and occupational topics. Georgian dances are associated with different regions and sometimes include the use of swords and staged combat.

The Georgian government has encouraged folk arts as a means of promoting Georgian nationalism. The same approach has also been used by the breakaway republics, which have promoted their own regional arts to represent their separate historical and cultural heritages.

Literature

Although most countries have a national anthem, few have a national epic poem. Shota Rustaveli’s *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* is not only regarded as Georgia’s greatest
example of poetry, but also as a source of philosophical lessons of virtue and chivalry long reflected in the culture. The poem’s advice that “Everything you give away remains yours and everything you keep is lost forever” is part of the national character of Georgia’s people and is expressed through traditional hospitality and kindness. According to the poem, a person’s worth is found not in his worldly goods but rather in the number of his friends. The importance of friendship and its relationship to hospitality may be seen in the Georgian word for friend, megobari, which literally refers to one who has eaten from the same bowl.

**Sports and Recreation**

Soccer, rugby, basketball, and wrestling are among the most popular sports in Georgia. Like most Europeans, Georgians are especially enthusiastic about soccer. Georgia has its own nationwide league, the Georgian Football Federation, and a national team that competes on the international circuit as well.

Over the last several decades, rugby has gained in popularity, largely because of its similarity to a traditional Georgian sport known as lelo. According to *Sports in the Soviet Union*, this game has been played for centuries and often pitted a team of bachelors or young men against a team of married or older men.

Other traditional Georgian sports include tskhenburti, a polo-like game and chidaoba, a form of jacket wrestling.

Recreational pastimes include mountaineering, trekking, mountain biking, hunting, and skiing. Projected tourist development largely revolves around outdoor activities and eco-tourism.

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Chapter 4: Assessment

1. Azeris are the single largest minority ethnic group in Georgia.

   **True**
   Although they make up only 6.5% of the overall population, Azeris are the largest ethnic minority in Georgia.

   2. The Russian army has been supporting Georgian troops in their fight against South Ossetian separatists.

   **False**
   The Russian army supports the Ossetians, not the Georgians, in the warfare taking place in South Ossetia. In fact, Russia is the only nation that officially recognizes the Ossetians’ *de facto* control of the area.

   3. The vast majority of people living in Abkhazia are fluent in Abkhaz.

   **False**
   The Abkhazians are a minority in the region. The non-Abkhazians in the area seldom speak any Abkhaz. Furthermore, most Abkhazians have little command of the language and instead speak Russian.

   4. The dominant religion in Georgia is Sunni Islam.

   **False**
   The vast majority of Georgians, nearly 84% of the population, belong to the various Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity.

   5. Georgian culinary traditions are influenced by the north and the south.

   **False**
   Georgian culinary traditions reflect Turkish and Mediterranean influences from the west and Persian influences from the east.

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Chapter 5: Security

Introduction

Georgia has tried to strengthen its economic and defense capabilities. They have sought support from Western powers (including the United States), encouraged private investment, joined international organizations, and worked cooperatively with its South Caucasus neighbors. New oil and natural gas pipelines run through Georgia and connect the Caspian Sea reserves, primarily in Azerbaijan, with Black Sea ports in Turkey. Thus, Georgia has become critical to geopolitical and economic stability in the South Caucasus. The United States and its allies have a vested interest in assuring Georgia’s continued progress as a democratic, capitalist state. They are also committed to helping Georgia address security conflicts that could undermine stability throughout the region.\(^\text{271}\)

To achieve greater stability, the United States encourages cooperation between Georgia and its neighboring South Caucasus states, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia’s integration into Western institutions should help steer the region in a pro-Western direction, away from the influence of Iran or Russia.\(^\text{272}\)

U.S.-Georgia Relations

Georgia has struggled to avoid Russia’s continued attempts to dominate it as a former Soviet state. Its leaders have turned increasingly toward the West for assistance and integration into democratic institutions. The United States has emerged as one of Georgia’s closest allies.

The United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership (2009) is evidence of this relationship. The charter affirms a mutual commitment to maintaining Georgia’s territorial integrity and independence. It addresses the two countries’ goals of enhancing bilateral military, economic, and cultural relations. It also addresses the goal of improving Georgia’s democratic institutions.\(^\text{273}\)


The U.S. government has given Georgia substantial aid throughout the post-Soviet era, and granted even more aid after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. U.S. funds have helped Georgia rebuild its infrastructure and deal with humanitarian issues related to the conflict. Funds have also helped house hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs).  

Since 2002 U.S. forces have worked closely with the Georgian military to provide specialized training in counterterrorism, mountain warfare, etc. In return, Georgian forces have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of U.S. and NATO operations.

**Relations with Neighboring Countries**

**Russia**

Relations between Georgia and Russia have historically been tense because Russia conquered its smaller neighbor on two separate occasions. This shared history forms the basis of the continued hostility between the two countries today. Georgia was one of the first Soviet Republics to declare its independence, more than half a year before the collapse of the Soviet empire. Even before this declaration, Georgia had pursued an independent path, which antagonized authorities in Moscow.

Hostilities between the Georgian government and minority groups in Abkhazia and South Ossetia erupted in conflict in the final days of the Soviet Union, and continued during the first few years of Georgian independence. Russian authorities in Moscow provided support to the Abkhazian and Ossetian rebels. Authorities allowed so-called volunteers from Russia to cross into Georgia to help the rebels in their fight with Georgian armed forces.

After establishing ceasefires, Russia created the peacekeeping force responsible for monitoring the provisions of the agreements. However, Russia continued to aid the rebels in their struggle against the Georgian government. Soon after, the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 began, during which Russian forces invaded Georgia in response to an attempt by T’bilisi to reassert its control over South Ossetia.

A ceasefire saw both sides return to their pre-war positions, but much of Georgia’s military infrastructure was left in ruins and Georgia-Russia relations were shattered. Tensions increased when Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.


Although Russia and Georgia agree upon most of their common border, strategic sections of the border and maritime boundary remain unresolved. This situation is intensified by Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and by recently announced plans to build a new Russian naval base in Abkhazia.\(^\text{277}\)

In early 2011, four U.S. Senators suggested Georgia as the possible location for a missile defense system, a move bound to aggravate Russia.\(^\text{278}\)

**Azerbaijan**

Georgia–Azerbaijan relations are generally friendly. The two countries have worked together to move away from Russian influence and toward the West. The two are charter members of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM, a strategic alliance between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova aimed at political, economic, and military cooperation in pursuit of integration into Western institutions.\(^\text{279,280}\)

Georgia and Azerbaijan have partnered economically with Turkey to build the Baku-T'bilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) and the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), both of which pass through Georgia and connect the Caspian oil and natural gas reserves of Azerbaijan with the Black Sea ports of Turkey. Azerbaijan is an important trading partner of Georgia in imports and exports.\(^\text{281}\)

Both countries appear to be concerned about their common boundary at certain crossing areas and the plight of ethnic Azeris in southeast Georgia, who tend to be poorly educated and economically disadvantaged.\(^\text{282}\)

**Armenia**

Georgia and Armenia have had a long history of amicable relations since antiquity. The royal and noble families of the two lands frequently intermarried. Armenian and Georgian kingdoms also joined forces to fight common adversaries throughout history.

Armenia, a landlocked country, relies on Georgia as its conduit to trade with the West. Azerbaijan and Turkey, are actively boycotting Armenia because of conflict over


Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway region of Azerbaijan populated by ethnic Armenians. Armenia, an ally of Russia, reciprocates by acting as a mediator between Georgia and Russia, especially when tensions erupt over Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Despite cordial relations, boundary demarcation with Armenia is unclear. A possible point of confrontation involves the ethnic Armenians in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia. They have long sought greater autonomy from the Georgian government.

**Turkey**

Despite historical animosities between Georgians and their former overlord, modern relations between Turkey and Georgia are quite friendly. Turkey is Georgia’s number one partner in the trading of imports and exports. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) and the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) pass through Georgia and connect the Caspian oil and natural gas reserves of Azerbaijan to Turkey’s Black Sea ports of Ceyhan and Erzurum.

As an ally of both Russia and Georgia, Turkey has been promoted as a possible neutral mediator in the ongoing conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, proposed creating a regional forum to pursue peaceful solutions to issues plaguing the area.

Positive relations between Turkey and Georgia were also demonstrated by Georgian troops serving in NATO’s Kosovo Force as part of a Turkish Battalion.

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285 “Armenian Leader on Karabakh, Ties with Russia, Iran, Georgia,” *Ekho Moskvy Online* (Russian) 26 January 2011,


Military

Georgia’s overall troop strength, including its combined armed forces, police, and border security forces, totals an estimated 32,850 troops.291 According to Georgia’s 2007 Strategic Defense Review, the authorized strength of Georgian Armed Forces, not including the National Guard, police, and border forces, is 28,666 troops. This number includes 16,993 Land Force troops; 1,791 Air Force troops; and 686 Maritime Defense Force troops (a merging of naval and coast guard units). The administrative and command structure is allotted 9,196 personnel.292

Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP)

In March 2002, the United States launched the Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP) to provide specialized counterterrorism training to Georgia’s military. The main goal of the program was to develop an elite force of Georgian troops capable of engaging unconventional forces and skilled in mountain warfare. From the U.S. perspective, GTEP provided a key ally in a strategic location with the necessary resources to help fight the Global War on Terror.293

Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP)

In 2004 the United States replaced GTEP with the Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP), a program of nearly USD 200 million implemented “to train battalion-size units in light infantry tactics, engineering, logistics and command-and-control operations for service with coalition forces in Iraq.”294 The aim of the program was to better prepare Georgian units for support roles in Operation Iraqi Freedom and future peacekeeping missions.295 Training was provided primarily by the U.S. Marine Corps and concluded in early 2008.296

Partnership for Peace (PfP)

Georgia was among the first of the former Eastern Bloc countries to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. The goal of the program “is to increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO, as well as among Partner countries.” 297 Within the program, individual member states define the parameters of their involvement and set goals associated with their membership. Georgia’s goal has been full membership in the organization. Georgia has been a major contributor to NATO operations. 298 As of early 2011, Georgia had more than 900 soldiers working with NATO’S International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.” 299

Issues Affecting Stability

Separatist Movements

Abkhazia—In 1992 Abkhazian secessionists, both overtly and covertly supported by the Russian government, staged an armed rebellion against the Georgian central government in an effort to achieve Abkhazian independence. 300 This action successfully pressured Georgia into a ceasefire agreement. The Russian Federation subsequently deployed troops, designated as peacekeepers, throughout Abkhazia. 301 Outbreaks of hostilities occurred in 1999 and 2008. The region remains a point of contention because Georgia and the majority of the international community refuse to acknowledge Abkhazian independence.

Russia does recognize Abkhazian independence, and has given Russian citizenship to over half the Abkhazian population. Russia has also announced plans to establish a naval base in the seaside city of Ochamchire. 302, 303 Abkhazian forces conducted ethnic

300 Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 58–59.
303 Ana K. Niedermaier, Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 77–78.
cleansing of the predominantly Georgian population of the area, substantially shifting the demographic composition.\textsuperscript{304}

In July 2009, Russia vetoed an extension of the mandate for UN observers to monitor the Abkhazian ceasefire provisions. Russia claimed its own forces were sufficient.\textsuperscript{305}

Another sign that Russia intends to stay in the region indefinitely and expects further confrontation with Georgia is that Russian forces deployed surface-to-air missiles in Abkhazia in August 2010.\textsuperscript{306}

As of February 2011, it remains illegal to enter Georgia via Abkhazia.\textsuperscript{307}

\textit{South Ossetia—}In January 1991, even before the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union, Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia ordered forces into South Ossetia to subdue opposition to central authority. This move sparked a separatist war. Attempts by the Georgian military to regain control over the territory failed. A Russian-brokered ceasefire ended direct confrontation and established a joint peacekeeping force monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Despite the agreement, violence continued on a smaller scale, driving tens of thousands, mostly ethnic Georgians, from their homes.\textsuperscript{308}

Georgian paramilitary units continued to operate in the area, and volunteer forces from the Russian republic of North Ossetia-Alania poured in to aid the South Ossetian rebels. In June 1992, the Georgian government signed a more clearly defined ceasefire agreement.\textsuperscript{309} The subsequent stalemate was interrupted by periodic outbursts of violence. In November 2006, South Ossetians passed a referendum in favor of independence.\textsuperscript{310}

In April 2008, Russia declared it was expanding its deployment of forces in and diplomatic relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia claimed the Georgian

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{305} Janusz Bugajski, \textit{Georgian Lessons: Conflicting Russian and Western Interests in the Wider Europe} (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010), 109.
\item \textsuperscript{307} Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Ireland, “Georgia,” 07 March 2011, http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=414
\item \textsuperscript{308} Jonathan Wheatley, \textit{Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union}, Post-Soviet Politics series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 53–56.
\item \textsuperscript{310} Jim Nichol, \textit{Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests} (Fort Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 3.
\end{itemize}
government was preparing to attack the rebels of those regions. Russia also deployed hundreds of extra troops to the already-assigned peacekeeping units.313

In the first week of August 2008, skirmishes between South Ossetian and Georgian forces led to a Georgian military campaign to bring the area back under government control. Russia repulsed the offensive and penetrated territory outside the autonomous republics. In what is now called the Russo-Georgian War, Russia occupied a number of key Georgian cities and bombed military and civilian targets.314,315

In response to the 2008 war and the failure of Georgia’s allies to come to its aid, on 18 August 2009, President Mikhail Saakashvili finalized the nation’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States. He claimed that the organization failed to stave off Russia’s assault.316

Today it is illegal to enter Georgia via South Ossetia.317

**Smuggling**

Because of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia has little control over much of its northern border. Thus border security remains a major government concern. One trigger of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 was a crackdown on illegal smuggling in South Ossetia. Attempts to smuggle radioactive material from former Soviet states through Georgia remain a serious concern. Many arrests have been made for such activities.318,319

**Internally Displaced Persons**

The Russo-Georgian War of 2008, characterized by acts of ethnic cleansing, destruction of homes, and other damage, resulted in there being approximately 150,000 internally displaced persons throughout Georgia and the breakaway

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313 Roy Allison, “Russia Resurgent? Moscow’s Campaign to ‘Coerce Georgia to Peace,’ ” International Affairs 84, no. 6 (2008): 1149.
315 Merle Wesley Shoemaker, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2009 (Harpers Ferry, WV: Stryker-Post Publications, 2009), 222.
republics. An unknown number of other people fled the country for the safety of neighboring states. Only some of these people have been able to return to their homes following the ceasefire. The United Nations estimated that by the end of 2009 the number of IDPs actually doubled because of continued intimidation by rebel militias in the breakaway republics.  

Minority Relations
The disputes between the rebels in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved. Although Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by nearly the entire world as Georgian territory, the rebels have gained de jure control of their respective areas, and supported by Russia, show no signs of negotiating an end to the conflicts.

In addition to the Abkhazian and Ossetian ethnic minorities already discussed, there are numerous other ethnic and religious minority groups in Georgia. The most prominent of the ethnic groups not lumped together as Georgians are the Azeris and the Armenians. Although both groups have in the past experienced discrimination with respect to education and economic opportunity, they maintain fairly amicable relations with their fellow countrymen and with the central government. However, small movements within both groups—the Azeris in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions of the southeast and the Armenians in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of the south—have called for greater autonomy in these areas where these groups are a majority.  

Within Georgia, one finds different branches of Islam and Christianity and very small Jewish and Yezidi communities. Although relations between Georgia’s religious groups have historically been friendly, a more vigorous, emerging nationalism closely tied to the Georgian Orthodox Church has sparked isolated incidents of persecution against some of the smaller faith communities. Jehovah’s Witnesses seem to have been the most obvious target of such attacks.  

Terrorism
The U.S. State Department 2009 Country Report on Terrorism states that Russian allegations of Georgian support for Chechen terrorists were unsubstantiated. Other entities have noted that such accusations were merely a pretense for Russia to take military action against Georgia.

In T’bilisi in May 2005, a man named Vladimir Arutyunian threw a live grenade toward the platform where then U.S. President George W. Bush and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili were addressing a gathering. The grenade landed several meters away and failed to detonate; neither leader was aware of the assassination attempt until later.

On 7 December 2010, the Georgian government announced the arrest of six suspects on charges of carrying out a series of bombings in T’bilisi under the direction of Russian military intelligence. One detainee alleged in a videotaped confession that he was “recruited by a Russian Army major based in Abkhazia.”

Looking Forward
The outlook for Georgia is difficult to gauge. Georgia continues to deepen its ties with the West as it integrates into more international institutions. On the other hand, the possibility of renewed conflict over breakaway republics remains a concern, as does the associated increase of Russian influence.

Since the 2008 war ended, the United States has reiterated its commitment to Georgia’s territorial integrity and provided substantial aid for Georgia’s military, economic, and infrastructural redevelopment. Meanwhile, Russia continues to build up its presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and has stated clearly that it will not permit the territories to reintegrate with Georgia. Georgia aims to ensure stability and security in the region.

partly by informing the international community about Russia’s increased militarization.329

Chapter 5: Assessment

1. The U.S. is one of Georgia’s closest allies.

True

The 2009 United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership is evidence of this relationship. The charter affirms a mutual commitment to help Georgia maintain its territorial integrity and independence.

2. Bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia are generally positive.

False

Relations between Georgia and Russia are hostile. Russia has supported the rebels fighting against Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and in 2008 fought a brief war against Georgia.

3. Relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia are generally friendly.

True

The two countries have worked together to move away from Russian influence and toward the West. They have worked together on economic and political projects to strengthen ties with Western economies and institutions.

4. The U.S. has actively assisted Georgia in modernizing its military.

True

Through the 2002 Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) and the 2004 Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP), the United States helped train Georgian Armed Forces in specialized skills such as counterterrorism and mountain warfare. The training aimed to bring the country’s military up to NATO standards.

5. Georgia has been actively engaged in NATO operations.

True

Georgia was among the first of the former Eastern Bloc countries to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Georgia also has personnel working with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo.
Final Assessment
1. In the nineteenth century Georgia was forcibly integrated into the Russian Empire.
2. Georgia has long been a unified and homogenous country.
3. Georgia has frequently been at the center of power struggles among its larger, more powerful neighbors.
4. The Georgian language is closely related to other Indo-European languages.
5. In the early medieval history of Georgia, Christianity and Zoroastrianism vied for dominance as the religion of the Georgian kingdoms.
6. Unlike the situation with South Ossetia, Georgian relations with Abkhazia have been amicable.
7. The autonomous republic of Ajaria has been peacefully reintegrated into the Georgian state.
8. The city of Gori was largely spared from the impact of the Russo-Georgian War of 2008.
9. The populations of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali have shrunk significantly in the aftermath of the separatist movements.
10. The only known natural hazard in Georgia is the danger of earthquakes.
11. In Georgia today, the wearing of traditional dress is reserved primarily for special occasions and performances.
12. There is very little division of labor based on gender in Georgia.
13. Georgian folk music is quite similar to that found in other European countries.
14. *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* is a Russian poem, adopted by the Georgians during Soviet occupation.
15. Unlike many European countries, Georgia has no tradition of soccer.
16. Georgia has managed to resolve all of its post-Soviet conflicts.
17. Smuggling has not been an issue in Georgia.
18. Georgia is plagued by the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs).
19. Ethnic Armenians in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region have called for greater autonomy from the central government.
20. Terrorism is not a concern in Georgia.
21. Georgia has an abundance of natural resources.

22. Georgia is internationally recognized for its investor-friendly business policies.

23. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Georgia’s economy decreased significantly because of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the world economic recession.

24. Georgian wages have continued to rise since the Rose Revolution of 2003.

25. Georgia’s unemployment rate skyrocketed in the aftermath of the 2008 war and the onset of the global recession.
Further Reading


Niedermaier, Ana K. *Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia*. Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008.


