

Georgia



2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

GEORGIA

Situated at the strategically important crossroads where Europe meets Asia, over the centuries, Georgia was the object of rivalry between Persia, Turkey and Russia, before being eventually annexed by Russia in the 19th century. Independent for three years (1918-1921) following the Russian revolution, it was forcibly incorporated into the USSR until the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

Since independence, Georgia has endured periods of civil war and unrest as well as violence related to the separatist conflicts in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. In August 2008, tensions between Georgia and Russia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia escalated into a full-blown military conflict. The conflict remains unresolved, although cease-fires are in effect. Relations with Russia came to the fore again since 2014 with Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, and Georgia's related fears of Russian imperialist ambitions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Georgia was one of the most prosperous areas of the former Soviet Union. But after independence in 1991, Georgia suffered severe political and economic turbulence as a result of the impact of the civil war and the loss of both preferential accesses to former Soviet Union markets and large budget transfers from the central government of the former Soviet Union. The economy started to pick up in 2000 and has seen impressive performance in recent years. However, the armed conflict with Russia over the disputed region of South Ossetia in August 2008 had a severe impact on Georgia's economy, and in the months that followed, the already difficult economy was hit by the global economic crisis.

In more recent years, the Georgian economy has seen its share of ups and downs, while the political sphere has experienced some turbulence.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Asia / Caucasus
Population:	4524962
Climate:	Warm with Mediterranean-like climate on Black Sea coast
Languages:	Georgian (Official) Armenian Azeri Russian
Currency:	lari
Holiday:	Independence Day is 26 May (1991), Constitution Day is 24 August
Area Total:	69700
Area Land:	69700
Coast Line:	310

Georgia

Country Map



Asia / Caucasus

Regional Map



Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Georgia's History in Brief

Georgian history is over 2,500 years old, and Georgian is one of the oldest living languages in the world. Tbilisi, located in a picturesque valley divided by the Mtkvari River, is more than 1,500 years old.

Archeological evidence indicates a neolithic culture in the area of modern Georgia as early as the fifth millennium B.C.E. ("before the common era"). Between that time and the modern era, a number of ethnic groups invaded or migrated into the region, merging with numerous indigenous tribes to form the ethnic base of the modern Georgian people. Throughout history the territory comprising the Georgian state varied considerably in size as foreign forces occupied some regions and as centrally ruled federations controlled others.

In the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, Georgia, in the form of the kingdom of Kartli-Iberia, was strongly influenced by Greece to the west and Persia to the east. After the Roman Empire completed its conquest of the Caucasus region in 66 B.C.E., the kingdom was a Roman client state and ally for some 400 years. In 330 C.E. ("common era"), King Marian III's acceptance of Christianity ultimately tied Georgia to the neighboring Byzantine Empire, which exerted a strong cultural influence for several centuries.

Although Arabs captured the capital city of Tbilisi in 645 C.E., Kartli-Iberia retained considerable independence under local Arab rulers. In 813 C.E., the Armenian prince Ashot I became the first of the Bagrationi family to rule Georgia. Ashot's reign began a period of nearly 1,000 years during which the Bagratids, as the house was known, ruled at least part of what is now Georgia.

Western and eastern Georgia were united under Bagrat V (r. 1027-72). In the next century, David IV (called the Builder, r. 1099-1125) initiated the Georgian golden age by driving the Turks from the country and expanding Georgian cultural and political influence southward into Armenia and eastward to the Caspian Sea. That era of unparalleled power and prestige for the Georgian monarchy concluded with the great literary flowering of Queen Tamar's reign (1184-1212). At the end of that period, Georgia was well known in the Christian West (and relied upon as an ally by the Crusaders). Outside the national boundaries, several provinces were dependent to some degree on

Georgian power: the Trabzon Empire on the southern shore of the Black Sea, regions in the Caucasus to the north and east, and southern Azerbaijan.

The Mongol invasion in 1236 marked the beginning of a century of fragmentation and decline. A brief resurgence of Georgian power in the fourteenth century ended when the Turkic conquerer Timur (Tamerlane) destroyed Tbilisi in 1386. The capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 began three centuries of domination by the militant Ottoman and Persian empires, which divided Georgia into spheres of influence in 1553 and subsequently redistributed Georgian territory between them.

By the eighteenth century, however, the Bagratid line again had achieved substantial independence under nominal Persian rule. In this period, Georgia was threatened more by rebellious Georgian and Persian nobles within than by the major powers surrounding the country. In 1762 Herekle II was able to unite the east Georgian regions of Kartli and Kakhetia under his independent but tenuous rule. In this period of renewed unity, trade increased and feudal institutions lost influence in Georgia.

In 1773, Herekle began efforts to gain Russian protection from the Turks, who were threatening to retake his kingdom. In this period, Russian troops intermittently occupied parts of Georgia, making the country a pawn in the explosive Russian-Turkish rivalry of the last three decades of the eighteenth century. After the Persians sacked Tbilisi in 1795, Herekle again sought the protection of Orthodox Russia.

Because of its weak position, Georgia could not name the terms of protection by the Russian Empire. In 1801 Tsar Alexander I summarily abolished the kingdom of Kartli-Kakhetia, and the heir to the Bagratid throne was forced to abdicate. In the next decade, the Russian Empire gradually annexed Georgia's entire territory. Eastern Georgia (the regions of Kartli and Kakhetia) became part of the Russian Empire in 1801, and western Georgia (Imeretia) was incorporated in 1804.

After annexation Russian governors tried to rearrange Georgian feudal society and government according to the Russian model. Russian education and ranks of nobility were introduced, and the Georgian Orthodox Church lost its autocephalous status in 1811. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russification intensified, as did Georgian rebellions against the process.

Pockets of Georgian resistance to foreign rule continued, and the first Republic of Georgia was established on May 26, 1918, after the collapse of tsarist Russia.

By March 1921, the tsarist army had reoccupied the country, and Georgia became part of the Soviet Union. On Apr. 9, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia declared independence from the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.).

Beset by ethnic strife and civil war since independence in 1991, Georgia began to stabilize in 1994. Separatist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been dormant since spring 1994, although political settlements remain elusive. Russian peacekeepers are deployed in both regions and a United Nations Observer Mission is operating in Abkhazia. As a result of these conflicts, Georgia still has approximately 250,000 internally displaced people.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Political Chronology

Through the 1990s, Georgia made significant progress toward achieving political and economic stability. Surviving two assassination attempts (in August 1995 and February 1998), President Shevardnadze consolidated his party's leadership and moved ahead with an ambitious political and economic reform agenda. He was also quite active in foreign policy.

In 1995, Georgia adopted a new constitution and conducted generally free and fair nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections. Eduard Shevardnadze easily defeated his challengers in the November presidential election, garnering nearly 75 percent of the votes cast. Shevardnadze's party, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, won 107 out of 235 seats. The closest challenger was the National Democratic Party of Georgia, which won 34 seats. The All-Georgian Union of Revival won 31 seats, and non-partisans took 29 seats. Since the separatist region of Abkhazia boycotted the national elections, the 12 deputies from Abkhazia chosen previously retained their seats. The remaining seats were divided among eight other parties.

At the time, of the 11 main political parties in Georgia, four were pro-government and seven were opposition parties. The Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), a pro-government party formed in late 1993, was dominated by young reformers but also included Soviet bureaucrats connected to President Shevardnadze from his days as leader of Soviet Georgia. The CUG's name recognition, financial support and organization gave it a distinct advantage over the other political parties. The National Democratic Party of Georgia represented the opposition in parliament. The party was formed in 1981 and had strong name recognition throughout most of the country.

The new government focused its attention on implementing an ambitious economic reform program and reforming parliament. The new parliament instituted wide-ranging political reforms supportive of higher human rights standards; however, problems persisted, largely as a result of the unwillingness of certain law enforcement and criminal justice officials to support constitutionally mandated changes. Mistreatment of detainees and corruption within certain state agencies and monopolies continued to be significant problems. Increased citizen awareness of civil rights and democratic values, however, provided an increasingly effective check on some of the excesses of law enforcement agencies.

In October and November 1999, parliamentary elections were again held. Most observers viewed these elections as a popular referendum on President Shevardnadze's seven years in office and on the performance of his CUG government since 1995. The CUG campaigned on a pro-Western, pro-NATO platform, arguing in favor of the removal of Russian military bases in Georgia and increasing Western and United Nations assistance with the situation in Abkhazia. With regard to domestic policy, the CUG promised judicial and military reforms and greater privatization of state-owned enterprises.

The All-Georgian Union for Revival was the primary opposition to the CUG in the elections. Headed by the leader of Georgia's Autonomous Republic of Ajaria, Aslan Abashidze, the Revival Bloc campaigned against moving "too close" to the West; against closing Russian bases in Georgia; and against privatizing key transportation and energy sectors. The campaign between the two main parties, the CUG and the Revival Bloc, became quite nasty, with each party accusing the other of foul play.

Other parties included the left-of-center Georgian Labor Party, the National Democratic Alliance (Third Way Bloc), and the "Industry Will Save Georgia" Bloc. The Labor Party campaigned on a platform based on a neutral foreign policy and the creation of a western European style welfare state. The National Democratic Alliance - Third Way Bloc presented a pro-Western, pro-business platform.

The 1999 "popular referendum" appeared to turn out strongly in favor of President Shevardnadze and his party. The Citizens' Union of Georgia won 132 seats. Its nearest competitor, the Revival Bloc, won only 58. "Industry Will Save Georgia" garnered 15, while the Labor Party won only two seats. Independents won 16 seats. The National Democratic Alliance (Third Way Bloc) received no seats. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe election monitors did note registration and voting irregularities, including some violence, instances of intimidation and ballot-stuffing.

Before the end of the year 2000, Georgia's communists voted to "rehabilitate" fellow countryman Josef Stalin and said that they believed the Soviet dictator was a role model for Russian President

Vladimir Putin. The symbolic vote to clear the name of Stalin came six days after his birthday (December 21) when a few hundred devoted Stalinists marched through his hometown of Gori, 40 miles west of Tbilisi, in an annual ritual. "We made this decision as it was our duty towards the most gifted politician of the 20th century," Panteleimon Giorgadze, the party leader, said.

Meanwhile, the Abkhaz separatist dispute continued to absorb much of the government's attention. While a cease-fire was in effect since 1994 between the Georgian government and separatists, more than 250,000 internally displaced people driven from their homes during the conflict have constituted a vocal lobby. The government offered the region considerable autonomy in order to encourage a settlement that would allow the majority of ethnic Georgians from the Gali region to return home. Nevertheless, the Abkhaz insist on independence.

On Oct. 3, 1999, the Abkhaz separatists held a presidential election and a referendum on independence. The only candidate, Vladislav Ardzinba, was elected president. Shortly after the elections, the Abkhazia parliament declared independence from Georgia and requested recognition by the international community. This recognition was forthcoming, and the Georgian government continued to condemn both the presidential election and the declaration of independence. Abkhazia continued to refuse acceptance of any power-sharing agreement with the government in Tbilisi.

In March 2001, Georgia and the Abkhazia region signed an accord which officialized an agreement not to use force against one other. By October 2001, violent altercations ensued between Abkhaz troops and Georgian paramilitaries from the North Caucasus.

At the same time, relations between Georgia and Russia deteriorated when Russia accused Georgia of allowing Chechen rebels to take refuge -- and operate from -- within its borders. Georgia denied the charges.

In internal political affairs, on Sept. 29, 2001, a decision was reached at a special session of the parliamentary majority to break up the majority and create several factions instead. The chairman of the parliamentary Committee for Regional Policy and Self-governance, Roman Kusiani, told Prime-News that three factions would be set up on the basis of the current Union of Citizens faction which made the bulk of the Majority. One of the new factions would be headed by the chairman of the Subcommittee for Relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Irakli Gogava. Kusiani also said that there were plans to establish the "Big faction" which would unite the majority of the members of the Union of Citizens faction. The faction would apparently be headed by the leader of the Union of Citizens faction, Rezo Adamia.

Members of the majority, Kote Kemularia, said that a group of members of parliament from within the Majority intended to establish another faction under the conventional name of Reformers. Apart from Kemularia, some 20 members of parliament expressed the wish to join this new faction.

The general secretary of the Citizens' Union, the largest party in parliament, Edvard Surmanidze, said on Oct. 3, 2001, that President Shevardnadze would be forced to agree to the decision of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) to postpone the local self-government elections by one year. Surmanidze said that despite Shevardnadze's opposition to the postponement of the elections, the CEC had decided, for various reasons, to relieve itself of its responsibility to administer the elections. Shevardnadze said on several occasions in September that he would oppose any postponement because "people are ready for the elections."

The chairman of Georgian parliament, Zurab Zhvania, said on Oct. 1, 2001, that, from an organizational point of view, it was desirable for the parliamentary majority to split into several factions and that this process should not be resisted. Zhvania said regrouping should not be seen as the disintegration of the parliamentary majority. He also said it was important that the parliamentary majority agree on its action plan. The parliamentary majority had thus far consisted of two groups, the Citizens' Union and Georgia's Regions, the alliance of single-seat constituency deputies. The establishment of a new group, Alliance for a New Georgia, was to be officially announced on the following day. It would be headed by the chairman of the parliamentary subcommittee for CIS affairs, Irakli Gogava.

The Traditionalist, Industrialist and New Abkhazia - Christian Democrat parliamentary groups announced on Oct. 3, 2001, that they established an alliance called Center. Traditionalist leader Akaki Asatiani said the alliance would be guided by the following five principles: restoration of Georgian territorial integrity and a peaceful settlement of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) problems by political means; liberalization of tax legislation; reform of the country's territorial and administrative system on the basis of devolution and direct elections for local administrations; improvement of electoral legislation; streamlining the country's governance.

This political orchestration aside, by the end of November 2001, Georgia was on the brink of a political crisis over allegations of government corruption. On September 19, Justice Minister Mikhail Saakashvili, frustrated by the parliament's blockade of his anti-corruption legislation, resigned from his post and accused the government of being deeply mired in corruption. Saakashvili was elected to parliament in an October by-election and promised to fight against corruption.

Meanwhile, on Oct. 30, 2001, State Security Ministry personnel raided Rustavi 2, Georgia's largest independent television station. Authorities claimed the raid was carried out to investigate tax violations committed by the station, however Rustavi 2 was a well-known critic of the government and was frequently critical of its failure to tackle corruption. Many viewed the raid as politically motivated, and they saw it also as an attack on the free press, especially once it was revealed that the TV station had in fact paid its taxes. Protests outside the TV station followed with demands that Rustavi 2 not be persecuted and for the resignation of Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze,

Prosecutor-General Giya Maparishvili, and President Shevardnadze. Protestors also called for early presidential and parliamentary elections.

The following day, State Security Minister Vakhtang Kutateladze resigned over the incident. On November 1, President Shevardnadze dismissed his entire cabinet. By Nov. 1, 2001, the protests had moved outside the parliament; it was estimated that several thousands were protesting the actions of the government. Parliamentary speaker Zurab Zhvania resigned as well and by the close of Nov. 1, 2001, President Shevardnadze was the only person to hold executive power in Georgia.

On Nov. 10, 2001, Nino Burdzhanadze was elected as the speaker of the parliament. This in itself marked a historical occasion as this was the first time a woman has held this position -- the second most powerful political position in the country. Throughout the remaining weeks of 2001, government ministers were appointed or reappointed to fill the empty positions.

In 2002, after several months of increasing tension resulting from rebel operations along their common border, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Eduard Shevardnadze agreed to establish joint border patrols. The agreement was forged at a regional summit in Moldova. Tensions between the two countries had been increasing in tandem with Russia's accusation that Georgia had allowed Chechen rebels to move freely and enact terrorist attacks in the area. Russia also claimed that after carrying out attacks, the rebels have typically fled across the border into Georgia, including the Pankisi Gorge, where they enjoyed a safe haven. For its part, Georgia accused Russia of violating its airspace as it attempted to deal with the rebel threat.

The conflict had escalated to such an extent that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe had placed monitors in the area. The joint border patrol decision was regarded as a constructive measure aimed at lowering the tenor of bilateral tensions and decreasing the threat of military confrontation.

By late 2002, the matter was somewhat diffused when Georgia promised to work with Russia to deal with the problem of Chechen rebels. Of particular note was an extensive two month antiterrorist operation by Georgian authorities, which resulted in the deaths of several suspected guerrillas, the detainment of dozens of Chechens and the extradition of many to Russia.

In 2003, parliamentary elections were due to take place. During that timeframe, the conflict between the government of Georgia and separatists in Abkhazia continued unabated. The violence left the area economically isolated from the rest of the world and in constant political conflict.

Russia offered citizenship to Abkhazians who were legally Georgians but, at the same time, had declared themselves to be independent. Assuming Russian citizenship, under these circumstances, offered little solace to those who had been fighting for self-determination. Caught in the crosshairs of the issue were not simply Abkhazians seeking independence but also ethnic Georgians who lived

in the Abkhazia region and were driven out during the last decade of ongoing dissonance. In both these regards, international jurisprudence had not been able to offer clear relief.

While United Nations aid has been vital to the survival of the people of the region, a few years prior, a United Nations aircraft was shot down. Also, in 2003, a few United Nations observers were kidnapped on the Abkhazia border. They were later released unharmed. At least in the case of the helicopter incident, which killed the crew and nine United Nations observers, the blame was placed on Chechen rebels. The lawlessness taking root within Abkhazia, however, could not be ignored as it was believed to have contributed to such incidences taking place.

With little attention placed on this forgotten area of the world, and with little hope offered in the way of resolving the political impasse, experts warned that the Abkhazia region could be a possible venue for explosive conflict in the future.

Abkhazia aside, events within the political center of Georgia were to take a dramatic turn in late 2003. Following elections in which the the president's party appeared to have seized victory on contestatory grounds, massive protests ensued. Then, on Nov. 22, 2003, opposition forces stormed the Georgian parliament and took over its control. After leaving the parliament building, President Eduard Shevardnadze declared a state of emergency and warned that he would use the military to restore order. He also observed that the action by opposition forces had occurred because he had been too liberal in his leadership. Nevertheless, President Shevardnadze resigned a day later, contradicting his earlier declaration that he would not be forced from office.

Although a popular leader in the early days of independent statehood, in recent years, Shevardnadze's image had deteriorated as he became increasingly associated with the corruption and poverty that flourished under his rule. This unfavorable image, in addition to protests over recent election results in which fraud was alleged by opposition parties, contributed to the mass uprising and the apparent overthrow of Shevardnadze's regime.

Announcing his resignation on national television, Shevardnadze said that he was resigning in order to prevent bloodshed. Reports on the ground in Georgia's capital city of Tblisi, however, suggested that he was given an ultimatum to resign by opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili, and the army also withdrew its support for him. With these factors working against him, Shevardnadze may have well felt compelled to resign, despite his self-stated altruistic motivation. Regardless, the leadership of the opposition promised to guarantee the safety of the ousted leader and his family.

Nino Burdzhnadarze, another opposition leader, was expected to take on the role of acting president until new elections could be held within 45 days. The other key opposition leader, Mikhail Saakashvili, worked with Burdzhnadarze during the transitional period.

The bloodless uprising that effectively ousted Shevardnadze from office was then dubbed Georgia'

s “rose revolution.” Ebulient celebration reigned in the streets of Tbilisi following the announcement of these developments. Still, experts warned that the end of the Shervardnadze regime hardly meant that Georgia’s problems were over. Indeed, some warned that the country would be ruled by inexperienced politicians and as such, they forecasted trouble ahead.

Within the region, the European Union expressed its hopes and desires for a peaceful handover of power in Georgia. Across the Atlantic in the United States, Secretary of State Colin Powell offered support to incoming interim leadership.

By the close of 2003, an explosion had gone off at the offices of one of the opposition political parties in the Georgian capital city of Tbilisi. A spokesperson for the Labour Party said that the incoming government might be responsible for the explosion, and warned that it might be attempting to squash dissent. The spokesperson also noted that the tactics of intimidation of the new government might be very similar to that of the last.

Shalva Natelashvili, the leader of the Labour Party, said his political group had been targeted because of its popularity. He also referred to the new administration as "Shevardnadze's heirs." The Labour Party, although in opposition to ousted President Eduard Shevardnadze's regime, had at the same time, been a critic of the interim administration, led by Nino Burjanadze.

In the first days of 2004, a political shift ensued. Saakashvili -- who spearheaded the "rose revolution" -- won an overwhelming victory in the presidential election held on Jan. 4, 2004. Born in 1967, Saakashvili studied law at George Washington University and Columbia University in the United States. He then worked for a law firm in New York. He began his political career in Georgia in 1995 when he was elected to the National Assembly of Georgia. The new president -- who spoke Russian, Ukrainian, English and French – was distinguished as Europe's youngest head of state. He was sworn in on Jan. 26, 2004, at the same place where protestors had forced President Shevardnadze out of power.

There was no doubt that Saakashvili would be faced with enormous challenges as Georgia remained fractured by unresolved conflicts. As well, half of the population lives below the poverty line while corruption is widespread. Opponents called the new president "young and untested;" meanwhile, Saakashvili declared on the day of his inauguration: "I'd rather die than disappoint my people."

In March 2004, early results from Georgia's parliamentary elections showed a strong victory win for candidates aligned with President Mikhail Saakashvili, whose National Movement-Democratic Front received 67 percent of the vote cast and claimed a majority of the seats in parliament (135 of the 150 seats at stake). The rightist opposition (an alliance of two parties) gained 7.6 percent and 15 seats of the 150 seats at stake in parliament. No other parties or blocs crossed the threshold to gain seats. These results, of course, excluded the 85 single-member constituencies. The result of

the election spurred warnings that having only one party in a position of political power could compromise democracy, which requires effective opposition.

The election ensued at a time of great animosity between President Saakashvili and the leader of the semi-autonomous Ajaria region, Aslan Abashidze. Two months later, the situation between Ajaria and Georgia proper became more strained. Following the destruction of two bridges by Ajarian forces, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili threatened to remove the leader of the Ajaria region from office unless he met certain demands within 10 days. For his part, Aslan Abashidze said he was anxiously anticipating an invasion by Georgian soldiers.

Editor's Note: Unlike Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two other conflict zones that also operate outside the sphere of Tbilisi 's control, Ajaria has never declared its independence. Conflicts in all these regions flared in the 1990s and remain unresolved today.

The Georgian separatist region of South Ossetia was the site of fighting in mid-2004 as the Georgian government struggled to keep a complex situation under control. South Ossetia seeks to integrate itself with Russia, and therefore its leaders have demanded either independence from Georgia, or direct rule from Moscow. In June of 2004, Georgian Interior Ministry troops were sent into the region, officially to combat smugglers and protect local villages. However, South Ossetians saw the deployment as a step toward forcing the region back under Georgian control. As a result, clashes broke out in mid-August between Georgian troops and South Ossetian forces and have continued to flare since then.

On August 19, fighting intensified and Georgian forces captured strategic heights near the major South Ossetian city of Tskhinvali, but began a pullout soon afterward. President Mikheil Saakashvili stated that the pullout demonstrated the willingness of his government to use negotiations to resolve the conflict. However, his troops were to be relocated to the nearby city of Gori, where they would be able to return in short order to South Ossetia if it was required.

Russian interests in South Ossetia have been another factor coming into play. Dozens of Russian peacekeepers were deployed there to monitor a 1992 Georgian-Ossetian peace treaty. Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a warning that any attempt by Georgia to forcefully regain control over South Ossetia may reignite the old territorial conflicts that caused much bloodshed in the early 1990s. However, both Georgia and South Ossetia blamed each other for the violence, as well as third party elements. Georgia considers Russian peacekeepers and Russian mercenaries hired by South Ossetia to be the "third force," while Russia and South Ossetia consider the Georgian Interior Ministry troops to be the instigator of clashes.

Complex relationships and the security of the region were at stake as the leaders of Georgia, Russia, and South Ossetia walked a tight rope to regain a form of balance in the region in the latter half of 2004.

At the start of 2005, President Saakashvili revealed proposals to address the question of autonomy within Georgia for South Ossetia. The leadership of South Ossetia, however, rejected the plan, calling for full independence once again.

Saakashvili also suggested that a similar package of proposals could be offered to Abkhazia, on the condition that Georgian refugees who fled the fighting and violence of 1993 were allowed to return. During this period in January 2005, Abkhazia held a "rerun" of its presidential elections. Sergei Bagapsh claimed victory after forging an agreement with his chief rival, Raul Khadzhimba, who later took on the role of vice president.

In early 2005, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, who had been a key figure in the "rose revolution," was found dead in a friend's apartment. His death was believed to have been caused by a gas leak. President Saakashvili assumed the role of head of government until a permanent replacement could be found.

Soon after Zhvania's death, a spate of deaths shook the Georgian political scene. In addition to the prime minister who died in the aforementioned apartment, two of his associates were also found dead in Tbilisi. Both deaths were associated with somewhat suspicious circumstances. Found in the same apartment as the late prime minister was the body of the Kremo-Kartli region deputy governor Raul Usupov, who was also the owner of the apartment. Soon thereafter, Georgy Khelashvili, who worked for the pardons commission, was found dead with a gunshot wound to his head. The death was reported to be a suicide, and the minister was supposedly suffering from depression, according to the Georgian Interior Ministry.

By late February 2005, Georgia's parliament had ratified a new government, led by former Finance Minister Zurab Nogaideli. The new government had to be formed to replace the one headed by the late Prime Minister Zhvania. The new government was faced with improving Georgia's ties to Russia.

May 2005 was marked by an historic visit by United States President George W. Bush, who attracted large crowds in the capital city of Tbilisi. A few months later in July 2005, a man was arrested for having thrown a grenade in the direction of the podium where Saakashvili and Bush stood to address the crowds. The grenade never exploded at the time in May; however, the device was found only 100 feet (about 30 meters) from where the two leaders stood.

In June 2005, Finance Minister Chechelashvili was asked to step down from office when it was revealed that a number of senior tax officials had been detained on suspicion of taking bribes.

Meanwhile, as the second half of 2005 began, Russia agreed to withdraw troops from two of the military bases that had been established during the Soviet era. The date for closure was set for

2008. As well, unrest in certain volatile regions continued with the killing of a Georgian policeman and four Ossetians in South Ossetia.

In early 2006, the issue of gas supplies was in the public purview in Georgia. This was because two explosions on Russia's main natural gas supply pipeline disrupted the supply of gas. The location of the explosions was close to the border with Georgia, thus disrupting supplies to that country.

In July 2006, issues regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia took center stage when the Georgian Foreign Ministry released a statement denouncing the "unacceptable and irresponsible" response of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov to the Georgian parliament's call for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from those two areas.

Lavrov said that Russia was ready to defend the population of the two disputed regions, most of whom are holders of Russian passports. Ivanov said that Russian forces who were staging maneuvers in the North Caucasus would assist peacekeeping forces, should the situation in the two conflict zones disintegrate. The Georgian Foreign Ministry interpreted the Russian ministers' statements as de facto threats of military force. Georgia said that such suggestions were in violation of Article 4 of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits threats of that sort.

A few days after the controversial Russian statements were uttered, Georgia's Defense Minister, Irakli Okruashvili, said that his country would not sign any bilateral pact on the non-resumption of hostilities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so long as human rights were being violated in those two areas. He also said that Georgia should abjure all the agreements that have been signed with the two breakaway republics in recent months.

Around the same time, it was confirmed that President Mikheil Saakashvili would not go to Moscow later in July 2006 to attend the informal CIS summit. No reason was given for that decision. Earlier, Saakashvili had said that he anticipated meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit to discuss tensions in bilateral relations. He also said earlier that he was optimistic about finding common ground with Putin. It was not known whether his decision not to attend the summit automatically meant that he was moving away from these pronouncements.

In September 2006, Russia and Georgia became embroiled in a diplomatic imbroglio. At issue was the arrest of five Russian officers in Georgia on the basis of allegations of spying. The Russian government in Moscow demanded their release, however, the Georgian government in Tbilisi was itself compelling the handover of a sixth Russian officer. That officer was apparently within Russian army headquarters, which was surrounded by police in the Georgian capital. The Georgian Interior Ministry claimed that it had evidence showing that the Russian officers had been "personally carrying out intelligence activities." It also linked Russia with separatist activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In response, Russia ordered the withdrawal of diplomatic officials,

including the Russian ambassador, from Georgia using emergency aircrafts. Russia additionally urged its citizens to refrain from travel to Georgia and stopped processing visa requests from Georgian nationals. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Georgia's actions were a manifestation of an anti-Russian policy and he warned that he would refer the matter to the United Nations. The situation was not helped by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's dismissal of Russia's reaction as being "hysteria."

By the start of October 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin entered the fray, saying that Georgia's arrest of the Russian army officers for spying was tantamount to "an act of state terrorism with hostage-taking." His remarks came following a meeting with the security council of his government and a day after his government said that it would halt its scheduled withdrawal of troops from Georgia. The presence of Russian troops in Georgia had been a source of consternation for Georgians and their exit in 2008 had been highly-anticipated. Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhushvili responded to that bit of news by saying that his government expected Russia to honor its prior commitment.

On October 2, 2006, Georgia said that it was releasing the Russian military officers. The situation was not automatically resolved, however, as Russia went forward with sanctions against Georgia, including the aforementioned travel restrictions, but also including deportations of Georgians and raids on Georgian-owned businesses. Georgia protested Russia's actions, with Foreign Minister Bezhushvili characterizing it as being beyond xenophobia. By October 9, 2006, Georgia said that it would turn back any aircraft with deported Georgians from Russia.

Since Saakashvili's ascent to power in 2004, relations between the two countries have devolved. Increased tensions have been blamed not only on the separatist campaigns which have been ongoing for some time, or the presence (until 2008) of two remaining Soviet-era military bases, but also on Saakashvili's Western orientation (away from Russia and toward the European Union and NATO).

November 2006 marked the time of an independence referendum in the Georgian semi-autonomous enclave of South Ossetia. Turnout was reported to be more than 90 percent and many analysts were expecting an overwhelming affirmative response to the question of independence. Indeed, South Ossetians voted in favour of independence in the referendum, which was largely unrecognized by the international community. For their part, South Ossetians were nevertheless hoping that the referendum result would help them augment their thrust for sovereignty. On the other hand, Georgia viewed the referendum as illegitimate and renewed its commitment to keeping South Ossetia within its fold. Moreover, the close connection South Ossetia shares with Russia resulted in a further strain on already poor Georgian-Russian ties.

Tensions between Russia and Georgia were not helped by a dispute over the price of gas supplied by Russia's Gazprom. Georgia had reacted angrily to a price increase by Gazprom. Indeed,

Georgia accused Russia of raising gas prices as a punitive measure against its pro-Western policies. However, because it was unable to secure an alternative supply of gas, and with Gazprom threatening to cut off supplies without agreement on the updated price of gas, Georgia eventually acquiesced to the new arrangement.

The issue was reminiscent of Russia's earlier argument with Ukraine and various other countries in Eastern Europe, which was also spurred by the increased price of gas supplies. As before, Russia said that the price increase was in keeping with market rates, while other countries complained that the new pricing structure was untenable.

By March 2007, ties between the two countries -- Georgia and Russia -- were not helped by the poor medical conditions and deaths of several ethnic Georgians who were deported from Russia during the aforementioned diplomatic imbroglio, which started with the detainment of Russian officers on charges of spying in the fall of 2006. Georgians expressed outrage at the deaths of the deportees, and the Georgian government in the spring of 2007 launched charges of human rights violations against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The Georgian Justice Ministry said in a statement, "The lawsuit is based on hundreds of cases of flagrant abuses of the human rights of Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians by the Russian Federation during their deportations." Russia responded by saying that it believed that it had the right to deport illegal migrants, and as such, it was doubtful that the court would consider the case. A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, Mikhail Kamynin said, "Actions of this kind are not conducive to the normalization of relations between Russia and Georgia."

On August 22, 2007, Georgia accused Russia of violating its airspace for a second time within weeks. The Georgian Foreign Ministry said that a Russian fighter jet had flown a few miles into its territory, according to tracking data from the country's air defense system. The Russian government in Moscow denied the incursion saying that its planes were not flying close to the border with Georgia on the day in question. The incident followed a similar episode earlier in the month when Georgia accused Russia of violating its border and dropping a missile close to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. Russia vociferously denied that accusation as well. Two days after the second claim by the Caucasus country that Russia had violated its border, the Georgian Interior Ministry announced that it had fired on what it claimed to be a Russian aircraft after it allegedly violated Georgian airspace. Russia again denied the claim and noted that there were no reports of missing Russian aircraft.

Editor's Note: These incidences have been indicative of a further devolution of poor relations between the two countries. In the background, various issues have worked to sour Russian-Georgian relations. Of grave importance has been the Georgian region of Abkhazia, which has been held by Russian-backed separatists. Georgia views Russia's decision to back the separatists, as well as the presence of Russian military bases on restive areas of Georgian territory such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as a virtual annexation. As well, the two countries have been

involved in imbrolios involving spying, the expulsion of ethnic Georgians from Russia as a result, as well as a dispute over the price of Russian gas to Georgia. Another source of tension comes from Russian accusations that Georgia is hiding Chechen militants in the Pankisi Gorge area, the home of Chechen kin people, the Kists. With little attention placed on this forgotten area of the world, and with little hope offered in the way of resolving the political impasse, experts have warned that these two conflict zones are possible venues for explosive conflict in the future.

Meanwhile, in late 2006, the defense portfolio was taken from Irakli Okruashvili, and replaced with the economy portfolio. President Saakashvili characterized the shift in positive terms, suggesting that Okruashvili was his strongest cabinet minister and was thus needed in the economic arena where significant challenges laid ahead. However, Okruashvili did not appear pleased about the change and made note of the fact that his interest continued to reside with the military. Among the Georgian public, there was some speculation that the move was actually intended to diminish former Defense Minister Okruashvili's prominence precisely because of his reputation as a competent and popular politician. This perspective may have held some validity and indicated some degree of a power struggle because less than a year later, Okruashvili announced the formation of an opposition party. That entity was quickly embroiled in scandal over possible financial irregularities and resulted in the arrest one of Okruashvili's associates on charges of corruption.

By that time in September 2007, former Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili redirected the negative attention surrounding his political party and accused President Mikhail Saakashvili of corrupt governance. Okruashvili also claimed that Saakashvili ordered the assassination of some of his political opponents. Soon after Okruashvili issued these accusations, he was also arrested on charges of corruption. Saakashvili said that because Okruashvili broke the law, he deserved to be detained. However, allies of Okruashvili said that his arrest had been politically-motivated and aimed at silencing dissent and staving off political opponents. Many Georgian citizens appeared to agree that Okruashvili's arrest was of a suspect nature, and took to the streets to protest against President Saakashvili's government.

On Sept. 29, 2007, key opposition parties joined forces to form a bloc, the Salvation Front, whose objective was to defeat Saakashvili, whom they characterized as autocratic. The removal of Saakashvili was presumably intended to take place at the polls since the bloc described itself as "an electoral revolution." Meanwhile, the Georgian government appeared unmoved by these developments, noting that peaceful protests were to be expected in a democracy.

For his part, President Saakashvili directly responded to the criticisms after returning from the United States where he was attending the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. He said that the charges against him by Okruashvili were untrue, asserting the following: "Okruashvili and everybody else knows that all the things he said about me and about the country's leadership are unpardonable lies."

On Nov. 2, 2007, tens of thousands of Georgians took to the streets. The protestors converged on the parliament in the capital, Tbilisi, where they called on President Mikhail Saakashvili to resign from office and they urged fresh elections. At issue were accusations of authoritarian and corrupt governance with Saakashvili at the helm; these charges were adamantly rejected by the government. Also of concern from protestors was the fact that there was little done to alleviate poverty in post-Soviet Georgia. These demonstrations were ongoing for several days and constituted the most significant political crisis in Georgia since the Rose Revolution of 2003, which ironically brought Saakashvili to power (as discussed above).

For its part, the government said that the opposition was leveraging the protests in a manner akin to political blackmail. President Saakashvili asserted that prior to his coming to power, Georgia had been a failed state. Under his leadership, he said, Georgia had moved progressively forward in the spheres of democratization and economic reform. Indeed, Saakashvili political viability was likely bolstered by the fact that most of his policies have enjoyed popular support in Georgia.

On Nov. 4, 2007, Saakashvili dismissed the demands of the protestors saying that he would not succumb to blackmail. However, he said that he would work to reform the electoral process in order to facilitate more opposition representation in parliament, and he said that he would deal with economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment.

Four days later on Nov. 8, 2007, Saakashvili said he wanted a renewed mandate and a vote of confidence in his presidency, which could only be realized by fresh elections. As such, he set a date for early elections in January 2008. The Georgian leader also imposed a state of emergency, however, he said that it would soon be lifted and was intended only to stabilize the country after riot police were compelled to break up protests using tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. Saakashvili's opponents responded to the news saying that his days as the country's leader were limited and predicted that he was headed for defeat.

A week later, Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli resigned from office and was replaced by Lado Gurgenidze, chairman of supervisory board of the Bank of Georgia. The appointment was yet to be approved in parliament, however, given the ruling party's advantage in the legislative body, it was expected that the president's selection of the new head of government would be sanctioned. As he made this announcement at the state chancellery, President Mikhail Saakashvili indicated that a new cabinet would soon be put forth, saying, "Lado Gurgenidze will soon propose the new cabinet that will be approved in keeping with all due procedures."

In the background of these developments were accusations that two opposition members were conspiring with three Russians to orchestrate a coup d'etat. The Georgian authorities said that they intended to bring charges against Shalva Natelashvili and Tsotne Gamsakhurdia on these grounds.

In the first week of January 2008, Georgian voters went to the polls to vote in the snap presidential

election. Incumbent President Mikhail Saakashvili was handily re-elected with 52.8 percent of the vote share, according to the country's election commission. Opposition candidate, Levan Gachechiladze, garnered a second place finish with 27 percent. These results foreclosed the possibility of a second-round run-off election.

Following election victory for President Saakashvili, the opposition argued that the vote had been rigged. However, international monitors from the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) dismissed such claims saying that the vote was fair and democratic, and that the result should be respected. Moreover, such complaints were also rejected by the country's election commission and justice system. Despite these assurances from the OSCE, the election commission and the courts, the opposition started protests in the capital city of Tbilisi to demand another round of voting despite the fact that Saakashvili was not legally bound to contest a run-off election since, as suggested above, he won the election with a clear majority of the vote share.

The snap election had been called following mass opposition protests in Georgia in late 2007. The outcome effectively ratified Saakashvili's leadership.

Meanwhile, following a Jan. 5, 2008, referendum, which was held to ratify a proposal to hold early parliamentary elections in the spring of 2008, the Georgian Central Elections Commission confirmed that close to 80 percent of voters had voted in favor of the proposal.

It was subsequently announced that Georgia would hold a parliamentary election in May 2008. The date for stage one of the parliamentary election was set for May 21, 2008. The parties in contention were: the Citizen's Union of Georgia (CUG), the Georgian People's Front, the Georgian United Communist Party (UCPG), the Greens party, the Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG), the Labour Party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), the New National Movement, the New Right, the Republican Party, the "Revival" Union Party (AGUR), the Socialist Party (SPG), the Traditionalists, and other independent parties.

Long considered one of the strongest political parties in Georgia, the National Democratic Party - better known as the United National Movement or the National Movement-Democratic -- has stood as a conservative reformist party, and has been focused on fighting corruption in government and business. The Industry will Save Georgia party has been regarded as fairly conservative as well, although not nearly as strong or popular as the National Movement-Democratic.

Georgian political leaders held a hunger strike in order to change the number of popularly elected members of their cabinet from the current 75 to 100 subsequently changing the number of proportionally elected members from 75 to 50. This hunger strike ended without any positive results for the party leaders.

On election day, after the polls closed, exit polls showed the United National Movement with a strong lead. Indeed, the exit poll data estimated this party would carry more than 63 percent of the vote share while the opposition would carry just over 14 percent. With such a result anticipated, President Saakashvili declared victory for his party in parliament, while the opposition, led by Levan Gachechiladze, accused the government of rigging the vote. This latter claim, however, was disputed by the electoral commission. The electoral commission also confirmed the president's claim of victory, confirming that the United National Movement had officially carried 59.5 percent of the vote.

In other developments, NATO refrained from extending an accession invitation to Georgia in April 2008, amidst Russian objections to such a move. NATO did not, however, foreclose the possibility of the country joining the bloc at some point in the future.

Editor's Note:

The bloodless uprising that effectively ousted Edward Shevardnadze from office, and which ultimately brought Mikhail Saakashvili to power, was dubbed Georgia's "Rose Revolution." There were hopes that corruption in Georgia would be diminished and that real democracy would take root.

Special Report:

Fighting in separatist enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

On August 8, 2008, the Georgian military launched an attack against separatist targets in South Ossetia. The military offensive ensued only hours after the Georgian authorities and South Ossetia's separatists agreed to a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

The situation began when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region.

According to Russian media, several people were reported to have been killed in the shelling. As well, Georgian forces and South Ossetian separatists were reported to be exchanging heavy fire. To that end, explosions and rocket fire were heard in the area around Tskhinvali. The British newspaper, *The Independent*, reported that "the assault is coming from all directions."

For its part, Georgia said that it was taking this action to stabilize the territory [South Ossetia]. Georgian Minister for Integration, Temur Yakobashvili, said that his country was compelled to

terminate South Ossetia's "criminal regime" and to "restore constitutional order" to the breakaway region. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili himself called for an end to bloodshed to end, but warned the South Ossetian separatists that Tbilisi's patience was not limitless.

On the other side of the equation, South Ossetian rebel leader Eduard Kokoity said that Georgia was carrying out "a perfidious and base" attack on Tskhinvali. He also confirmed the assault on Tskhinvali saying, "The storming of Tskhinvali has started." Eyewitnesses on the ground said that the city was being attacked, the hospital was destroyed and the university was on fire. The Red Cross reported that there were numerous casualties needing medical attention.

In response, Russia was said to be deploying troops to South Ossetia to assist peacekeepers operating there. Indeed, an aide to the Russian Land Forces commander confirmed that Russian tanks and troops had entered South Ossetia and were approaching Tskhinvali, which was reported to have been already devastated by the Georgian offensive there.

Russia's military presence in the region was not well-received by Georgia, given the fact that the Georgian government has long accused Russia of arming South Ossetian separatists. But Russia has its own counter-argument to levy against Georgia. It has accused Georgia of deliberately ramping up its own military presence in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and assuming a hard-line posture against these enclaves. Russia's tensions with Georgia have been partially rooted in another concern. Specifically, Russia has been opposed to pro-Western Georgia's ambitions to join NATO. This geopolitical element has textured the larger context of the territorial struggle being played out in South Ossetia.

It should be noted that Russia has enjoyed strong ties with South Ossetia, largely due to the fact that the ethnically-related province of North Ossetia is located within its borders, and both the south and the north have long hoped to unite. Indeed, many South Ossetians hold Russian citizenship. As such, with vested interests on both sides of the border, Russia called for an end to the ongoing violence. Russia also urged the international community to work cooperatively "to avert massive bloodshed and new victims."

However, the prospects for peace were not likely to be easily advanced, given the emerging situation in the region a day later. On August 9, 2008, Georgian authorities said that Russian jets had bombed military targets inside its territory – specifically in the Georgian town on Gori to the south of South Ossetia. They also said that one attack ensued close to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which is known to supply Caspian oil to the West. Georgia described the air strikes as "a full-scale military invasion" and Georgian President Saakashvili claimed that Russia was at war with his country.

Russia had a very different perspective and placed the blame squarely on the Georgians. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated the dire nature of the situation by asserting that already 1,500 people had died in the conflict and more than 30,000 South Ossetian had fled into Russia to

escape the threat of death. The Russian government said that it had to act to protect the South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian citizenship. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said that Georgia also bore a responsibility for "protecting the [South Ossetian] population" and that his country's military action was intended "to force the Georgian side to peace."

By August 9, 2008, the Russian army had advanced to take complete control South Ossetia's capital of Tskhinvali. General Vladimir Boldyrev, the head of the Russian ground forces said, "Tactical groups have completely liberated Tskhinvali from the Georgian military." Boldyrev also said that Russian forces would keep up the pressure on Georgian military units. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev explained his country's objectives in South Ossetia saying, "Under these circumstances, Russia is guided by one task -- to immediately stop violence and defend civilians and restore peace as soon as possible." President Dmitry Medvedev also demanded the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the conflict zone, saying that it was the only way to settle the "tragic crisis."

That same day, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili called for an end to hostilities saying, "We propose an immediate ceasefire and the beginning of the withdrawal of troops from the contact line." On the home front, the Georgia's parliament approved a presidential decree that essentially imposed two weeks of martial law in the country.

A day later on August 10, 2008, Georgia said that it was withdrawing its troops from the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali in the face of Russia's counter-offensive. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said his country's troops were returning to the positions they held before the conflict erupted days earlier. There was, however, some confusion about whether Georgian troops were pulling out of Tskhinvali or withdrawing entirely from South Ossetia. Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili confirmed that the troops left Tskhinvali but were remaining in other areas of South Ossetia. Russian sources said that Georgian military units were still active in South Ossetia.

Presumably due to the continued activity by Georgian military units in South Ossetia, and what Moscow described as continued Georgian offensive action, Russian forces were continuing to carry out its own military action into Georgian territory. Reports from the region suggested that Russia carried out an air strike on a military airfield near the Tbilisi International Airport.

With the situation grim despite the earlier declaration of a withdrawal of troops from Tskhinvali, Georgia said that it had submitted a note to the Russian embassy in Tbilisi calling for immediate negotiations with Russia regarding "an end to all hostilities and a ceasefire." Russia confirmed that the note had been received. Russia at the time also denied Georgia's claims that Russian air strikes had targeted populated areas.

But movement toward a resolution seemed no closer by August 11, 2008. Georgian authorities said that Russian air strikes hit communications facilities to the west of Tbilisi and the port city of

Poti in the Black Sea. As well, Russian forces were reported to have led a raid through the other breakaway enclave of Abkhazia into the western Georgian town of Senaki. On the other side of the equation, Russia said that the Georgian military was still targeting positions in Tskhinvali, despite claims of a withdrawal and overtures of a ceasefire. In this way, both sides accused one another of continuing the hostilities and exacerbating the conflict.

On the international front, the United Nations Security Council had earlier convened an emergency session to consider the rapidly deteriorating security crisis in the Caucasus. Little was actually accomplished at that session. Likewise, a spokesperson from NATO had already called on both sides -- Georgian and Russian -- to exercise restraint. However, with the violence ongoing, clearly restraint was not at hand.

Nevertheless, the United States said that it was sending a delegation to the region to try to negotiate a resolution. The United States Department of State said that the envoys would "engage with the parties in the conflict." As well, a European Union delegation was en route to the region and said that it was hoping to procure a ceasefire and withdrawal agreement from both Georgia and Russia. A separate Council of Europe delegation was also hoping to advance dialogue.

In the same time period, according to news reports, Russian President Medvedev reiterated the death toll -- in the thousands -- during a conversation with United States President George W. Bush. For his part, Bush, who was attending the Beijing Olympics, called for an end to the violence, warned of escalation beyond the zone of conflict, and endorsed the notion of international mediation.

Indeed, the international community's objective appeared to be focused on averting the prospects of a war in the restive Caucasus, which has long been regarded as something of a powder keg. Yet to be determined was the question of whether or not such efforts would actually yield positive results.

Days later, Russia noted that its military activity in the area was ending and Russian troops were seen retreating from the area. The hostilities flared again when Georgia sent in troops to try to regain control of South Ossetia. Nevertheless, witnesses said that the full brunt of the fighting in South Ossetia appeared to be ending. Elsewhere in the region, Russian troops were withdrawing from the other breakaway region of Abkhazia, however, separatist there were reported to be ensconced in some continuing clashes with the Georgian military in the Kodori Gorge.

Yet even with an official truce in the offing (as discussed below) and an end to the fighting, the situation was not peaceful. A war of words continued. On an official day of mourning in his country, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev charged that Georgia had launched "genocide of the South Ossetian people." At issue were the deaths of thousands of South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian passports, as well as the deaths and injuries to scores of Russian soldiers,

including one general. The Russian leader used the Russian word "otmorozki," which roughly translates to "thugs" in English, to characterize Georgian troops. Meanwhile, Georgian President Saakashvili addressed a crowd of thousands gathered in Tbilisi's main and accused Russia of the "ruthless, heartless destruction" of Georgians. The Georgian leader also warned that his country would no longer be a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) -- a group consisting of former Soviet republics.

France negotiates truce agreement for Georgia and Russia

On August 13, 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy was leading diplomatic negotiations to help Georgia and Russia resolve the crisis that had been sparked when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region, and went onto gain military supremacy over large swaths of Georgian territory.

Sarkozy put forth a peace agreement that both sides signed days later. Central to the proposed plan for a truce was that all forces would pull back to pre-conflict positions. Other elements of the plan included an end to the use of force, an end to military action in perpetuity, as well as the free access of humanitarian aid. France, as the head of the European Union, has called on the European bloc to endorse the peace initiative ahead of its submission to the United Nations Security Council. The European Union was also expected consider deploying peacekeepers to the region to maintain peace and security, and also to protect the supply of humanitarian aid.

The remaining thorny issue, which was not included in the framework of the truce, was the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Neither Russian President Medvedev nor Georgian President Saakashvili was likely to find common ground on that matter in the immediate future. Indeed, the Georgian leader asserted, "The territorial integrity and belonging of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgia can never be put under doubt."

On August 17, 2008, Russia officially pledged to withdraw its forces from Georgian territory in keeping with the agreement. At the time, however, its forces had control over large swaths of Georgian territory, including the main east-west highway through that country. There was speculation that Russian troops might withdraw only as far as South Ossetia since Russia said it would only fully withdraw when Georgian police were ready to take over responsibility for security. NATO responded to anxieties that Russia would not abide by the withdrawal requirements of the agreement by warning that relations would be compromised if Russian troops remained in Georgia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia was not occupying Georgia and would not annex South Ossetia. However, he also characterized NATO as biased and intent on saving the "criminal regime" of Tbilisi.

Meanwhile, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev told his French President Nicolas Sarkozy that the Russian withdrawal would be complete by August 22, 2008, although approximately 500 troops would be installed as peacekeepers on both sides of South Ossetia's border. Russian troops were soon identified exiting Gori -- the largest town in Georgia located close to the border of South Ossetia. Sarkozy, during talks with Medvedev, acknowledged this withdrawal but noted that Russian troops were yet to exit Poti and Senaki. Russia had earlier indicated that it would not soon leave the port city of Poti, and claimed that this would be in keeping with the terms of the ceasefire agreement. Medvedev's government said that Russian peacekeepers were allowed to take "additional security measures." However, the United States and the United Kingdom countered this claim noting that such buffer zones would violate the deal.

In other developments, the first United States ship with humanitarian aid was expected to dock in Georgia by the last week of August 2008. Two more ships were expected to arrive in Georgia as well.

In the last week of August 2008, Russia's Kremlin officially recognized the breakaway enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. South Ossetians and Abkhazians celebrated the news of this recognition of their self-proclaimed sovereignty. However, without wider international recognition of sovereign status, and with many countries of the West committed to the notion of Georgia's territorial integrity, the actual status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remained in the zone of "contested independent status."

By the start of September 2008, the European Union (EU) had decided to suspend talks on a new partnership pact with Russia, given the still-incomplete withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. EU-Russian negotiations on the partnership agreement had been scheduled for mid-September 2008 but were based on a shared understanding that Russian troops would withdraw to pre-conflict positions. The lack of progress on that withdrawal front, followed by the EU's response, signaled that relations between the EU and Russia were moving into highly challenging territory.

Following a meeting in the Belgian capital city of Brussels, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said that the bloc that he represented could not "continue as if nothing had happened." As well, the European bloc's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, said that the EU could deploy civilian monitors to Georgia to determine whether or not Russia was complying with the ceasefire agreement that had been brokered earlier. Meanwhile French President Sarkozy said, "The EU would welcome a real partnership with Russia, which is in the interests of all, but you have to be two to have a partnership."

On the other side of the equation, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that unchecked support by the EU and the United States for the government of Georgian President Saakashvili would be a "historic" mistake. He also introduced the notion of an embargo on arms supplies to Georgia until

a new regime was established there. These declarations came in the background of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's assertion that his country's foreign policy principles would not be dictated by the hegemony of any single country, such as the United States.

In October 2008, months after the Russian-Georgian conflict over South Ossetia, Russia removed a checkpoint near the town of Gori. The removal of the checkpoint at Gori -- located in Georgian territory close to the separatist region of South Ossetia -- marked the first significant sign that Russia intended to comply with its withdrawal pledge, which was part of the ceasefire deal negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Indeed, Russia also pledged to withdraw troops from two buffer zones within Georgia -- now under European Union observation -- by October 10, 2008.

At the same time, Russia increased its troop presence in South Ossetia -- largely a result of an explosion that left eight Russian soldiers and three civilians dead in the early part of the month. Russia accused Georgia of orchestrating the attack; Georgia denied the accusation. Russia also maintained its troop presence in the other separatist region of Abkhazia. Russia has recognized both South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent while Western countries have backed Georgian territorial integrity. The matter of sovereignty has remained unresolved.

Latest Developments

The fifth anniversary of the Rose Revolution, which swept President Mikhail Saakashvili to power, was marked by chaos. As the president traveled in a motorcade with Polish President Lech Kaczynski close to the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, shots were fired.

Although no one was hurt in the incident, both the Georgian president and his Polish counterpart accused Russian troops of being behind the apparent attack in an area that has been the site of much cross-border violence. According to Reuters, one individual in Saakashvili's entourage said that South Ossetians fired warning shots when their motorcade came close to a checkpoint at the quasi-border area. Meanwhile, President Saakashvili said that the situation was a "reminder" that Russia was in flagrant violation of the European Union-brokered ceasefire between Tblisi and Moscow. President Saakashvili also railed against the Russians saying, "Twenty-first Century occupiers, who have no legal, moral or other right to be there and oppress people, are stationed in the heart of Georgia."

On the other side of the equation, however, the Russian military as well as South Ossetian forces denied an involvement in the gunfire incident. In an interview with RIA Novosti, a South Ossetian spokeswoman, Irina Gagloyeva, asserted the following: "The South Ossetian side has nothing to do with it. There was no shelling from our side." A Russian spokesperson said to the Interfax news agency, "The claims that Russian servicemen were implicated in the shelling of the cortege do

not correspond with reality."

In January 2009, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said he intended to finish his current term as head of state. Saakashvili said that he did not intend to seek re-election after his current term in office ends in 2013.

During his television interview in which he took questions from Georgian citizens he expressed a desire for improved relations with the Russian people but was suspicious of the intentions of the Russian government. In fact, he indicated negative motives to Russian diplomatic overtures saying, "As soon as we yield to this game, we will be enslaved again."

At issue has been devolving Russian-Georgian relations over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both semi-autonomous areas declared unilateral independence in 2008 following a Georgian offensive into South Ossetia, which precipitated a Russian invasion, as discussed in this Country Review. The brief war between Georgia and Russia over these breakaway regions has, in some ways, placed Saakashvili's government under growing pressure.

On the domestic agenda in February 2009, Georgia's parliament approved former finance minister Nika Gilauri to be the country's fifth prime minister since President Mikheil Saakashvili was sworn into five years earlier. The former Soviet republic's parliamentarians voted 106 to 8 to endorse Gilauri as prime minister. Gilauri therefore replaced Grigol Mgaloblishvili, who resigned after only three months in office for health reasons. The new head of government said, "I don't promise everything will be solved this year, but our priority will be the creation of jobs."

Months later, the country was struck by unrest. Tens of thousands of Georgians participated in a rally in Tbilisi on April 9, 2009, demanding that President Mikhail Saakashvili resign from office and/or call for a fresh presidential election. The protests occurred on the 20th anniversary of violent anti-Soviet demonstrations of 1989. As many as 60,000 Georgians rallied in front of the parliament building, with the opposition leading the charges against Saakashvili. At issue has been a litany of complaints that included the president's failure to enact reforms as well as the unsuccessful war against Russia over South Ossetia in August 2008.

For his part, Saakashvili said he did not intend to resign; instead he would remain in the office through the end of his term in 2013. In the meanwhile, however, a political resolution was not immediately at hand. There were successive mass protests in the capital city of Tbilisi, with demonstrators continuing to demand that President Saakashvili resign from office ahead of schedule. Those protests continued throughout the month of April 2009.

By May 2009, clashes between protestors and the authorities continued in the streets of the capital. But it was an attempted army mutiny that raised the specter of chaos in Georgia. There was an attempt at that time to find some common ground and talks between the president and the

opposition were convened. Those talks between President Mikhail Saakashvili and opposition leaders were brokered in an effort to try to reduce the prevailing political turmoil but ended in stalemate, effectively leaving the country in a continued state of political instability.

President Saakashvili acknowledged the talks had indeed broken down but nevertheless suggested that further dialogue was in the offing. One opposition leader, Levan Gachechiladze, offered a very different depiction of the situation saying, "We have a completely different view, the opposition and the president. The protests will continue today and tomorrow, and for a long time." Another opposition leader, Zurabishvili, said: "Clearly we don't have the same appreciation of reality. Our visions and our paths do not intersect."

Note: At issue has been a litany of complaints that included the president's failure to enact reforms as well as the unsuccessful war against Russia over South Ossetia in August 2008. For his part, Saakashvili said he did not intend to resign; instead he would remain in office through the end of his term in 2013.

In June 2009, the western Georgian town of Zugdidi was the site of three bombings that resulted in some structural damage and injuries to one person. One explosion hit a train and resulted in the wounding of a train engineer; a second explosion occurred half an hour later and damaged train tracks; the third explosion hit a truck just outside the town. While there was no claim of responsibility for the attacks, the location of Zugdidi close to the breakaway region of Abkhazia indicated a possible political motive.

August 2009 marked the one year anniversary of the war between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Both countries commemorated the war in ceremonies. In the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, midnight bonfires were ignited, and a minute of silence was observed as church bells rang to honor those who died in the war. In South Ossetia itself, there was a rally as well as a candlelight ceremony in South Ossetia are also planned. Meanwhile, a war of words was brewing with Georgia and Russia respectively accusing each other of being the cause of the conflict. While Georgia said that its assault on South Ossetia was in reaction to a clandestine plan by Russia to invade the territory. On the other side of the equation, Russia denied making the first move and said reacted to Georgia's "pre-planned criminal act."

On August 13, 2009, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited Abkhazia, where he promised to build a military base along the border with Georgia. Putin also said that such a move would help guarantee the stability of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Russian head of government said: "Russia is going to deploy its armed forces in Abkhazia and take the necessary efforts to build a modern border guard system in cooperation with the relevant Abkhazian authorities." He continued, "All these factors are serious guarantees of the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." Putin's pledge came on the first anniversary of the cease-fire, which ended Russia's war with Georgia over South Ossetia. As might be expected, Georgia decried the move, characterizing it as

"yet another provocation," that could potentially "escalate tensions" in the region of the Caucasus.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region.

On August 18, 2008, Georgia has finalized the legal procedures for its withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The move appeared to be largely motivated by the short war with Russia over South Ossetia a year earlier. The Georgia's foreign ministry said via its website: "In August 2008, Russia...carried out occupation of the inalienable parts of the Georgian territory, ethnic cleansing and recognition of the so-called 'independence' of the proxy regimes set up by Russia on the occupied territories." The statement continued, "Based on the foregoing, Georgia made a decision to withdraw from the CIS."

The Foreign Ministry statement noted that Georgia would remain part of 75 multilateral relationships not conditional upon CIS membership, in accordance with the Vienna 1969 Convention on the Law of Treaties. These relationships would fall into the category of visa-free movement of certain nationals as well as free trade zone. The Foreign Ministry also noted that it was willing to forge bilateral relationships with other CIS member states, but expressly stated that such ties would require respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as inviolability of borders and noninterference in internal affairs.

In October 2009, a report commissioned by the Council of the European Union placed the blame for the start of the 2008 war over the semi-autonomous region of South Ossetia on Georgia. The report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia found that the war, which erupted on August 7, 2008, was spurred when Georgian forces attacked the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, in an attempt to re-establish sovereign control. Still, the report did not cast Georgia as being the only guilty party. It noted that the hostilities between the two sides led to provocative actions by both Georgia and Russia. The report also acknowledged that after Georgia shelled South Ossetia, Russia responded by not only repelling the assault but, in fact, pressing further into Georgian territory.

Editor's Note: It should be noted that the report also registered the human toll of the conflict. Approximately 850 people died in August 2008, more than 100,000 were forced to flee their homes to escape the cross-fire of violence, and to date, about 35,000 people remain displaced. Humanitarian aid agencies have warned that there is a refugee crisis continuing in the region.

See the appendices of this Country Review for South Ossetia and Abkhazia for more details about the chronology of events from the final years of the Soviet Union to the recent separatists aspirations of these enclaves.

Special Report

Terrorism Target in Georgia

On Feb. 13, 2012, Israel's embassies in India and Georgia were struck by bomb attacks. In the Indian capital city, a magnetic bomb attached to a vehicle left the wife of an Israeli diplomat wounded as she traveled to retrieve her children from school at the American embassy. She was said to be in stable condition in a New Delhi hospital. In the Georgian capital, a bomb was discovered attached to a car in the Israeli diplomatic fleet. Georgian police were able to defuse the bomb after an Israeli embassy employee alerted them to the situation in Tbilisi.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wasted no time in accusing Iran of being behind the two bombs, characterizing Iran as "the greatest exporter of terror in the world." Netanyahu also observed that there were recent thwarted attacks on Jews and Israelis in places such as Azerbaijan and Thailand. Speaking of this trend, the Israeli prime minister noted, "In all these cases, the elements behind the attacks were Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah." Israel said that its foreign missions would be placed on high alert, given the current landscape.

While Iran offered no immediate response, it was certainly the case that Tehran had promised to seek revenge for a number of targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, which that country blames on Israel.

Special Report

Abkhazia leader survives assassination attempt

On Feb. 22, 2012, the president of Georgia's breakaway republic of Abkhazia survived an attempted assassination while he was en route to work in the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi. President Aleksandr Ankvab was targeted when his motorcade struck a remote-controlled roadside bomb and then came under gunfire by five assailants. While President Ankvab survived the attack, two of his bodyguards were not so fortunate and died as a result. Officials from Abkhazia's National Security Council said that efforts were being made to find the perpetrators of the violent assault on the president. It should be noted that there were no claims of responsibility for the attack, and this assassination attempt was the latest in a long list of such efforts to take Ankvab's life.

Editor's Note: Abkhazia is a strategically located province on the Black Sea in the northwestern corner of the Republic of Georgia. Since the final years of the Soviet Union, ethnic Abkhazs, who

initially constituted a clear minority in the area, have sought to assert their independence from Georgia. In 1991, war erupted as Georgian troops battled Abkhaz forces, alleged to have the backing of Russia and various northern Caucasus militant groups. More than 250,000 ethnic Georgians fled Abkhazia because of the fighting, fueling accusations that Abkhaz forces carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the conflict have not yet returned to Abkhazia. Throughout the 1990s, the United Nations (U.N.), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Group of Friends (consisting of American, British, German, French, and Russian envoys) have attempted to negotiate a resolution to the conflict, but the situation remains a stalemate. Abkhazia, which is economically isolated as a result of a Georgian embargo, continues to operate as a de facto protectorate of Russia. The geopolitical dimensions of the conflict have grown increasingly important, as Russia has sought to use its military support for Abkhazia as leverage against President Saakashvili's pro-Western government. Georgia has accused Russia of seeking to informally annex Abkhazia. Georgian and Abkhaz officials have restarted negotiations in talks sponsored by the Group of Friends. Although a comprehensive settlement has yet to be reached, negotiators on both sides described the talks as positive. That being said, the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia (another breakaway republic) affected Abkhazia as well. The French-brokered peace agreement that was intended to end that crisis included implications for both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. To date, Georgia has offered Abkhazia a high degree of autonomy, but insists on preserving its territorial integrity. Abkhazia, meanwhile, continues to demand independence. Many outside observers stress the need to peacefully resolve the dispute because of fears that another armed conflict in Abkhazia could destabilize the region.

Primer on parliamentary elections in Georgia

Parliamentary elections were set to be held in the South Caucasus country of Georgia on Oct. 1, 2012, under a reformed electoral system. At stake would be the 150 seats of the unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti," which is also known as the Umaghiesi Sabcho (Supreme Council). Of the 150 seats, 75-77 members would be divided among parties crossing a five percent threshold of votes, and 73-75 would be directly elected from single-seat constituencies; members serve five-year terms. Note that the new incoming parliament of Georgia of 2012 would be relocated from the capital of Tbilisi to Kutaisi.

Going into the 2012 parliamentary elections, the ruling United National Movement party held control over about 120 seats. Three opposition parties -- the Christian Democratic Movement Party, the Labor Party, and the Republican Party of Georgia -- gained representation in the outgoing parliament. It would yet to be seen if the smaller opposition forces, such as the aforementioned Republican Party, would pass the five percent threshold in 2012. That being said, with legal provisions ensuring that Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's tenure as president would end in 2013 at the close of his second term in office, all eyes were on the

parliamentary contest, which would set the path for political power in Georgia going forward. Specifically, changes to the system meant that most executive power would be transferred from the president in 2013 (precisely when Saakashvili's term was to end), to a prime minister, who would be selected by the majority in parliament. Clearly, a parliamentary victory for the president's United National Movement would ensure that Saakashvili's hand remained on the levers of power well into the future. Of course, the opposite was also true. The ascendancy of the opposition at the polls would curtail Saakashvili's continued influence on the political scene past 2013.

In many senses, the 2012 parliamentary vote was a test for President Saakashvili, who came to power in 2003. Saakashvili has advanced a pro-Western stance and has engaged in a sometimes-hostile relationship with Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union from which newly-independent Georgia emerged in the early 1990s. That hostility gave rise to a short-lived war in 2008 over the semi-autonomous territory of South Ossetia. Saakashvili has warned that even parliamentary success for the opposition would represent regression to the Russian fold.

Opposition leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose personal fortune has been estimated at about half of Georgia's GDP, has been at the forefront of the effort to challenge Saakashvili's leadership and political agenda, accusing the incumbent president of reversing the country's democratic gains and undermining civil rights. Of particular concern to human rights advocates has been a prisoner abuse scandal that has rocked the country, as videos were released of prison inmates being assaulted by guards. The scandal led to street protests and offered Ivanishvili the opportunity to cast the Saakashvili as autocratic and undemocratic. At a rally for his Georgian Dream coalition, Ivanishvili declared: "This regime cannot be the leadership of our country. This system should collapse."

But in a speech broadcast in the state-controlled media, Saakashvili had the following characterization to make of the opposition leader on the eve of the parliamentary vote: "Tomorrow, our enemy has its last chance to turn us off our path of independence. But I am confident that tomorrow our freedom-loving nation will take the ultimate and decisive step towards liberation from the pincers of the conqueror and towards integration into the house of Europe."

After the polling stations closed and the vote count began on election day, exit polls indicated an advantage for the opposition Georgian Dream coalition of Ivanishvili. Of course, a lead at the popular vote level would not neatly translate into a parliamentary majority, given the electoral system of the country. Specifically, the opposition was leading the vote for party lists, which determine about 77 seats of the 150-seat parliament, whereas the rest of the seats were to be determined by the "first past the post" system. Still, supporters of the opposition coalition were taking to the streets of the capital city of Tbilisi to celebrate their claim of victory. The party of President Saakashvili -- the ruling United National Movement -- was making its own counter-claim of victory, as it was leading the "first past the post" vote. Accordingly, the ruling party was certain that it would hold its majority in parliament.

By Oct. 2, 2012, the election outcome was becoming clear and it was the opposition that had the more convincing claim on victory. To this end, President Saakashvili conceded that Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition had won the elections during a live broadcast on Georgian television. With close to 75 percent of the vote count considered, Georgian Dream was leading the party list vote with 54 percent of the vote while the president's United National Movement had about 41 percent. Of course, the actual makeup of the legislative branch of government was yet to be seen. The party with control over more than half the seats in parliament would be positioned to select a prime minister. As discussed above, the prime minister would be the new base of executive power from 2013 going forward.

Update:

In March 2013, the parliament of Georgia passed into law constitutional amendments to limit presidential power. The legislation would effectively remove President Mikheil Saakashvili's power to dismiss the cabinet, disband the parliament, and call fresh elections. The vote was not close with all 135 members present in the 150-seat unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia) voting in favor of the constitutional amendments.

At the end of May 2013, the ruling coalition in Georgia started a political process aimed at addressing a constitutional anomaly that could affect the prime minister. At issue was the fact that Bidzina Ivanishvili secured special permission from the President Mikheil Saakashvili to serve as prime minister until the start of 2014; however, Ivanishvili's ability to hold that post after that Jan. 1, 2014, deadline was very much in doubt because he was a dual citizen of Georgia and France. Indeed, the constitution prohibits Georgians with dual citizenship to serve as president, prime minister or parliamentary speaker. But in a bit of a constitutional anomaly, the Georgia constitution allow citizens of the European Union to hold those posts; obviously, France is a member of the European Union. With an eye on resolving this matter and removing doubt as to Ivanishvili's ability to hold the post of head of government, the ruling Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia coalition commenced internal discussion aimed at amending the constitution.

Primer on Presidential Election in Georgia

A presidential election was set to be held in Georgia in October 2013. The last published date for this election was Oct. 27, 2013.

In Georgia, the president -- who is head of state and head of government -- is typically elected by popular vote for a five-year term. However, in November 2003, opposition forces stormed and took control of the Georgian parliament. Then-President Eduard Shevardnadze declared a state of

emergency and resigned from office on Nov. 23, 2003. An interim presidency followed until elections were held in 2004. Fresh elections were again held four years later. The snap election had been called following mass opposition protests in Georgia in late 2007. The outcome effectively ratified Saakashvili's leadership. Saakashvili had come to power in what came to be known as the Rose Revolution of 2003.

As intimated here, the incumbent president was Mikhail Saakashvili; he was elected president and head of state in 2004 and was re-elected in 2008. Saakashvili was not, however, eligible for a third consecutive term. Possible contenders for the presidency in 2013 included the following candidates:

Giorgi Margvelashvili was the candidate of Georgian Dream -- a coalition of pro-market and pro-western liberal entities, as well as hardline nationalists. Note that Georgian Dream was the largest entity in parliament following the 2012 elections. As a result, the party's leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, became the new prime minister.

David Bakradze was the candidate of the center-right but pro-Western United National Movement (Ertiani Natsionaluri Modzraoba or ENM) -- the same party of outgoing President Saakashvili. As noted above, the president's party suffered a political setback in the 2012 parliamentary elections; it was to be seen if that negative fortune would prevail in the presidential contest.

Nino Burjanadze was the candidate of the center-right Democratic Movement-United Georgia (DM-UG). She was a key player in Georgia's Rose Revolution. Since that time, she has been an occasional ally and intermittent rival of outgoing President Saakashvili. Now, she was aiming to be the elected head of state of Georgia with Saakashvili headed off stage.

Shalva Natelashvili was the candidate of the socialist and pro-European integration Georgian Labor Party (Sakartvelos Leiboristuli Partia or SLP).

Giorgi Targamadze was the candidate of the Christian-Democratic Movement (k'ristianul-demokratiuli modzraoba or KDM); the KDM is a conservative and pro-Christian Orthodox political party.

Another possible contender for the presidency was Zurab Kharatishvili, the former chairman of Georgia's Central Electoral Commission, who resigned from that post to form a new centrist political party. In September 2013, Kharatishvili indicated that he would, indeed, be participating in this presidential contest. At a news conference, he said that he has been registered as a candidate after being nominated by the National Democratic Party and the Party of European Democrats.

In late September 2013 -- a month ahead of the election -- polling data from the National

Democratic Institute (NDI) showed that Giorgi Margvelashvili -- the candidate of the Georgian Dream coalition of Prime Minister Ivanishvili that leads the parliament -- had the advantage. Margvelashvili had 39 percent of support -- well ahead of Davit Bakradze, the candidate of outgoing President Saakashvili's United National Movement, who had 18 percent. Nino Burjanadze of Democratic Movement-United Georgia was trailing behind with seven percent, while the two other opposition candidates -- Shalva Natelashvili and Giorgi Targamadze -- were even further back with four percent of support respectively. It was to be seen if this dynamic would hold until election day.

In October 2013, that trend was still holding. Polling data from the United States-based firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research showed that the Georgian Dream coalition candidate, Margvelashvili, augmenting his lead with 43 percent of public support, against United National Movement candidate, Bakradze, with 22 percent, and Burjanadze, with eight percent. With weeks to go until election day, there was the possibility of the race tightening. However, the expectations at the time of writing involved a win for Margvelashvili and the ruling coalition.

Indeed, Margvelashvili was, himself, so confident about his impending victory that he declared that he would withdraw from the presidential race if the first round of voting failed to produce an outright winner, and thus went to a run-off round. "The Georgian society will vote for Bidzina Ivanishvili's coalition and for me, as its presidential candidate on Oct. 27," he said. Margvelashvili continued, "But if a miracle happens, I do not see any sense in taking part in the miracle (of a run-off round)."

Margvelashvili's confidence was backed by the voters on election day. With the votes counted, it was the ally of Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili who had won the presidential election, with around 67 percent of the vote share. Bakradze from the party of the outgoing President Saakashvili was far behind in second place with 20 percent. Evidently, no second round would be necessary and Margvelashvili was set to become Georgia's new president and head of state. This victory by Margvelashvili was a ratification of sorts for the Georgian Dream party, which dominated the parliament and would now also be represented in the executive branch of government.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ivanishvili indicated that with Margvelashvili's victory, he had achieved his goals for the Georgian Dream party and was considering resigning from office. To that end, Prime Minister Ivanishvili proposed that Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili -- an ally -- be the person to succeed him when he steps down from office. That resignation was expected to come at some point in mid-November 2013. Garibashvili's accession to the position of head of government would not be automatic simply based on being named to the position by the outgoing prime minister. He would have to be nominated by parliament and approved by newly-elected President Margvelashvili. Since the parliament was dominated by the Georgian Dream coalition, and Margvelashvili was an Ivanishvili stalwart, the outcome was all but assured that in addition to having a new president, Georgia was also set for a new prime minister.

Special Entry

Georgia warns Russia against backing independence claims of Georgia breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

On Feb. 4, 2014, just ahead of the opening of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (Russia), Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili of Georgia warned Russia that it should refrain from taking any positions that might support the independence claims of the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Relations between Russia and Georgia have long been tense since the early 1990s when Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Relations devolved further over the years as Russia has supported the independence inclinations of the two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But relations between Georgia and Russia hit a nadir in 2008 when the two countries fought a brief war over South Ossetia. Since then, they have had no diplomatic ties.

With Russia in the international spotlight as it hosts the 2014 Winter Olympics, Georgia was adamant about ensuring that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not use the spotlight to advance the independence causes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of note was the fact that Russia's Olympic security zone was expanded into Abkhazia, which was less than 25 miles away from Sochi.

Prime Minister Garibashvili went to so far as to suggest that his country considered boycotting the Olympics in Russia. During a meeting with European Union and NATO officials in Belgium, he said, "It was a tough decision not to boycott the Games...But if there are any surprises we will of course react adequately."

Editor's Note:

Since the final years of the Soviet Union, Russian-backed separatists in South Ossetia have sought to break away from Georgia and join North Ossetia, which is currently an autonomous region in Russia. While South Ossetians assert their right to self-determination, Georgia considers such separatist aspirations as a threat to its territorial integrity.

The dispute descended into a civil war in 1991, though a Russian-mediated ceasefire in 1992 ended the armed conflict and established a general framework by which to resolve the dispute. Despite the presence of Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian peacekeepers, tensions remain high and, in 2004, the situation once again descended into armed conflict. In January 2005, Georgian President

Mikhail Saakashvili announced a peace plan under which South Ossetia would receive a high degree of autonomy and economic incentives, though South Ossetian leaders continued to reject any attempt to put the disputed territory under Georgian rule.

The geopolitical dimensions of the conflict have growing increasingly important as Russia has sought to use its military support for South Ossetia as leverage against Georgia's pro-Western government. November 2006 marked the time of an overwhelmingly supported independence referendum in South Ossetia, which was intended to augment the thrust for sovereignty. But Georgia rejected such independence aspirations and warned that it could provoke a war.

In April 2007, the Georgian parliament approved legislation creating a temporary administration in South Ossetia. The move evoked an outcry from South Ossetian separatists and contributed to devolving tensions with Russia. The situation was no less stable two months later when South Ossetian separatists accused Georgia of attacking the capital of Tskhinvali with mortar and sniper fire.

Peace talks between Georgia and South Ossetia in October 2007, which were hosted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), saw no progress.

In early 2008, following Kosovo's secession from Serbia, South Ossetia called for international recognition of its self-avowed sovereignty and independence from Georgia. However, such recognition was not forthcoming at the broad level although the Russian parliament called on the Kremlin to indeed recognize South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) as independent.

In April 2008, the Georgian power-sharing agreement, which accorded significant autonomy but not actual sovereignty, was rejected by South Ossetia, which insisted on complete independence.

In August 2008, Georgia was carrying out a full military offensive in South Ossetia, intended to "restore constitutional order" to the breakaway region. Russia was responding with military action of its own. The situation left the region on the brink of full-scale conflict and in a state of crisis. By mid-August of 2008, a truce had been negotiated under the stewardship of the French government; this truce aimed to bring an end to the crisis.

Meanwhile, ethnic Abkhazs in the strategically located province of Abkhazia on the Black Sea have sought to assert their independence from Georgia. In 1991, war erupted as Georgian troops battled Abkhaz forces, alleged to have the backing of Russia and various northern Caucasus militant groups. More than 250,000 ethnic Georgians fled Abkhazia because of the fighting, fueling accusations that Abkhaz forces carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Throughout the 1990s, the United Nations (U.N.), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Group of Friends

(consisting of American, British, German, French, and Russian envoys) have attempted to negotiate a resolution to the conflict, but the situation remains a stalemate. Abkhazia, which is economically isolated as a result of a Georgian embargo, operates as a de facto protectorate of Russia. The geopolitical dimensions of the conflict have grown increasingly important, as Russia has sought to use its military support for Abkhazia as leverage against Georgia's pro-Western government. For its part, Georgia has accused Russia of seeking to informally annex Abkhazia. Nevertheless, Georgia has offered Abkhazia a high degree of autonomy, but insists on preserving its territorial integrity. Abkhazia, meanwhile, continues to demand independence.

The 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia affected Abkhazia as well. The French-brokered peace agreement that was intended to end that crisis included implications for both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

It should be noted that a report commissioned by the Council of the European Union placed the blame for the start of the 2008 war over the semi-autonomous region of South Ossetia on Georgia. The report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia found that the war was spurred when Georgian forces attacked the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, in an attempt to re-establish sovereign control. Indeed, the report read: "The shelling of Tskhinvali [the capital of South Ossetia] by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia." The report unambiguously concluded that the attack by Georgia was not justified by international law as follows: "There is the question of whether [this] use of force... was justifiable under international law. It was not."

Still, the report did not cast Georgia as being the only guilty party. It noted that the hostilities between the two sides led to provocative actions by both Georgia and Russia. The report also acknowledged that after Georgia shelled South Ossetia, Russia responded by not only repelling the assault but, in fact, pressing further into Georgian territory. While Russia withdrew its forces several days later when a ceasefire was hammered out, it nonetheless retained a military presence in both South Ossetia and the other breakaway republic of Abkhazia, which was also technically under Georgian rule. The report found that while Russia's initial actions -- responding to attacks on its own personnel in South Ossetia -- were justified, its continued advance into Georgian territory "went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense." The report also found that the destruction that ensued after the ceasefire went into effect was "not justifiable by any means."

The report further dismissed Georgian claims that Russia carried out a large-scale incursion into South Ossetia ahead of the outbreak of war, noting that this accusation could not be substantiated. The European Union-sponsored report would only allow that there was some evidence of a low-level military build-up by the Russians in the area ahead of the conflict.

Perhaps not surprisingly, both Russia and Georgia interpreted the findings through an ideological

prism most suited to their respective agendas. Russia asserted that the report had rendered an "unequivocal answer" on the question of who started the war. On the other side of the equation, Georgia said that the report showed that Russia had been spoiling for a fight throughout.

It should be noted that the report also registered the human toll of the conflict. Approximately 850 people died in August 2008, more than 100,000 were forced to flee their homes to escape the crossfire of violence, and to date, about 35,000 people remain displaced. Humanitarian aid agencies have warned that there is a refugee crisis continuing in the region.

Special Entry

Georgia and Moldova defy Russian threats and move forward with closer ties with European Union

In June 2014, the eastern European countries of Georgia and Moldova indicated that they were prepared to defy the threat posed by their former Soviet overlord -- Russia -- by signing a trade and political pact with the European Union.

It was a similar westward move by Ukraine at the start of 2014 that sparked an uprising in that country, that sparked the ousting the pro-Russian president of that country, followed by the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian area of Crimea. Since that time eastern Ukraine has been beset by violence at the hands of pro-Russian separatists. Both Georgia and Moldova are at risk of similar pro-Russian separatist uprisings in their own countries since they are home to semi-autonomous territories inhabited by ethnic Russians.

In Georgia, the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have evoked incidences of conflict with Russia over the years -- including a war in 2008. In Moldova, the issue at stake is Trans-Dnestr.

In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has sought to warn Georgia and Moldova against signing agreement that would bolster those breakaway former Soviet republics' ties with the West. However, in clear defiance of such threats, both Georgia and Moldova were making the calculation that they would benefit from closer European ties.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region. That being said, Georgia was not about to relinquish sovereignty easily, thus the defiance in signing the association agreement with the EU. As noted by Irakly Sesiashvili, the head of the parliamentary defense and security committee in Georgia, "There is an aggressive attitude

from Russia not only towards us, but towards any ex-Soviet state which has European aspirations. But this does not mean that we will reject our free choice."

Shortly after Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Trans-Dniestr declared its independence from Moldova, sparking an armed conflict between Moldovan and Trans-Dniestrian forces. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has remained involved in negotiations over Trans-Dniestr's status since the conflict began, though a long series of negotiations have thus far failed to produce a final status agreement. Moldova has tried to accommodate its ethno-linguistic Russian minority in the region by offering broad cultural and political autonomy. But given Russia's success in Crimea, it was to be seen if the Russian argument that it must act to "protect" ethno-linguistic Russians would hold sway in Moldova. The Russia argument in that direction would be aided by the call from the speaker of Trans-Dniestr's parliament for Russia to incorporate the region.

The attention of Trans-Dniestr emerged in 2014 as speculation arose about Russia using its many political and economic levers to prevent Moldova from moving forward with its Western integration effort. At the top of Russia's list of objectives was likely to be the derailment of Moldova's proposed association and trade agreements with the European Union discussed here.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 2014, Russia held military exercises in Trans-Dniestr. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, United States Air Force General Philip Breedlove has noted that Russia had built up a "very sizeable" force on its border with Ukraine, that could easily be activated elsewhere in the region. Chief among the possibilities for expanded Russian encroachment, according to Breedlove, was the Moldovan territory of Trans-Dniestr. In his remarks to the Marshall Fund think tank, Breedlove said, "There is absolutely sufficient (Russian) force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Trans-Dniestr if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome." Breedlove thus added, "We need to think about our allies, the positioning of our forces in the alliance and the readiness of those forces ... such that we can be there to defend against it if required."

Of course, given the lack of international action -- including on the part of NATO -- in punishing Russia for seizing Crimea, it was barely conceivable that NATO would act to save Moldova's territorial integrity, should Russia choose to incorporate Trans-Dniestr. To date, Russia has paid no price for its action in the Russian-speaking regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which remain officially under Georgian jurisdiction. As well, sanctions and condemnations against Russia for annexing Crimea has resulted in only mocking responses from the Russian political class.

Special Note on Governance

Former President Saakashvili faced with abuse of power and corruption charges --

In late July 2014, former President Mikhail Saakashvili was faced with allegations of abuse of power and corruption when Georgian prosecutors filed criminal charges against him. At issue were claims that the former president exceeded his authority in ordering the forcible quelling of a protest in the capital of Tbilisi and in relation to a raid on a television station. Several government officials who served under Saakashvili, including his prime minister, were arrested in relation to the criminal charges. For his part, former President Saakashvili accused the country's current authorities of carrying out a political witch-hunt against him and other members of his party, United National Movement. On his Facebook page, he wrote in relation to the legal case against him: "I will obviously not take part in this farce." In response, the leaders of the ruling Georgian Dream party, which were victorious in recent elections against Saakashvili's party from power, denied that there were political reasons behind the prosecution of Saakashvili and his cadre. Instead, they said that Georgia was capable of holding a fair trial.

Special Note on Governance

Georgian government on brink of collapse as PM sacks popular defense minister --

The decision by Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili in November 2014 to sack Defense Minister Irakli Alasania has poisoned the political well and caused turmoil within the ruling Georgian Dream political coalition, which has been in power since 2012. In that year, Georgian Dream pulled off a shocking victory over the hitherto dominant United National Movement (UNM) of former President Mikheil Saakashvili.

In the intervening years until 2014, Georgian Dream crafted a positive image of itself as a democratized and populist political "base camp" for Georgians, especially in comparison to Saakashvili's somewhat hardline leadership style. Now, in late 2014, that positive image was at risk thanks to an internal power struggle that cast the reformists within Georgian Dream -- Alasania's Free Democrats party -- against Prime Minister Garibashvili's wing.

The power struggle came to ahead when several Defense Ministry officials were arrested on charges of corruption and sanitary negligence, thus drawing sharp criticism from Alasania, who said that charges were politically motivated. Prime Minister Garibashvili responded by saying that Alasania's criticism and accusations were "completely irresponsible." That declaration sparked a spate of resignations from key cabinet members, including Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze, and eventually, a broader withdrawal from government from Alasania's party in protest of the questionable arrests.

Indeed, the general consensus was that while corruption was, indeed, a deeply pressing reality in the Georgian sphere, it was least likely to occur in the Defense Ministry where transparency and

relatively good governance were to be found, and which was led by Alasania -- one of the most respected politicians on the Georgian scene and particularly known for his integrity. The United States's own ambassador to Georgia, Richard Norland, entered the equation by issuing his support on behalf of that country for the Georgian military, even going so far as to say that the United States had "full confidence in Minister Alasania and the leadership team at the Ministry of Defense."

Yet despite these high profile acts of allegiance to Alasania, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili removed the country's most popular politician from his ministerial position, effectively catapulting the ruling coalition off the precipice of the proverbial cliff. In truth, even with Alasania's Free Democrats exiting the ruling coalition, the prime minister likely had enough support from among the remaining Georgian Dream bloc to continue to control parliament. However, another reformist player within the bloc -- the Republicans of David Usupashvili -- could decide to play "kingmaker" and defect along with Alasania's Free Democrats. That action could surely trigger the government's collapse. It was to be seen if Alasania and Usupashvili were interested in trying their luck at the polls on a reformist agenda -- and outside of the Georgian Dream alliance.

Note: On Nov. 11, 2014, Prime Minister Garibashvili appointed Tamar Beruchashvili as the country's new foreign minister, replacing Panjikidze, who resigned in protest of the sacking of Defense Minister Alasania, as discussed above.

Special Entry

Russia launches military exercises in disputed territories of Georgia; quiet plan afoot to annex South Ossetia

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

The areas affected included the federal districts of Southern and North Caucasus, as well as the recently annexed Ukrainian region of Crimea. Military drills were also taking place on Russian military bases in Armenia, and in the Georgian separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The moves were being regarded as a symbolic illustration of Russian hegemony and influence in the region, irrespective of global outrage over Russia's backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine and the ensuing war that has rocked the region since 2014.

In fact, while global attention has focused on Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, Russia has been quietly working towards subsuming the semi-autonomous Georgian territory of South Ossetia into its fold. In fact, a treaty, known as the "Treaty of Alliance and Integration" was drafted in December 2014 with the intent of integrating the Russian speaking enclave, irrespective of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity or its legal claim on South Ossetia. At the end of January 2015, the leader of South Ossetia, Leonid Tibilov, dispatched finalized documents to Moscow. In February 2015, Russia and South Ossetia signed the "Treaty on the State Border," which was being viewed as a first step towards the signing of the broader "Treaty of Alliance and Integration." Once that integration accord was signed, South Ossetia would be absorbed by Russia over a period of months.

A similar process has been underway as regards the other Georgian semi-autonomous breakaway region, Abkhazia, which was also home to a Russian-speaking population. The alliance and integration measures related to Abkhazia, however, were not regarded as comprehensive as the integration accord at stake for South Ossetia.

Note that on March 18, 2015, Russian President Putin signed the aforementioned Treaty of Alliance and Integration," which (illegally) integrated the breakaway territory with Russia. The government of Georgia in Tbilisi cast the development as a provocation with the aim of stealing Georgian territory. As noted by Georgian Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili, "It's a cynical and provocative step by Russia ... We consider it a move aimed at annexation." Meanwhile, leading Western countries said it was a dangerous threat to regional stability.

As with the annexation of Crimea, the integration of Georgian territories had no chance of gaining international recognition, and instead, Russia's territorial encroachment has been widely condemned. Indeed, the United States and the European Union condemned the new treaty with South Ossetia. Jen Psaki, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State said, "The United States' position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains clear: these regions are integral parts of Georgia, and we continue to support Georgia's independence, its sovereignty, and its territorial integrity." Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy head, said the treaty was "yet another step" intended to undermine "ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region."

Of course, as noted above, the loudest outrage as regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has come from Georgia, which already fought a war with Russia in 2008 over these very issues of control. Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was not expected to curtail his expansionist ambitions. In fact, the Russian leader was flexing his aggressive and hawkish muscles in the region as he ordered the Russian Northern Fleet to be on a state of full combat readiness in the Arctic. As well, Russia commenced major military exercises across northern Russia involving more than 45,000 troops, in what was a clear show of military strength intended to intimidate its neighbors.

Special Note on Governance

Georgian PM Garibashvili wins confidence vote after resignations and period of turbulence

In mid-May 2015, Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili of Georgia won a confidence vote in parliament, which essentially ratified his new government following a cabinet shuffle. Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili moved forward with the shake-up after a period of political turbulence in Georgia stretching back to late 2014 when the government was rocked by a series of high profile resignations and firings (as discussed above).

The 2015 cabinet shuffle came after President Georgy Margvelashvili issued warnings about the security threat posed by an increasingly aggressive Russia, and cautioned of the stability risks arising from frequent changes of defense ministers. Significantly, among the new appointments was the naming of Georgia's first female defense minister, Tina Khidasheli.

It was to be seen if this new cabinet, now ratified via a confidence vote in parliament, would be part of a more stabilized political sphere in Georgia.

Special Geopolitical Entry:

Russia encroaches into semi-autonomous Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

-- Some portions replicated from earlier entry above due to relevance--

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By mid-July 2015, the European Union was warning that while world attention remained on

Russia's land grab in Ukraine, Russia was doing the same in the Georgian semi-autonomous regions. Of note was the fact that Russia had installed its own border signs inside South Ossetia, as it continued its quiet absorption of the Georgian territory. As the European Union had warned, Russia was intent on redrawing the regional map, effectively expanding its territory in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to the detriment of Georgian sovereignty. A statement by the European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, aimed to remind Russia that it was acting in violation of international law and read as follows: "The EU reaffirms its full support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders."

Meanwhile, the political landscape in Georgia was tense due to Russia's moves in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On July 18, 2015, thousands of demonstrators were on the streets of the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to register their outrage over what Russia's so-called "occupation" of the two semi-autonomous regions. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Tamara Chergoleishvili, a leading protest organizer, explained the mass action as follows: "The Kremlin continues to use both hard and soft power in its efforts to subjugate Georgia. We gathered here to show that Russia's aggressive policy doesn't belong to the 21st century."

Special Entry

New Georgian head of government promises closer ties with West and improved relations with Russia

December 2015 in Georgia was marked by speculation over the resignation of Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili, with specific regard to influence of his predecessor, former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, and tense relations with President Giorgi Margvelashvili.

Following the 2013 presidential election, which brought Giorgi Margvelashvili to power as the new president of Georgia, then-Prime Minister Ivanishvili indicated that he had achieved his goals for the Georgian Dream party and was considering resigning from office. To that end, Prime Minister Ivanishvili proposed that Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili -- an ally -- be the person to succeed him when he stepped down from office. That resignation came in mid-November 2013. Garibashvili's accession to the position of head of government was automatic and simply based on being named to the position by the outgoing prime minister. He had to be nominated by parliament and approved by newly elected President Margvelashvili. Since the parliament was dominated by the Georgian Dream coalition, and Margvelashvili was an Ivanishvili stalwart, the outcome was all but assured that in addition to having a new president, Georgia would also have a new prime minister

Two years later in late 2015, Prime Minister Garibashvili resigned from office. In his nationally broadcast address, Garibashvili offered no explanation for his decision to step down, although he

made clear that his resignation was intended to take immediate effect. He said, "I've made a decision today to resign from the post of prime minister ... I'm leaving this position today, but will remain a loyal soldier of my motherland." Political rival suggested that the move was due to the declining popularity of the ruling Georgia Dream coalition ahead of the next elections, set to be held in the autumn of 2016. Other critics suggested that the country's economic woes -- particularly with regard to the decline in the value of the national currency -- might be the rationale for the move. Meanwhile, there was speculation that Garibashvili's tense relationship with President Margvelashvili might be the real cause of the decision for the change in head of government. Related to that rationale was the theory that Prime Minister Garibashvili's predecessor -- former Prime Minister Ivanishvili -- was actually calling the political shots in Georgia and had compelled Garibashvili to resign.

Note that Foreign Minister Georgy Kvirikashvili was soon nominated for the post of prime minister, and was easily backed by the ruling Georgian Dream coalition. His candidacy was submitted to the president for review, and he was formally approved by parliament, given the domination of the Georgian Dream coalition in that legislative body. In this way, the year 2016 would begin in Georgia with a new prime minister at the helm.

A banking and finance technocrat who worked as the director general of Cartu Bank from 2006 to 2011, the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Kvirikashvili promised to press for closer ties with the West while also improving strained relations with Russia. In a speech before parliament, he said, "Full European integration with an eventual goal of EU membership, as well as NATO membership, is our top priority." He added, "Our pragmatic approach toward Russia aims first and foremost to lessen risks to prevent threats to our main foreign policy course."

-- January 2016

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman

Core research sources listed in Bibliography

Supplementary sources: BBC, Congressional Research Service, Federal Information and News Dispatch, U.S. State Department, Chicago Tribune

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8

Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7

Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3

Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8

Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr. Yugoslav Rep. Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9

Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8

Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8

Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4

Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8

Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5

Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7

United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)
2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)
3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)
4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)

5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)
6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)
7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)
8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)
9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)
10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Syria](#), [Iraq](#) and [Yemen](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected [Syria](#) where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. [Iraq](#) has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. [Libya](#) has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in [Libya](#) have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. [Yemen](#) continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between [Iran](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#). Conversely, [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, [Zimbabwe](#) continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime

effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and mirroring [Zimbabwe](#) with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. [Somalia](#) also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in [Kenya](#). On the upside, [Nigeria](#), which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. [South Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#) and [Guinea](#) have been downgraded due to political unrest, with [Guinea](#) also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#), and [Hungary](#), due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both [India](#) and [China](#) retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, [Singapore](#) retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), and [Brazil](#). [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the [United States](#) maintains a strong ranking along with [Canada](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the [United States](#) to be downgraded

in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The [Political Stability Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2

Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5

Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7

China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7

Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7

Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6

Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4

Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8

Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7

Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7

Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5

Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

***Methodology**

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)
2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability
3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights
4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance
5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")
6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection
7. level of unchecked crime and corruption
8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security
9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation
10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), and [Somalia](#) -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both [Afghanistan](#) and [Somalia](#) continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In [Afghanistan](#), while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In [Somalia](#), while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in [Somalia](#), but across the border into [Kenya](#) with devastating results/ Also in this category is [Iraq](#), which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, [Libya](#), and [Yemen](#) have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. [Syria](#) has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddafi landscape of [Libya](#) has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is [Yemen](#), which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secessionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a [Iran](#) and Sunni [Saudi Arabia](#).

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In [Bahrain](#), the landscape had calmed. In [Egypt](#), the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of [Tunisia](#) -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. [Zimbabwe](#) has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is [Nigeria](#), which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. [Mali](#) was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited [Burkina Faso](#) and [Burundi](#) as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In [Burundi](#), an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In [Burkina Faso](#), the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Guinea](#) has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola health crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while [Romania](#) was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece](#) was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](#), [France](#), [Switzerland](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia](#) was very slightly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti](#) retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico](#) was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala](#) was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil](#) was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia](#) was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal

with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States. Meanwhile, the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji](#) was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives](#) has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	

Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	↑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	

Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	↓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	

Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	↓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	

Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	

Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	↑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	

Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	↓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	

Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	↓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	↓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	↓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	↓

Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	↓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	

South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	↓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	↓

Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Overview of Human Rights in Georgia

Georgia is a republic that gained global attention when it ousted the corrupt government of Eduard Shevardnadze from power in what came to be known as the peaceful "Rose Revolution" of 2003. In 2004, Georgia elected Mikhail Saakashvili to be president. That election was a vast improvement over the previous national elections, which had been marred with many irregularities and included the intimidation of the voters. Protests in ensuing years led to snap elections, as discussed in the "Political Conditions" of this report.

Today, it can be said that the government works to respect the civil and human rights of its citizens. However, a few problem areas still remain.

The security forces in Georgia are known to be beset by widespread corruption in its ranks. Arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as torture and beatings, occur with impunity. The lack of judicial independence means that trials cannot be guaranteed to be considered free or fair.

Discrimination and violence against religious minorities and trafficking in persons are other issues of concern with regard to Georgia. In 2006, the Georgian government passed strong anti-trafficking-in-persons legislation. To date, the government has taken further constructive steps to

combat trafficking in persons.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See Social Overview in Country Review for full list of countries' rankings.

Human Poverty Index Rank:

Not Ranked

Gini Index:

38.9

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

65 years

Unemployment Rate:

12.6%

Population living on \$1 a day (%):

N/A

Population living on \$2 a day (%):

N/A

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

54%

Internally Displaced People:

240,000

Note-12,000 refugees are currently seeking asylum in Georgia

Total Crime Rate (%):

23.6%

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: 1.0%

% of GDP Spent on Education:

2.2%

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

Constitution

The constitution was adopted in adopted on August 24, 1995.

Executive Authority

In Georgia, the president is typically elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The president is the central figure among the executive branch with strong powers. The president is the chief of state and head of government for the specific ministries including state security, interior, and defense. The prime minister is head of the remaining ministries of government.

Legislative Authority

The parliament is the locus of the legislative branch. In Georgia, the unicameral "Sak'art'velos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia), also known as the Umaghiesi Sabcho (Supreme Council) has 150 seats; 75 members elected by proportional representation, 75 from single-seat constituencies; to serve five-year terms.

Judicial Authority

At the judicial level, there is a Supreme Court and a Constitutional Court. For the Supreme Court, justices are nominated by the president and elected by a majority of all members in parliament for a term of not less than ten years. In the Constitutional Court, three justices are appointed by the parliament, three by the president, and three by the Supreme Court for ten-year terms.

Note

In March 2013, the parliament of Georgia passed into law constitutional amendments to limit presidential power. The legislation would effectively remove President Mikheil Saakashvili's

power to dismiss the cabinet, disband the parliament, and call fresh elections. The vote was not close with all 135 members present in the 150-seat unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia) voting in favor of the constitutional amendments.

At the end of May 2013, the ruling coalition in Georgia started a political process aimed at addressing a constitutional anomaly that could affect the prime minister. At issue was the fact that Bidzina Ivanishvili secured special permission from the President Mikheil Saakashvili to serve as prime minister until the start of 2014; however, Ivanishvili's ability to hold that post after that Jan. 1, 2014, deadline was very much in doubt because he was a dual citizen of Georgia and France. Indeed, the constitution prohibits Georgians with dual citizenship to serve as president, prime minister or parliamentary speaker. But in a bit of a constitutional anomaly, the Georgia constitution allow citizens of the European Union to hold those posts; obviously, France is a member of the European Union. With an eye on resolving this matter and removing doubt as to Ivanishvili's ability to hold the post of head of government, the ruling Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia coalition commenced internal discussion aimed at amending the constitution.

Government Structure

Name:

conventional long form:

Republic of Georgia

conventional short form:

Georgia

local long form:

none

local short form:

Sak'art'velo

former:

Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic

Type:

Republic

Executive Branch:

President and head of state:

President Giorgi MARGVELASHVILI (since 2013)

Note on President:

Giorgi Margvelashvili of Georgian Dream won the 2013 presidential election as discussed in "Primer" below.

Primer on 2013 Presidential Election in Georgia

(Oct. 27, 2013)

A presidential election was set to be held in Georgia in October 2013. The last published date for this election was Oct. 27, 2013.

In Georgia, the president -- who is head of state and head of government -- is typically elected by popular vote for a five-year term. However, in November 2003, opposition forces stormed and took control of the Georgian parliament. Then-President Eduard Shevardnadze declared a state of emergency and resigned from office on Nov. 23, 2003. An interim presidency followed until elections were held in 2004. Fresh elections were again held four years later. The snap election had been called following mass opposition protests in Georgia in late 2007. The outcome effectively ratified Saakashvili's leadership. Saakashvili had come to power in what came to be known as the Rose Revolution of 2003.

As intimated here, the incumbent president was Mikhail Saakashvili; he was elected president and head of state in 2004 and was re-elected in 2008. Saakashvili was not, however, eligible for a third consecutive term. Possible contenders for the presidency in 2013 included the following candidates:

Giorgi Margvelashvili was the candidate of Georgian Dream -- a coalition of pro-market and pro-western liberal entities, as well as hardline nationalists. Note that Georgian Dream was the largest entity in parliament following the 2012 elections. As a result, the party's leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, became the new prime minister.

David Bakradze was the candidate of the center-right but pro-Western United National Movement (Ertiani Natsionaluri Modzraoba or ENM) -- the same party of outgoing President Saakashvili. As noted above, the president's party suffered a political setback in the 2012 parliamentary elections; it was to be seen if that negative fortune would prevail in the presidential contest.

Nino Burjanadze was the candidate of the center-right Democratic Movement-United Georgia (DM-UG). She was a key player in Georgia's Rose Revolution. Since that time, she has been an occasional ally and intermittent rival of outgoing President Saakashvili. Now, she was aiming to be the elected head of state of Georgia with Saakashvili headed off stage.

Shalva Natelashvili was the candidate of the socialist and pro-European integration Georgian Labor Party (Sakartvelos Leiboristuli Partia or SLP).

Giorgi Targamadze was the candidate of the Christian-Democratic Movement (k'ristianul-demokratiuli modzraoba or KDM); the KDM is a conservative and pro-Christian Orthodox political party.

Another possible contender for the presidency was Zurab Kharatishvili, the former chairman of Georgia's Central Electoral Commission, who resigned from that post to form a new centrist political party. In September 2013, Kharatishvili indicated that he would, indeed, be participating in this presidential contest. At a news conference, he said that he has been registered as a candidate after being nominated by the National Democratic Party and the Party of European Democrats.

In late September 2013 -- a month ahead of the election -- polling data from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) showed that Giorgi Margvelashvili -- the candidate of the Georgian Dream coalition of Prime Minister Ivanishvili that leads the parliament -- had the advantage. Margvelashvili had 39 percent of support -- well ahead of Davit Bakradze, the candidate of outgoing President Saakashvili's United National Movement, who had 18 percent. Nino Burjanadze of Democratic Movement-United Georgia was trailing behind with seven percent, while the two other opposition candidates -- Shalva Natelashvili and Giorgi Targamadze -- were even further back with four percent of support respectively. It was to be seen if this dynamic would hold until election day.

In October 2013, that trend was still holding. Polling data from the United States-based firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research showed that the Georgian Dream coalition candidate, Margvelashvili, augmenting his lead with 43 percent of public support, against United National Movement candidate, Bakradze, with 22 percent, and Burjanadze, with eight percent. With weeks to go until election day, there was the possibility of the race tightening. However, the expectations at the time of writing involved a win for Margvelashvili and the ruling coalition.

Indeed, Margvelashvili was, himself, so confident about his impending victory that he declared that he would withdraw from the presidential race if the first round of voting failed to produce an outright winner, and thus went to a run-off round. "The Georgian society will vote for Bidzina Ivanishvili's coalition and for me, as its presidential candidate on Oct. 27," he said. Margvelashvili continued, "But if a miracle happens, I do not see any sense in taking part in the miracle (of a run-off round)."

Margvelashvili's confidence was backed by the voters on election day. With the votes counted, it was the ally of Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili who had won the presidential election, with

around 67 percent of the vote share. Bakradze from the party of the outgoing President Saakashvili was far behind in second place with 20 percent. Evidently, no second round would be necessary and Margvelashvili was set to become Georgia's new president and head of state. This victory by Margvelashvili was a ratification of sorts for the Georgian Dream party, which dominated the parliament and would now also be represented in the executive branch of government.

Head of Government

Prime Minister Georgy Kvirikashvili (since Dec. 2015)

Note on head of government:

December 2015 in Georgia was marked by speculation over the resignation of Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili, with specific regard to influence of his predecessor, former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, and tense relations with President Giorgi Margvelashvili.

Following the 2013 presidential election, which brought Giorgi Margvelashvili to power as the new president of Georgia, then-Prime Minister Ivanishvili indicated that he had achieved his goals for the Georgian Dream party and was considering resigning from office. To that end, Prime Minister Ivanishvili proposed that Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili -- an ally -- be the person to succeed him when he stepped down from office. That resignation came in mid-November 2013. Garibashvili's accession to the position of head of government was automatic and simply based on being named to the position by the outgoing prime minister. He had to be nominated by parliament and approved by newly elected President Margvelashvili. Since the parliament was dominated by the Georgian Dream coalition, and Margvelashvili was an Ivanishvili stalwart, the outcome was all but assured that in addition to having a new president, Georgia would also have a new prime minister

Two years later in late 2015, Prime Minister Garibashvili resigned from office. In his nationally broadcast address, Garibashvili offered no explanation for his decision to step down, although he made clear that his resignation was intended to take immediate effect. He said, "I've made a decision today to resign from the post of prime minister ... I'm leaving this position today, but will remain a loyal soldier of my motherland." Political rival suggested that the move was due to the declining popularity of the ruling Georgia Dream coalition ahead of the next elections, set to be held in the autumn of 2016. Other critics suggested that the country's economic woes -- particularly with regard to the decline in the value of the national currency -- might be the rationale for the move. Meanwhile, there was speculation that Garibashvili's tense relationship with President Margvelashvili might be the real cause of the decision for the change in head of government. Related to that rationale was the theory that Prime Minister Garibashvili's predecessor -- former Prime Minister Ivanishvili -- was actually calling the political shots in Georgia and had compelled Garibashvili to resign.

Note that Foreign Minister Georgy Kvirikashvili was soon nominated for the post of prime

minister, and was easily backed by the ruling Georgian Dream coalition. His candidacy was submitted to the president for review, and he was formally approved by parliament, given the domination of the Georgian Dream coalition in that legislative body. In this way, the year 2016 would begin in Georgia with a new prime minister at the helm.

A banking and finance technocrat who worked as the director general of Cartu Bank from 2006 to 2011, the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Kvirikashvili promised to press for closer ties with the West while also improving strained relations with Russia. In a speech before parliament, he said, "Full European integration with an eventual goal of EU membership, as well as NATO membership, is our top priority." He added, "Our pragmatic approach toward Russia aims first and foremost to lessen risks to prevent threats to our main foreign policy course."

Legislative Branch:

Unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia):

The "Sak'art'velos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia), also known as the Umaghiesi Sabcho (Supreme Council) has 150 seats; 75 members elected by proportional representation, 75 from single-seat constituencies; to serve five-year terms

Primer on parliamentary elections in Georgia:

(Oct. 1, 2012)

Parliamentary elections were set to be held in the South Caucasus country of Georgia on Oct. 1, 2012, under a reformed electoral system. At stake would be the 150 seats of the unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti," which is also known as the Umaghiesi Sabcho (Supreme Council). Of the 150 seats, 75-77 members would be divided among parties crossing a five percent threshold of votes, and 73-75 would be directly elected from single-seat constituencies; members serve five-year terms. Note that the new incoming parliament of Georgia of 2012 would be relocated from the capital of Tbilisi to Kutaisi.

Going into the 2012 parliamentary elections, the ruling United National Movement party held control over about 120 seats. Three opposition parties -- the Christian Democratic Movement Party, the Labor Party, and the Republican Party of Georgia -- gained representation in the outgoing parliament. It would yet to be seen if the smaller opposition forces, such as the aforementioned Republican Party, would pass the five percent threshold in 2012. That being said, with legal provisions ensuring that Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's tenure as president would end in 2013 at the close of his second term in office, all eyes were on the parliamentary contest, which would set the path for political power in Georgia going forward. Specifically, changes to the system meant that most executive power would be transferred from the president in 2013 (precisely when Saakashvili's term was to end), to a prime minister, who would be selected by the majority in parliament. Clearly, a parliamentary victory for the president's

United National Movement would ensure that Saakashvili's hand remained on the levers of power well into the future. Of course, the opposite was also true. The ascendancy of the opposition at the polls would curtail Saakashvili's continued influence on the political scene past 2013.

In many senses, the 2012 parliamentary vote was a test for President Saakashvili, who came to power in 2003. Saakashvili has advanced a pro-Western stance and has engaged in a sometimes-hostile relationship with Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union from which newly-independent Georgia emerged in the early 1990s. That hostility gave rise to a short-lived war in 2008 over the semi-autonomous territory of South Ossetia. Saakashvili has warned that even parliamentary success for the opposition would represent regression to the Russian fold.

Opposition leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose personal fortune has been estimated at about half of Georgia's GDP, has been at the forefront of the effort to challenge Saakashvili's leadership and political agenda, accusing the incumbent president of reversing the country's democratic gains and undermining civil rights. Of particular concern to human rights advocates has been a prisoner abuse scandal that has rocked the country, as videos were released of prison inmates being assaulted by guards. The scandal led to street protests and offered Ivanishvili the opportunity to cast the Saakashvili as autocratic and undemocratic. At a rally for his Georgian Dream coalition, Ivanishvili declared: "This regime cannot be the leadership of our country. This system should collapse."

But in a speech broadcast in the state-controlled media, Saakashvili had the following characterization to make of the opposition leader on the eve of the parliamentary vote: "Tomorrow, our enemy has its last chance to turn us off our path of independence. But I am confident that tomorrow our freedom-loving nation will take the ultimate and decisive step towards liberation from the pincers of the conqueror and towards integration into the house of Europe."

After the polling stations closed and the vote count began on election day, exit polls indicated an advantage for the opposition Georgian Dream coalition of Ivanishvili. Of course, a lead at the popular vote level would not neatly translate into a parliamentary majority, given the electoral system of the country. Specifically, the opposition was leading the vote for party lists, which determine about 77 seats of the 150-seat parliament, whereas the rest of the seats were to be determined by the "first past the post" system. Still, supporters of the opposition coalition were taking to the streets of the capital city of Tbilisi to celebrate their claim of victory. The party of President Saakashvili -- the ruling United National Movement -- was making its own counter-claim of victory, as it was leading the "first past the post" vote. Accordingly, the ruling party was certain that it would hold its majority in parliament.

By Oct. 2, 2012, the election outcome was becoming clear and it was the opposition that had the more convincing claim on victory. To this end, President Saakashvili conceded that Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition had won the elections during a live broadcast on Georgian television.

With close to 75 percent of the vote count considered, Georgian Dream was leading the party list vote with 54 percent of the vote while the president's United National Movement had about 41 percent. Of course, the actual makeup of the legislative branch of government was yet to be seen. The party with control over more than half the seats in parliament would be positioned to select a prime minister. As discussed above, the prime minister would be the new base of executive power from 2013 going forward.

Note that following the 2013 presidential election that brought Giorgi Margvelashvili of Georgian Dream to power (as discussed in the Presidential Election Primer above), Prime Minister Ivanishvili indicated that he had achieved his goals for the Georgian Dream party and was considering resigning from office. See above for information about his choice of successor.

Judicial Branch:

Supreme Court; justices nominated by the president and elected by a majority of all members in parliament for a term of not less than ten years.

Constitutional Court; three justices appointed by the parliament, three by the president, and three by the Supreme Court for ten-year terms.

Constitution:

Adopted Aug. 24, 1995

Note: On March 22, 2013, the parliament of Georgia passed into law constitutional amendments to limit presidential power. The legislation would effectively remove President Mikheil Saakashvili's power to dismiss the cabinet, disband the parliament, and call fresh elections. The vote was not close with all 135 members present in the 150-seat unicameral "Sakartvelos Parlamenti" (Parliament of Georgia) voting in favor of the constitutional amendments.

Legal System:

Based on civil law system

Administrative Divisions:

9 regions (mkharebi, singular - mkhare), 9 cities (k'alak'ebi, singular - k'alak'i), and 2 autonomous republics (avtomnoy respubliki, singular - avtom respublika)

regions:

Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti,

Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Shida Kartli

cities:

Chiat'ura, Gori, K'ut'aisi, P'ot'i, Rust'avi, T'bilisi, Tqibuli, Tsqaltubo, Zugdidi

autonomous republics:

Abkhazia or Ap'khazet'is Avtonomiuri Respublika (Sokhumi), Ajaria or Acharis Avtonomiuri Respublika (Bat'umi)

Established Political Parties:

Alliance of Patriots [Irma INASHVILI]

Conservative Party [Zviad DZIDZIGURI]

European Democrats [Paata DAVITAIA]

Free Georgia [Kakha KUKAVA]

Georgian Dream (a five-party coalition composed of Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia, Republican Party, National Forum, Conservative Party, and Industry Will Save Georgia)

Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia [Irakli GARIBASHVILI]

Green Party of Georgia [Gia GACHECHILADZE]

Industry Will Save Georgia (Industrialists) or IWSG [Giorgi TOPADZE]

National Democratic Party or NDP [Bachuki KARDAVA]

National Forum [Kakhaber SHARTAVA]

New Rights [Pikria CHIKHRADZE]

Our Georgia-Free Democrats (OGFD) [Irakli ALASANIA]

Republican Party [Khatuna SAMNIDZE]

United Democratic Movement [Nino BURJANADZE]

United National Movement or UNM [vacant]

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Government of Georgia

Pres.

Giorgi MARGVELASHVILI

Speaker of Parliament

Davit USUPASHVILI

Prime Min.

Giorgi KVIRIKASHVILI

First Dep. Prime Min.

Dimitry KUMSISHVILI

Dep. Prime Min.

Kakhaber "Kakha" KALADZE

Min. of Agriculture

Otar DANELIA

Min. of Corrections & Legal Assistance

Kakhi KAKHISHVILI

Min. of Culture & Monument Protection

Mikheil GIORGADZE

Min. of Defense

Tinatin "Tina" KHIDASHELI

Min. of Economy & Sustainable Development

Dimitry KUMSISHVILI

Min. of Education & Science

Tamar SANIKIDZE

Min. of Energy

Kakha KALADZE

Min. of Environment & Natural Resources Protection

Gigla AGULASHVILI

Min. of Finance

Nodar KHADURI

Min. of Foreign Affairs

Mikheil JANELIDZE

Min. of Internal Affairs

Giorgi MGEBRISHVILI

Min. for Internally Displaced Persons From the Occupied Territories, Accommodation, & Refugees of Georgia

Sozar SUBARI

Min. of Justice

Tea TSULUKIANI

Min. of Labor, Health & Social Affairs

Davit SERGEENKO

Min. of Regional Development & Infrastructure

Nodar JAVAKHISHVILI
Min. of Sports & Youth Affairs
Tariel KHECHIKASHVILI
Dir. of State Security Service
Vakhtang GOMELAURI
State Min. for Diaspora Issues
Gela DUMBADZE
State Min. for European & Euro-Atlantic Integration
Davit BAKRADZE
State Min. for Reintegration
Paata ZAKAREISHVILI
Sec., National Security Council
Irine IMERLISHVILI
Chmn., National Bank
Giorgi KADAGIDZE
Ambassador to the US
Archil GEGESHIDZE
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York
Kakha IMNADZE

-- as of 2016

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Biography of President

Executive Branch:

Note on President:

Giorgi Margvelashvili of Georgian Dream won the 2013 presidential election as discussed in "Primer" below.

Note:

In Georgia, the president -- who is head of state and head of government -- is typically elected by popular vote for a five-year term. However, in November 2003, opposition forces stormed and took control of the Georgian parliament. Then-President Eduard Shevardnadze declared a state of emergency and resigned from office on Nov. 23, 2003. An interim presidency followed until elections were held in 2004. Fresh elections were again held four years later. The snap election had been called following mass opposition protests in Georgia in late 2007. The outcome effectively ratified Saakashvili's leadership. Saakashvili had come to power in what came to be known as the Rose Revolution of 2003.

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(Oct. 27, 2013)

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As intimated here, the incumbent president was Mikhail Saakashvili; he was elected president and head of state in 2004 and was re-elected in 2008. Saakashvili was not, however, eligible for a third consecutive term. Possible contenders for the presidency in 2013 included the following candidates:

Giorgi Margvelashvili was the candidate of Georgian Dream -- a coalition of pro-market and pro-western liberal entities, as well as hardline nationalists. Note that Georgian Dream was the largest entity in parliament following the 2012 elections. As a result, the party's leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, became the new prime minister.

David Bakradze was the candidate of the center-right but pro-Western United National Movement (Ertiani Natsionaluri Modzraoba or ENM) -- the same party of outgoing President Saakashvili. As noted above, the president's party suffered a political setback in the 2012 parliamentary elections; it was to be seen if that negative fortune would prevail in the presidential contest.

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Shalva Natelashvili was the candidate of the socialist and pro-European integration Georgian Labor Party (Sakartvelos Leiboristuli Partia or SLP).

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demokratiuli modzraoba or KDM); the KDM is a conservative and pro-Christian Orthodox political party.

Another possible contender for the presidency was Zurab Kharatishvili, the former chairman of Georgia's Central Electoral Commission, who resigned from that post to form a new centrist political party. In September 2013, Kharatishvili indicated that he would, indeed, be participating in this presidential contest. At a news conference, he said that he has been registered as a candidate after being nominated by the National Democratic Party and the Party of European Democrats.

In late September 2013 -- a month ahead of the election -- polling data from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) showed that Giorgi Margvelashvili -- the candidate of the Georgian Dream coalition of Prime Minister Ivanishvili that leads the parliament -- had the advantage. Margvelashvili had 39 percent of support -- well ahead of Davit Bakradze, the candidate of outgoing President Saakashvili's United National Movement, who had 18 percent. Nino Burjanadze of Democratic Movement-United Georgia was trailing behind with seven percent, while the two other opposition candidates -- Shalva Natelashvili and Giorgi Targamadze -- were even further back with four percent of support respectively. It was to be seen if this dynamic would hold until election day.

In October 2013, that trend was still holding. Polling data from the United States-based firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research showed that the Georgian Dream coalition candidate, Margvelashvili, augmenting his lead with 43 percent of public support, against United National Movement candidate, Bakradze, with 22 percent, and Burjanadze, with eight percent. With weeks to go until election day, there was the possibility of the race tightening. However, the expectations at the time of writing involved a win for Margvelashvili and the ruling coalition.

Indeed, Margvelashvili was, himself, so confident about his impending victory that he declared that he would withdraw from the presidential race if the first round of voting failed to produce an outright winner, and thus went to a run-off round. "The Georgian society will vote for Bidzina

Ivanishvili's coalition and for me, as its presidential candidate on Oct. 27," he said. Margvelashvili continued, "But if a miracle happens, I do not see any sense in taking part in the miracle (of a run-off round)."

Margvelashvili's confidence was backed by the voters on election day. With the votes counted, it was the ally of Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili who had won the presidential election, with around 67 percent of the vote share. Bakradze from the party of the outgoing President Saakashvili was far behind in second place with 20 percent. Evidently, no second round would be necessary and Margvelashvili was set to become Georgia's new president and head of state. This victory by Margvelashvili was a ratification of sorts for the Georgian Dream party, which dominated the parliament and would now also be represented in the executive branch of government.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ivanishvili indicated that with Margvelashvili's victory, he had achieved his goals for the Georgian Dream party and was considering resigning from office. To that end, Prime Minister Ivanishvili proposed that Interior Minister Irakli Garibashvili -- an ally -- be the person to succeed him when he steps down from office. That resignation was expected to come at some point in mid-November 2013. Garibashvili's accession to the position of head of government would not be automatic simply based on being named to the position by the outgoing prime minister. He would have to be nominated by parliament and approved by newly-elected President Margvelashvili. Since the parliament was dominated by the Georgian Dream coalition, and Margvelashvili was an Ivanishvili stalwart, the outcome was all but assured that in addition to having a new president, Georgia was also set for a new prime minister.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in October 2001 that the principles of democracy to shaping its policy and pursues a balanced foreign policy in all directions. The ministry made this statement in response to allegations by some members of the Georgian Parliament that Georgia was likely to change its political course and direct it from the West towards Russia.

Georgia's long tradition as a crossroad of East-West commerce was interrupted by the Soviet Union and then by Zviad Gamsakhurdia's isolationist policy. After Eduard Shevardnadze became the first the head of the state and then the president, the government sought to revive the national economy by reinstating ties with both East and West-starting in 1992-1993 it made several major steps in that direction. In March 1992 Germany became the first Western country to post an ambassador in Georgia with the embassy was opened in June and recognition by the United States came in April of that year. A month later, Georgia became the 179th member of the United Nations.

Georgia is a member of numerous international organizations including the United Nations and many of its specialized and regional agencies, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, more commonly known as the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The Georgian government is committed to economic reform in cooperation with the IMF and World Bank. Georgia stakes much of its future on the revival of the ancient Silk Road as the new Eurasian Corridor, a bridge for the transit of goods between Europe and Asia.

In 2009, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine joined the Eastern Partnership, an entity which was facilitated by the European Union (EU).

Georgia is also a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (now the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council or EAPC), NATO's Partnership for Peace, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Georgia is also a guest of the Council of Europe and an applicant to the World Trade Organization.

In 2006, with an eye on joining NATO, Georgia withdrew from the Council of Defense Ministers, saying that "Georgia has taken a course to join NATO and it cannot be part of two military structures simultaneously." Georgia said it was withdrawing from the grouping after the 2008 South Ossetia war with Russia. Georgia's membership ended in 2009.

NATO refrained from extending an accession invitation to Georgia in April 2008, amidst Russian objections to such a move. NATO did not, however, foreclose the possibility of the country joining the bloc at some point in the future.

In 2013, Georgia made it clear that although it would not be rejoining any post-Soviet alliances, it was nonetheless interested in pursuing cooperation with countries belonging to them, such as Belarus.

Regional Relations

Georgia's location, nestled between the Black Sea, Russia and Turkey, gives it strategic importance far beyond its size. It is developing as the gateway from the Black Sea to the Caucasus and the larger Caspian region, and also serves as a buffer between Russia and Turkey. Georgia has a long relationship with Russia, but it is reaching out to its other neighbors and looking to the West in search of alternatives and opportunities. It signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Union; it also participates in NATO's Partnership for Peace and encourages foreign investment. France, Germany and the United Kingdom all have embassies in Tbilisi, and Germany is a significant donor.

Georgia is a participant in the regional SilkSat group of countries that are seeking to boost regional economic and technological cooperation via satellite communications.

Georgia is also a member of the GUUAM political, economic and security alliance. The five participating GUUAM countries, Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova, formalized their relationship by signing on June 7, 2001, in Yalta, Ukraine, a charter. In it they stated that they acknowledge "that regional cooperation is a part of globalization processes, and may contribute to consolidation of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the GUUAM member states, promote peaceful settlement of conflicts and improve well-being of their peoples."

They further stated that their cooperation is "based on the universally recognized principles and norms of international law, in particular, on the respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in domestic affairs of the member states."

The objectives of the group are:

- promoting social and economic development
- strengthening and expanding trade and economic links
- developing and effectively using, in the interest of GUUAM states, transportation and communication arteries as well as their corresponding infrastructures situated in their territories
- strengthening of regional security in all spheres of activity
- developing relations in the field of science and culture and in the humanitarian sphere
- interacting in the framework of international organizations
- combating international terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking.

The GUUAM members left the door open to other countries to join the group. The annual meeting of heads of states is the highest body of the alliance, while meetings on the level of ministers for

foreign relations are to be held biannually. Chairmanship of GUUAM is rotational by alphabetical order (according to both official languages, Russian and English, the rotation is Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Uzbekistan and Ukraine). The GUUAM working body is called the Committee of National Coordinators, which consists of national coordinators from each member state, appointed by the ministers for foreign affairs. The committee coordinates the activities of the member states and prepares meetings of the heads of state and the sessions of the ministers for foreign affairs.

On August 18, 2008, Georgia finalized the legal procedures for its withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The move appeared to be largely motivated by the short war with Russia over South Ossetia a year earlier. The Georgia's foreign ministry said via its website: "In August 2008, Russia...carried out occupation of the inalienable parts of the Georgian territory, ethnic cleansing and recognition of the so-called 'independence' of the proxy regimes set up by Russia on the occupied territories." The statement continued, "Based on the foregoing, Georgia made a decision to withdraw from the CIS."

The Foreign Ministry statement noted that Georgia would remain part of 75 multilateral relationships not conditional upon CIS membership, in accordance with the Vienna 1969 Convention on the Law of Treaties. These relationships would fall into the category of visa-free movement of certain nationals as well as free trade zone. The Foreign Ministry also noted that it was willing to forge bilateral relationships with other CIS member states, but expressly stated that such ties would require respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as inviolability of borders and noninterference in internal affairs.

Editor's Note

The CIS is a bloc formerly composed of 12 (now 11) former Soviet republics, which currently include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Georgia and The Caucasus

Due to its strategic geographical position between Europe and Central Asia, Georgia remains the gateway for land transportation across the Caucasus, using its ports as bridges; its location on the Black Sea is one of the country's foremost natural assets. Some overland routes are problematic, but Georgia is publicly committed to building a functional trans-Georgia transportation infrastructure to its Caucasus and Central Asian neighbors.

The country's busiest seaport, Poti, has a shipping capacity of five to six million tons a year, and is used for most container traffic entering Georgia by sea. This port should develop quickly as more traffic comes through the city, and it is being modernized to handle heavier traffic. The

southernmost port, Batumi, has a capacity of four to five million tons, and was designed for bulk traffic. It has dealt primarily with humanitarian grain imports.

A pipeline linking Georgia's Black Sea port at Supsa, just south of Poti, with Baku in Azerbaijan was completed in April 1999. The pipeline can carry up to 105,000 barrels of oil per day. Azerbaijan and its main foreign oil consortium can use this pipeline instead of the Russian pipeline that passes through several of the Russian Federation's southern republics, including Dagestan and Chechnya, on its way to Novorossiisk on the Black Sea.

On the same day in April 1999, a new rail ferry route across the Black Sea was opened, connecting Poti, Georgia to Ilichovsk, near Odessa, in the Ukraine. Thus, when the Azerbaijani oil arrives in Supsa, it can be shipped across the Black Sea.

The new pipeline and rail ferry route together mark the beginning of the revitalization of the silk road (the ancient spice trading route that caravans traveled through the Caspian and Caucasus regions to reach Europe) and highlight the viability of an East-West transit corridor from the Caspian.

At least three other proposed pipelines were under discussion in 2000. The first is a gas pipeline, proposed by Russia, which would be laid from Dzhubga in Russia to Samsun in Turkey, under the Black Sea. The second is an oil pipeline to connect Baku in Azerbaijan through Georgia and Turkey to Turkey's Mediterranean port, Ceyhan. The third is the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP), which would run from Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan, across the floor of the Caspian Sea to Baku in Azerbaijan, through Georgia, to Erzurum, Turkey.

The presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey on the sidelines of the Organization signed several agreements concerning the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline for the Security and Cooperation in Europe summit in Istanbul in November 1999. These three countries and Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan signed additional agreements concerning the shipping of the latter two states' oil via the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Also in Istanbul, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, and the United States signed an agreement on the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline. If they are built, these pipelines will provide a way to ship oil and gas from the Caspian Sea region to the West, without having to go through either Russia or Iran.

Relations with Russia: Issues pertaining to Chechnya, Abkazia and South Ossetia

Georgia's political landscape has been influenced by relations with Russia as well as relations with semi-autonomous regions. Of particular concern over the years has been the presence of Russian military bases on restive areas of Georgian territory. The Russian presence is viewed as the virtual annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. With little attention placed on the conflict zones, and

with little hope offered in the way of resolving the political impasse, experts have warned that they are possible venues for explosive conflict in the future.

Another source of tension comes from Russian accusations that Georgia is hiding Chechen militants in the Pankisi Gorge area, the home of Chechen kin people, the Kists. Tensions between the two countries have increased in tandem with Russia's accusation that Georgia allows Chechen rebels to move freely and enact terrorist attacks in the area. Russia also claims that after carrying out attacks, the rebels usually flee across the border into Georgia, including the Pankisi Gorge, where they enjoy a safe haven. For its part, Georgia accuses Russia of violating its airspace as it attempts to deal with the rebel threat. The conflict had escalated to such an extent that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe had placed monitors in the area. The joint border patrol decision is regarded as a constructive measure aimed at lowering the tenor of bilateral tensions and decreasing the threat of military confrontation.

Relations between Georgia and Russia became increasingly tense in the latter half of 1999 as the Russian-Chechnyan conflict worsened. From around August 1999 onward, Georgia repeatedly accused Russia of violating its airspace, bombing and subjecting Georgian villages to artillery fire, and injuring and killing Georgian civilians.

At times (such as the mid-August incident involving a violation of Georgian airspace and the bombing of a Georgian village), Russia admitted responsibility and compensation was discussed. At other times (such as an alleged bombing incident in November 1999), Russia refused to concede that it had violated Georgia's territorial sovereignty. In turn, Russia repeatedly accused Georgia of allowing goods (including arms) to be smuggled into Chechnya (across the Georgian-Chechnyan border); Georgia denied all of these accusations.

Periodically, Russia also accused Georgia of both closing its border to Chechen refugees and allowing able-bodied men to seek refuge in Georgia. Again, Georgia denied all of these accusations. The more than 5,000 Chechen refugees who have made their way to Georgia are putting an increasing strain on the Georgian economy. Georgia has requested the assistance of the international community in dealing with these displaced persons.

Meanwhile, Russian peacekeepers, under the authority of the Commonwealth of Independent States, are stationed in Abkhazia, along with United Nations observers, but both groups have had to restrict their activities due to increased mining and guerrilla activity. Georgia is working with France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and the United States, and through the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, to reach a comprehensive settlement consistent with Georgian independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The United Nations observer force and other organizations are encouraging grassroots cooperative and confidence building measures in the region.

The separatist war in the Abkhazia region of Georgia continues without resolution more than 10 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Abkhazian separatists drove out Georgian forces in a 1992-93 war that ended in a ceasefire and de facto independence but no international recognition. Attempts to reach a political solution have been elusive, and the province situated along the Black Sea has remained plagued by clashes and bombings despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers. In this regard, Tbilisi has let more than 2,000 Russian peacekeepers monitor an uneasy truce with the Abkhazian separatists under the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The presence of these Russian troops on Georgian soil has been the source of great controversy. Increasingly, the timeline for Russian base closings was (and continues to be) a high priority of the Georgian government. At the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe summit meeting in Istanbul in November 1999, Russia agreed to decommission and dismantle a military base near Tbilisi and another base in Abkhazia by July 1, 2001. At that meeting, Russia also agreed to reduce significantly its heavy weapons in Georgia. For its part, the leadership of Abkhazia believes that a pullout of Russian peacekeepers would likely trigger renewed armed conflict with Georgian forces.

This concordance between Georgia and Russia in mid-2001 did not last long. On October 9, 2001, an Abkhazian village was raided, leaving 14 people dead. Georgian and Chechen troops were blamed. As well, Georgia reportedly bombed three villages from the air, according to officials in Abkhazia. For its part, a Georgian official denied his nation's involvement, and said a helicopter had entered Abkhazia from Russia and bombed the three villages.

Tensions in Georgia surged on the previous day, following the downing of a helicopter carrying several United Nations observers, four crew members and a translator. The gunmen had seized Georgievskoe village, 50 km (30 miles) northwest of Sukhumi, late on the previous day after a battle with Abkhazian residents. They were forced out by residents and moved north towards Russia's border. Abkhazian officials again blamed Chechen and Georgian fighters, whom they claim invaded the Kodori Gorge region of Abkhazia the previous week. Moscow blamed Georgia for allowing whom it called "bandits" and "terrorists" to move throughout its territory.

Georgia did not publicly confirm the presence of Chechen fighters on Abkhazian territory and it denied Russian and Abkhazian allegations that it allowed Chechen rebels to take refuge in its territory, though it has permitted refugees from the region's two wars to live there. Georgia is the only foreign country that borders Chechnya.

The Abkhazia region said Oct. 17, 2001, that it had launched a new airborne attack against Georgian and Chechen guerrillas, inflicting heavy casualties. The new attack on the gunmen was launched a day after the leaders of Georgia and Russia agreed to intensify efforts to avert full-scale conflict. Fighting intensified in the rugged Black Sea region between Abkhazian forces and what the region's leaders say are up to several hundred Georgian and Chechen guerrillas. More than a dozen people have been killed.

In late 2001, Russia-Georgia relations turned even more sour. On October 28, six unidentified Mi-24 helicopters and four Su-25 planes bombed an unpopulated area in Georgia's Kodori gorge. Tbilisi accused Moscow of the bombing -- an accusation that Moscow denied. Moscow once again placed strong pressure on Georgia to allow the Russian military into Pankisi Gorge capture Chechen rebels. Furthermore, President Putin announced that the Russian military would no longer intervene in the Abkhaz conflict, a maneuver that shocked Georgian leaders.

After several months of increasing tension resulting from rebel operations along their common border, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, and Georgia's then-leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, agreed to establish joint border patrols, at regional summit in Moldova in 2002.

From 2003 and into the first part of 2005, bilateral relations remained marked by the problems associated with the Pankisi Gorge area as well as Abkhazia.

In 2003, hoping to offer some resolution to the problems at hand, Russia offered citizenship to Abkhazians who were legally Georgians but, at the same time, had declared themselves to be independent. Assuming Russian citizenship, under these circumstances, offered little solace to those who had been fighting for self-determination. Caught in the crosshairs of the issue were not simply Abkhazians seeking independence but also ethnic Georgians who lived in the Abkhazia region and were driven out during the last decade of ongoing dissonance. In both these regards, international jurisprudence has not been able to offer clear relief.

While United Nations aid has been vital to the survival of the people of the region, a few years prior, a United Nations aircraft was shot down (as noted above). Also, in 2003, a few United Nations observers were kidnapped on the Abkhazia border. They were later released unharmed. At least in the case of the helicopter incident, which killed the crew and nine United Nations observers, the blame was placed on Chechen rebels. The lawlessness taking root within Abkhazia, however, could not be ignored as it was believed to have contributed to such incidences taking place.

The Georgian separatist region of South Ossetia was the site of fighting in mid-2004 as the Georgian government struggled to keep a complex situation under control. South Ossetia seeks to integrate itself with Russia, and therefore its leaders have demanded either independence from Georgia, or direct rule from Moscow. In June of 2004, Georgian Interior Ministry troops were sent into the region, officially to combat smugglers and protect local villages. However, South Ossetians saw the deployment as a step toward forcing the region back under Georgian control. As a result, clashes broke out in mid-August between Georgian troops and South Ossetian forces and have continued to flare since then.

On August 19, fighting intensified and Georgian forces captured strategic heights near the major

South Ossetian city of Tskhinvali, but began a pullout soon afterward. President Mikheil Saakashvili stated that the pullout demonstrated the willingness of his government to use negotiations to resolve the conflict. However, his troops were to be relocated to the nearby city of Gori, where they will be able to return in short order to South Ossetia if this is required.

Russian interests in South Ossetia have been another factor coming into play. Dozens of Russian peacekeepers were deployed there to monitor a 1992 Georgian-Ossetian peace treaty. Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a warning that any attempt by Georgia to forcefully regain control over South Ossetia may reignite the old territorial conflicts that caused much bloodshed in the early 1990s. However, both Georgia and South Ossetia blamed each other for the violence, as well as third party elements. Georgia considers Russian peacekeepers and Russian mercenaries hired by South Ossetia to be the "third force," while Russia and South Ossetia consider the Georgian Interior Ministry troops to be the instigator of clashes.

Complex relationships and the security of the region were at stake as the leaders of Georgia, Russia, and South Ossetia walked a tight rope to regain a form of balance in the region in the latter half of 2004.

At the start of 2005, President Saakashvili revealed proposals to address the question of autonomy within Georgia for South Ossetia. The leadership of South Ossetia, however, rejected the plan, calling for full independence once again. Saakashvili also suggested that a similar package of proposals could be offered to Abkhazia, on the condition that Georgian refugees who fled the fighting and violence of 1993 were allowed to return.

By mid-2005, unrest continued with the killing of a Georgian policeman and four Ossetians in South Ossetia.

As the second half of 2005 began, Russia agreed to withdraw troops from two of the military bases which had been established during the Soviet era. The date for closure was set for 2008.

In July 2006, issues regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia took center stage when the Georgian Foreign Ministry released a statement denouncing the "unacceptable and irresponsible" response of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov to the Georgian parliament's call for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from those two areas.

Lavrov said that Russia was ready to defend the population of the two disputed regions, most of whom are holders of Russian passports. Ivanov said that Russian forces who were staging maneuvers in the North Caucasus would assist peacekeeping forces, should the situation in the two conflict zones disintegrate. The Georgian Foreign Ministry interpreted the Russian ministers' statements as de facto threats of military force. Georgia said that such suggestions were in violation of Article 4 of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits threats of that sort.

A few days after the controversial Russian statements were uttered, Georgia's Defense Minister, Irakli Okruashvili, said that his country would not sign any bilateral pact on the non-resumption of hostilities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so long as human rights were being violated in those two areas. He also said that Georgia should abjure all the agreements that have been signed with the two breakaway republics in recent months.

Around the same time, it was confirmed that President Mikheil Saakashvili would not go to Moscow later in July 2006 to attend the informal CIS summit. No reason was given for that decision. Earlier, Saakashvili had said that he anticipated meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit to discuss tensions in bilateral relations. He also said earlier that he was optimistic about finding common ground with Putin. It was not known whether his decision not to attend the summit automatically meant that he was moving away from these pronouncements.

In September 2006, Russia and Georgia became embroiled in a diplomatic imbroglio. At issue was the arrest of five Russian officers in Georgia on the basis of allegations of spying. The Russian government in Moscow demanded their release, however, the Georgian government in Tbilisi was itself compelling the handover of a sixth Russian officer. That officer was apparently within Russian army headquarters, which was surrounded by police in the Georgian capital.

The Georgian Interior Ministry claimed that it had evidence showing that the Russian officers had been "personally carrying out intelligence activities." It also linked Russia with separatist activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In response, Russia ordered the withdrawal of diplomatic officials, including the Russian ambassador, from Georgia using emergency aircrafts. Russia additionally urged its citizens to refrain from travel to Georgia and stopped processing visa requests from Georgian nationals. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Georgia's actions were a manifestation of an anti-Russian policy and he warned that he would refer the matter to the United Nations. The situation was not helped by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's dismissal of Russia's reaction as being "hysteria."

By the start of October 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin entered the fray, saying that Georgia's arrest of the Russian army officers for spying was tantamount to "an act of state terrorism with hostage-taking." His remarks came following a meeting with the security council of his government and a day after his government said that it would halt its scheduled withdrawal of troops from Georgia. The presence of Russian troops in Georgia had been a source of consternation for Georgians and their exit in 2008 had been highly-anticipated. Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhushvili responded to that bit of news by saying that his government expected Russia to honor its prior commitment.

On Oct. 2, 2006, Georgia said that it was releasing the Russian military officers. The situation was not automatically resolved, however, as Russia went forward with sanctions against Georgia, including the aforementioned travel restrictions, but also including deportations of Georgians and raids on Georgian-owned businesses. Georgia protested Russia's actions, with Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili characterizing it as being beyond xenophobia. By Oct. 9, 2006, Georgia said that it would turn back any aircraft with deported Georgians from Russia.

Since Saakashvili's ascent to power in 2004, relations between the two countries have devolved. Increased tensions have been blamed not only on the separatist campaigns which have been ongoing for some time, or the presence (until 2008) of two remaining Soviet-era military bases, but also on Saakashvili's Western orientation (away from Russia and toward the European Union and NATO).

In late 2006, tensions between Georgia and Russia were not helped by a dispute of the price of gas supplied by Russia's Gazprom. Georgia reacted angrily to the price increase. Indeed, Georgia accused Russia of raising gas prices as a punitive measure against its pro-Western policies. However, because it was unable to secure an alternative supply of gas, and with Gazprom threatening to cut off supplies without agreement on the updated price of gas, Georgia eventually acquiesced to the new arrangement. The issue was reminiscent of Russia's earlier argument with Ukraine and various other countries in Eastern Europe, which was also spurred by the increased price of gas supplies. As before, Russia said that the price increase was in keeping with market rates, while other countries complained that the new pricing structure was untenable.

By March 2007, ties between the two countries -- Georgia and Russia -- were also not helped by the poor medical conditions and deaths of several ethnic Georgians who were deported from Russia during the aforementioned diplomatic imbroglio, which started with the detainment of Russian officers on charges of spying in the fall of 2006. Georgians expressed outrage at the deaths of the deportees, and the Georgian government in the spring of 2007 launched charges of human rights violations against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The Georgian Justice Ministry said in a statement, "The lawsuit is based on hundreds of cases of flagrant abuses of the human rights of Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians by the Russian Federation during their deportations." Russia responded by saying that it believed that it had the right to deport illegal migrants, and as such, it was doubtful that the court would consider the case. A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, Mikhail Kamynin said, "Actions of this kind are not conducive to the normalization of relations between Russia and Georgia."

On Aug. 22, 2007, Georgia accused Russia of violating its airspace for a second time within weeks. The Georgian Foreign Ministry said that a Russian fighter jet had flown a few miles into its territory, according to tracking data from the country's air defense system. The Russian government in Moscow denied the incursion saying that its planes were not flying close to the border with Georgia on the day in question. The incident followed a similar episode earlier in the

month when Georgia accused Russia of violating its border and dropping a missile close to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. Russia vociferously denied that accusation as well. Two days after the second claim by the Caucasus country that Russia had violated its border, the Georgian Interior Ministry announced that it had fired on what it claimed to be a Russian aircraft after it allegedly violated Georgian airspace. Russia again denied the claim and noted that there were no reports of missing Russian aircraft.

These incidences have been indicative of a further devolution of poor relations between the two countries. In the background, various issues have worked to sour Russian-Georgian relations. Of grave importance has been the Georgian region of Abkhazia, which has been held by Russian-backed separatists. Georgia views Russia's decision to back the separatists, as well as the presence of Russian military bases on restive areas of Georgian territory such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as a virtual annexation. As well, the two countries have been involved in imbroglios involving spying, the expulsion of ethnic Georgians from Russia as a result, as well as a dispute over the price of Russian gas to Georgia. Another source of tension comes from Russian accusations that Georgia is hiding Chechen militants in the Pankisi Gorge area, the home of Chechen kin people, the Kists. With little attention placed on this forgotten area of the world, and with little hope offered in the way of resolving the political impasse, experts have warned that these two conflict zones are possible venues for explosive conflict in the future.

Russia launches military exercises at bases in Armenia and in disputed territories of Georgia --

In the background of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

The areas affected included the federal districts of Southern and North Caucasus, as well as the recently annexed Ukrainian region of Crimea. Military drills were also taking place on Russian military bases Armenia, and in the Georgian separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The moves were being regarded as a symbolic illustration of Russian hegemony and influence in the region, irrespective of global outrage over Russia's backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine and the ensuing war that has rocked the region since 2014.

In fact, while global attention has focused on Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, Russia has been quietly working towards subsuming the semi-autonomous Georgian territory of South Ossetia into its fold. In fact, a treaty, known as the "Treaty of Alliance and Integration" was drafted in December 2014 with the intent of integrating the Russian speaking

enclave, irrespective of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity or its legal claim on South Ossetia. At the end of January 2015, the leader of South Ossetia, Leonid Tibilov, dispatched finalized documents to Moscow. In February 2015, Russia and South Ossetia signed the "Treaty on the State Border," which was being viewed as a first step towards the signing of the broader "Treaty of Alliance and Integration." Once that integration accord was signed, South Ossetia would be absorbed by Russia over a period of months.

A similar process has been underway as regards the other Georgian semi-autonomous breakaway region, Abkhazia, which was also home to a Russian-speaking population. The alliance and integration measures related to Abkhazia, however, were not regarded as comprehensive as the integration accord at stake for South Ossetia.

As with the annexation of Crimea, the integration of Georgian territories had no chance of gaining international recognition, and instead, Russia's territorial encroachment has been widely condemned. Of course, the loudest outrage as regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has come from Georgia, which already fought a war with Russia in 2008 over these very issues of control. Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was not expected to curtail his expansionist ambitions.

Russia encroaches into semi-autonomous Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

-- Some portions replicated from earlier entry above due to relevance--

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

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On March 18, 2015, Russian President Putin signed the aforementioned Treaty of Alliance and Integration," which (illegally) integrated the breakaway territory with Russia. The government of Georgia in Tbilisi cast the development as a provocation with the aim of stealing Georgian territory. As noted by Georgian Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili, "It's a cynical and provocative step by Russia ... We consider it a move aimed at annexation." Meanwhile, leading Western countries said it was a dangerous threat to regional stability.

As with the annexation of Crimea, the integration of Georgian territories had no chance of gaining international recognition, and instead, Russia's territorial encroachment has been widely condemned. Indeed, the United States and the European Union condemned the new treaty with South Ossetia. Jen Psaki, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State said, "The United States' position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains clear: these regions are integral parts of Georgia, and we continue to support Georgia's independence, its sovereignty, and its territorial integrity." Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy head, said the treaty was "yet another step" intended to undermine "ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region."

Of course, as noted above, the loudest outrage as regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has come from Georgia, which already fought a war with Russia in 2008 over these very issues of control. Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was not expected to curtail his expansionist ambitions. In fact, the Russian leader was flexing his aggressive and hawkish muscles in the region as he ordered the Russian Northern Fleet to be on a state of full combat readiness in the Arctic. As well, Russia commenced major military exercises across northern Russia involving more than 45,000 troops, in what was a clear show of military strength intended to intimidate its neighbors.

By mid-July 2015, the European Union was warning that while world attention remained on Russia's land grab in Ukraine, Russia was doing the same in the Georgian semi-autonomous regions. Of note was the fact that Russia had installed its own border signs inside South Ossetia,

as it continued its quiet absorption of the Georgian territory. As the European Union had warned, Russia was intent on redrawing the regional map, effectively expanding its territory in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to the detriment of Georgian sovereignty. A statement by the European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, aimed to remind Russia that it was acting in violation of international law and read as follows: "The EU reaffirms its full support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders."

Meanwhile, the political landscape in Georgia was tense due to Russia's moves in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On July 18, 2015, thousands of demonstrators were on the streets of the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to register their outrage over what Russia's so-called "occupation" of the two semi-autonomous regions. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Tamara Chergoleishvili, a leading protest organizer, explained the mass action as follows: "The Kremlin continues to use both hard and soft power in its efforts to subjugate Georgia. We gathered here to show that Russia's aggressive policy doesn't belong to the 21st century."

NOTE: See Appendices in this Country Review for coverage of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as it relates to bilateral ties between Georgia and Russia. See also "Special Report" in Political Conditions for developments related to the violent Georgian-Russian conflict over South Ossetia that was sparked in August 2008.

Other Significant Relations

Relations with the United States

When Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze visited the United States (U.S.) on Oct. 5, 2001, he met with several American leaders in order to reaffirm bilateral relations. President George W. Bush also gained support from Shevardnadze for the anti-terrorism campaign against Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers. Shevardnadze, who as foreign minister of the Soviet Union ultimately urged the withdrawal of Soviet troops from a bloody war in Afghanistan, said he and Bush were in "absolute mutual understanding" and offered his "full cooperation and full solidarity."

Georgia earlier had agreed to allow Washington to use its airspace if necessary in any operations against targets in Afghanistan in response to terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. After a meeting at the Pentagon, Shevardnadze added Georgia's airfields and other infrastructure to his offer.

During a meeting with Georgian president, President Bush also underscored the continued support of the United States for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia. Bush

expressed the willingness of the United States to work with Georgia to support Georgian efforts to take steps against terrorists. Bush and Shevardnadze agreed on the importance of Georgia strengthening itself internally through economic and democratic reform, and a robust fight against corruption. Progress on these reforms will maintain and strengthen the partnership between the United States and Georgia as they seek to fight terrorism, promote regional cooperation and stability, and advance Caspian energy projects.

In April 2002, United States military experts were sent to Georgia on a six-month mission to train the Georgian military in the fight against terrorism.

In 2003, the power balance in Georgia shifted and by the start of 2004, President Mikheil Saakashvili was elected as the new president. It has yet unclear how bilateral relations between Georgia and the United States will be affected by the change. Nevertheless, the Bush administration in the United States has been a supporter of democratic change in the region.

The year 2005 was marked by an historic visit by United States, President George W. Bush, who attracted large crowds in the capital city of Tblisi. A few months later in July 2005, a man was arrested for having thrown a grenade in the direction of the podium where Saakashvili and Bush stood to address the crowds. The grenade never exploded at the time in May; however, the device was found only 100 feet (about 30 meters) from where the two leaders stood.

The 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia made evident that the Bush administration was maintaining its strong relationship with Georgia, and was placing the blame on Russia. Republican presidential hopeful, John McCain, who was hoping to succeed Bush, made clear that he stood clearly in Georgia's camp and blasted Russia for invading Georgian terrain.

Since the 2008 election of Barack Obama as the United States' new president, there has been much speculation about the kind of relations to be forged from Washington with countries in the Caucasus. While the Obama has said that it would support Georgia's bid for membership in NATO and has urged Russia to respect the territorial integrity of Georgia, his administration has taken a more tempered tone in contrast to the preceding United States government.

Notably, when Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov traveled to Washington to meet with both Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, both sides expressed a desire for cooperation. "We have expressed on several occasions our concerns about Georgia," Clinton said. "But it is, I think, old thinking to say that we have a disagreement in one area, therefore we shouldn't work in something else that is of overwhelming importance." Perhaps most importantly, both Lavrov and Clinton made clear that their countries had a shared interest in maintaining stability in Georgia.

Special Note

On Feb. 13, 2012, Israel's embassies in India and Georgia were struck by bomb attacks. In the Indian capital city, a magnetic bomb attached to a vehicle left the wife of an Israeli diplomat wounded as she traveled to retrieve her children from school at the American embassy. She was said to be in stable condition in a New Delhi hospital. In the Georgian capital, a bomb was discovered attached to a car in the Israeli diplomatic fleet. Georgian police were able to defuse the bomb after an Israeli embassy employee alerted them to the situation in Tbilisi.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wasted no time in accusing Iran of being behind the two bombs, characterizing Iran as "the greatest exporter of terror in the world." Netanyahu also observed that there were recent thwarted attacks on Jews and Israelis in places such as Azerbaijan and Thailand,. Speaking of this trend, the Israeli prime minister noted, "In all these cases, the elements behind the attacks were Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah." Israel said that its foreign missions would be placed on high alert, given the current landscape.

While Iran offered no immediate response, it was certainly the case that Tehran had promised to seek revenge for a number of targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, which that country blames on Israel.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch.com

National Security

External Threats

A number of issues have precipitated tension between Georgia and neighboring countries, especially Russia. Differences over the security of the Pankisi Gorge began to strain Georgia's relations with Russia after hostilities between Russian security forces and Chechen separatists resumed in the late 1990s. In 1999, the Russian government began to take issue with the presence of Chechen rebels in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge, insisting that the Georgian government do more to police the region. In 2002, it threatened to take unilateral action against the insurgents, a measure that the Georgian government strongly opposed. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the United States government also took an interest in the region, largely due to the suspected links between

Chechen separatists and the al-Qaida network. Between 2001 and 2004, it contributed US \$47 million towards improving Georgian law enforcement capabilities and border security. The Georgian government subsequently began to step up its efforts to secure the Pankisi Gorge. In 2003 Georgia extradited several Chechen rebels captured there to Russia. Georgian and international efforts to rid the Pankisi Gorge of Chechen insurgents and their affiliates went a long way towards alleviating Russian concerns.

It remains to be seen, however, whether or not two recent tragedies will rekindle Russian anxiety over the Pankisi Gorge. In August 2004, Chechen suicide bombers allegedly downed two Russian planes. In September a group of Chechen rebels and foreign Islamic militants took over a school in the southern Russian town of Beslan. The incident ended in the deaths of over 300 individuals, mostly schoolchildren, and elicited harsh words from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who vowed to step up his campaign against Chechen separatists. Just two weeks after the Beslan attack, United States (U.S.) State Department spokesman Richard Boucher declared the Pankisi Gorge "no longer a haven for terrorists." Richard Miles, the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia, later affirmed that, while terrorist elements still operate in the region, their numbers have been significantly reduced. What Washington categorizes as a diminished threat may take on a more ominous appearance from Moscow, however.

Outside of issues pertaining to the Pankisi Gorge, the governments of Georgia and Russia continue to disagree over segments of their boundary. Approximately two-thirds of it has been delimited; none of it has been demarcated. Likewise, the governments of Georgia and Azerbaijan continue to disagree over sections of their border. The boundary between Georgia and Armenia has not been demarcated.

NOTE: See "Special Report" in Political Conditions for developments related to the violent Georgian-Russian conflict over South Ossetia that was sparked in August 2008.

Crime

Crime is now categorized as a critical problem in Georgia. While crimes such as pick pocketing and muggings have always been common place, in the later half of 2004 violent crimes (murders, assaults, kidnappings, and armed robberies) began to increase in number. Also, Georgia serves as an interim destination for opiates trafficked from Central Asia to Russia and Western Europe. Limited amounts of cannabis and poppy are cultivated there, predominately for the domestic market.

Insurgencies

There are two regions in Georgia over which the central government does not exercise effective control: the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia and the Autonomous Region of Abkhazia. Both

have maintained their independence from the rest of Georgia since the early 1990s. Fighting between Georgian forces and armed elements in the two autonomous regions has ceased. The matter of Georgia's sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia has not yet been resolved, however. Militants in Abkhazia have perpetrated a number of attacks against civilian targets there in recent years, including bombings and kidnappings. In addition to turmoil in Ossetia and Abkhazia, ethnic Armenians based in the Javakheti region of Georgia seek greater autonomy.

Terrorism

Despite Georgian and international efforts to the contrary, terrorist elements remain in the Pankisi Gorge. Chechen separatists engaged in a heated conflict with Russian security forces began to cross the border into Georgia in the late 1990s. Islamic militants sympathetic to their cause allegedly joined them in the Pankisi Gorge. With international assistance, the Georgian government has taken great strides towards ridding the region of terrorist elements in recent years (see above section on external threats). In addition to the threat that Chechen and Islamic militants pose, separatists in the Autonomous Region of Abkhazia have perpetrated attacks against civilian targets in recent years, including bombings and kidnappings (see above section on insurgencies).

Georgia does work closely with the U.S. on security and counterterrorism efforts. The United States provides Georgia with bilateral security assistance, including English-language and military professionalism training through the International Military Education and Training program.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Georgian Armed Forces: Land Forces (include Air and Air Defense Forces); separatist Abkhazia Armed Forces: Ground Forces, Air Forces; separatist South Ossetia Armed Forces

note: Georgian naval forces have been incorporated into the Coast Guard, which is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs rather than the Ministry of Defense (2015)

Eligible age to enter service:

18 for voluntary and compulsory

Mandatory Service Terms:

18 months for conscript service

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 893,003

females age 16-49: 931,683

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

Male: 29,723

Female: 27,242

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

2.26%

Appendix: South Ossetia

Special Report: South Ossetia

Summary

Since the final years of the Soviet Union, Russian-backed separatists in South Ossetia have sought to break away from Georgia and join North Ossetia, which is currently an autonomous region in Russia. While South Ossetians assert their right to self-determination, Georgia considers such separatist aspirations as a threat to its territorial integrity.

The dispute descended into a civil war in 1991, though a Russian-mediated ceasefire in 1992 ended the armed conflict and established a general framework by which to resolve the dispute. Despite the presence of Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian peacekeepers, tensions remain high and, in 2004, the situation once again descended into armed conflict. In January 2005, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili announced a peace plan under which South Ossetia would receive a high degree of autonomy and economic incentives, though South Ossetian leaders continued to reject any attempt to put the disputed territory under Georgian rule.

The geopolitical dimensions of the conflict have growing increasingly important as Russia has sought to use its military support for South Ossetia as leverage against Georgia's pro-Western government. November 2006 marked the time of an overwhelmingly supported independence referendum in South Ossetia, which was intended to augment the thrust for sovereignty. But Georgia rejected such independence aspirations and warned that it could provoke a war.

In April 2007, the Georgian parliament approved legislation creating a temporary administration in South Ossetia. The move evoked an outcry from South Ossetian separatists and contributed to devolving tensions with Russia. The situation was no less stable two months later when South Ossetian separatists accused Georgia of attacking the capital of Tskhinvali with mortar and sniper fire.

Peace talks between Georgia and South Ossetia in October 2007, which were hosted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), saw no progress.

In early 2008, following Kosovo's secession from Serbia, South Ossetia called for international recognition of its self-avowed sovereignty and independence from Georgia. However, such recognition was not forthcoming at the broad level although the Russian parliament called on the Kremlin to indeed recognize South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) as independent.

In April 2008, the Georgian power-sharing agreement, which accorded significant autonomy but not actual sovereignty, was rejected by South Ossetia, which insisted on complete independence.

In August 2008, Georgia was carrying out a full military offensive in South Ossetia, intended to "restore constitutional order" to the breakaway region. Russia was responding with military action of its own. The situation left the region on the brink of full-scale conflict and in a state of crisis. By mid-August of 2008, a truce had been negotiated under the stewardship of the French

government; this truce aimed to bring an end to the crisis.

It should be noted that a report commissioned by the Council of the European Union placed the blame for the start of the 2008 war over the semi-autonomous region of South Ossetia on Georgia. The report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia found that the war was spurred when Georgian forces attacked the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, in an attempt to re-establish sovereign control. Indeed, the report read: "The shelling of Tskhinvali [the capital of South Ossetia] by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia." The report unambiguously concluded that the attack by Georgia was not justified by international law as follows: "There is the question of whether [this] use of force... was justifiable under international law. It was not."

Still, the report did not cast Georgia as being the only guilty party. It noted that the hostilities between the two sides led to provocative actions by both Georgia and Russia. The report also acknowledged that after Georgia shelled South Ossetia, Russia responded by not only repelling the assault but, in fact, pressing further into Georgian territory. While Russia withdrew its forces several days later when a ceasefire was hammered out, it nonetheless retained a military presence in both South Ossetia and the other breakaway republic of Abkhazia, which was also technically under Georgian rule. The report found that while Russia's initial actions -- responding to attacks on its own personnel in South Ossetia -- were justified, its continued advance into Georgian territory "went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense." The report also found that the destruction that ensued after the ceasefire went into effect was "not justifiable by any means."

The report further dismissed Georgian claims that Russia carried out a large-scale incursion into South Ossetia ahead of the outbreak of war, noting that this accusation could not be substantiated. The European Union-sponsored report would only allow that there was some evidence of a low-level military build-up by the Russians in the area ahead of the conflict.

Perhaps not surprisingly, both Russia and Georgia interpreted the findings through an ideological prism most suited to their respective agendas. Russia asserted that the report had rendered an "unequivocal answer" on the question of who started the war. On the other side of the equation, Georgia said that the report showed that Russia had been spoiling for a fight throughout.

It should be noted that the report also registered the human toll of the conflict. Approximately 850 people died in August 2008, more than 100,000 were forced to flee their homes to escape the cross-fire of violence, and to date, about 35,000 people remain displaced. Humanitarian aid agencies have warned that there is a refugee crisis continuing in the region.

See "Special Report" below for details.

Background/Context

The Ossetian people are believed to have migrated from Persia five millennia ago. The Ossetian language belongs to the Indo-European group and, though it uses the Cyrillic alphabet, is related to Farsi. Ossetians maintain that their ancestors have been living on both sides of the Caucasus mountains for as long as the Georgians, while Georgians claim that the Ossetians did not arrive until the seventeenth century. The contrasting historical narratives about the duration of the Ossetians' presence in Georgia form the basis of the dispute. Georgians believe that the Ossetians are merely guests in the region, while the Ossetians argue that the area is their historical homeland.

When the first Georgian Republic was established in 1918, the government accused the Ossetians of cooperating with the Russian Bolsheviks. Ossetian separatists subsequently launched a series of rebellions. In response, the Georgian government deployed troops to the region to defeat the uprising, allegedly killing 5,000 Ossetians while 13,000 more died from starvation and epidemics. After invading Georgia in 1921, Soviet authorities established the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (SOAO) within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). During the Soviet period, hostilities were latent, though Georgians generally believed that Ossetians in the autonomous region had special privileges that were not extended to them. Georgian authorities considered South Ossetia an artificial entity. South Ossetians, meanwhile, felt politically disadvantaged compared to Ossetians living in other parts of the Soviet Union.

In 1988, Ossetians intensified their efforts to change their status by creating Ademon Nykhaz (the South Ossetia Popular Front) in order to counter increasing nationalist sentiments in Georgia. In 1989, the SOAO regional council lobbied for either joining North Ossetia in Russia or being granted independence, which infuriated Georgians. Later that year, following increasingly violent clashes between Georgians and Ossetians in Tskhinvali, the Soviet Union sent forces to keep the peace. At one point, 15,000 Georgians marched on Tskhinvali only to be repelled by South Ossetia militants and the Soviet army. In 1990, prior to parliamentary elections, the Georgian government passed a law that banned regionally based political parties, which prevented groups like Ademon Nykhaz from participating. In response, South Ossetia declared its complete autonomy within the Soviet Union. Ossetians then boycotted the Georgian election and shortly afterwards held their own parliamentary election. The Georgian government, led by Zviad Tskhinvali, voided the election results, revoked South Ossetia's status as an autonomous oblast, and declared a state of emergency. In April 1991, the South Ossetia Supreme Council voted for secession and integration with Russia.

In January 1991, the Georgian government deployed several thousand troops to Tskhinvali, which triggered urban warfare that ultimately was responsible for 1,500 deaths and extensive destruction of South Ossetian homes and infrastructure. As neither Georgia nor South Ossetia possessed a well-disciplined military, most of the fighting took place between small groups and paramilitaries

scattered throughout cities and villages. According to Human Rights Watch, both sides committed atrocities against civilians.

In June 1992, Russia brokered a ceasefire and negotiated the Sochi Agreement. The Sochi Agreement established a Joint Control Commission (JCC) – comprised of representatives from Russia, Georgia, and North and South Ossetia – to pursue a settlement of the conflict. The Sochi Agreement also created a trilateral Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF), which was comprised of troops from Russia, Georgia, and Ossetian areas. The JPKF had a mandate to monitor the ceasefire and maintain peace and security in the zone of conflict around the Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and a security corridor along the Ossetian-Georgian border. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) agreed to monitor the ceasefire and facilitate negotiations.

In May 1996, the Memorandum on Measures to Ensure Security and Reinforce Mutual Confidence Between the Parties to the Georgia-Ossetian conflict called on all sides of the conflict to continue negotiating a final political settlement. Both sides renounced the use of force as a means of achieving their political aspirations.

In December 2000, Russia, Georgia, and North and South Ossetia signed an agreement to devise two programs to help resolve the situation. The first program concerned the economic rehabilitation of the zone of conflict and the second program dealt with the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the conflict. Despite the 1992 ceasefire agreement, the displacement of Georgians and Ossetians has yet to be reversed. Though prior interethnic coexistence in many areas was prevalent prior to the conflict, the failure of displaced persons to return to their homes has ethnically polarized the disputed area.

The conflict has spurred the development of illegal business operations, such as smuggling drug trafficking, arms trading, and kidnapping. Neither Georgia nor South Ossetia could agree on a system of customs control to regulate trade. The Georgian government felt that smuggling was a serious impediment to resolving the conflict, as it provided South Ossetian authorities a source of income that they use for social projects designed to secure the support of their constituents. The Ergneti market developed on a strip of land between South Ossetia and Georgia proper, near the Transcaucasian highway. Food products, gasoline, cigarettes, alcohol, illegal drugs, and goods of Russian origin were sold in the market, which was the mainstay of the local economy. Georgian officials claimed that the market robbed Georgia of customs revenues and closed the market in 2004. Knowing that the closure would affect ordinary South Ossetian citizens as much as corrupt officials, Georgia launched a “humanitarian offensive” to aid ethnic Ossetians with the hope of undermining support for the de facto government. Georgia pursued a range of social, cultural, and economic projects. However, ordinary Ossetians did not respond favorably to the overtures and instead blamed Georgia for their troubles. Ossetians felt that Georgian military measures in the region were not meant to combat smuggling, but were rather part of a strategy to reassert Georgian

control of South Ossetia. Russia also sharply criticized Georgia for its actions.

In May 2004, South Ossetia held parliamentary elections, though the Georgian government did not recognize their legitimacy. In June 2004, the Georgian government accused Russia of providing arms to the South Ossetians. Georgian forces seized Russian trucks carrying helicopter missiles. Russia condemned the move, arguing that the shipment was perfectly legal under the ceasefire agreements. In retaliation, South Ossetian authorities seized 50 Georgian troops, but released them the next day. Georgian and South Ossetian forces began to exchange fire throughout the region. A resolution expressing support for the South Ossetian separatists passed in the Russian Dumas, further inflaming tensions. A Georgian-Ossetian ceasefire was signed on August 13, but was violated shortly afterwards. Georgia managed to seize strategic areas near South Ossetian villages, but handed control of those areas back to peacekeepers as a show of good faith. A second ceasefire was then signed. That fall, the four participants of the JCC agreed to demilitarize the zone of conflict.

November 2006 marked the time of an independence referendum in the Georgian semi-autonomous enclave of South Ossetia. Turnout was reported to be more than 90 percent and many analysts were expecting an overwhelming affirmative response to the question of independence. For their part, South Ossetians were hoping that the referendum result would help them augment their thrust for sovereignty. On the other hand, Georgia viewed the referendum as illegitimate and renewed its commitment to keeping South Ossetia within its fold. The situation strained Georgian-Russian ties.

Recent Initiative

In January 2005, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili announced his intention to promote a dialogue with breakaway regions in order to restore Georgian territorial integrity. Saakashvili offered South Ossetia autonomy within the Georgian state, though this fell far short of the separatists' demands. Saakashvili emphasized the need to attract separatists through economic incentives. Saakashvili also proposed the creation of an international fund to facilitate repatriation and rebuilding in South Ossetia. The de facto leadership of South Ossetia rejected the plan, however, arguing that South Ossetians are Russian citizens. The United States and the OSCE reportedly backed the plan. In May 2006, tensions between Russia and Georgia once again rose when Georgia demanded that Russian peacekeepers be issued visas before serving in South Ossetia. The Russian Foreign Ministry accused Georgia of organizing a military buildup to reestablish control over South Ossetia by force. The referendum of 2006 was expected to spark tensions but the events of 2008 took relations between Georgia and Russia in an even more complex direction. See below for details.

Foreign Policy Positions of Key Players

Georgia

The Georgian government believes that South Ossetia is an integral part of Georgia and regards South Ossetian separatism as a threat to Georgian territorial integrity. The government even goes so far as referring to South Ossetia by its historical name, Samachablo, in order to deny the implication that the region has any sort of political bond with North Ossetia. When President Saakashvili became president in 2004, he reaffirmed his goal of reintegrating South Ossetia. Georgia believes that the integration of South Ossetia into Russia would be unrealistic because the region is not economically viable on its own. Furthermore, as there is only one road link between South Ossetia and Russia, Georgians claim that the Caucasus Mountains provide a “natural barrier” to reunification. The presence of ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia also complicates the issue. The Georgian military believes that it does not have the capacity to restore Georgian territorial integrity through military force, believing that it would risk guerilla warfare and the loss of Georgia’s international support and credibility.

Russia

Russia has traditionally relied on the Ossetians as staunch allies. While Russia does not officially recognize South Ossetia’s independence from Georgia, it still maintains close contacts with its de facto political leadership. For Russia, South Ossetia has a prime geostrategic location given the volatility of the Northern Caucasus region. Russia also worries that the situation in South Ossetia could destabilize North Ossetia. Georgia accuses Russia of providing significant military and logistical support to South Ossetia. In June 2004, Russia’s Constitutional Court ruled that Russia could not unilaterally integrate South Ossetia without holding discussions with Georgia. As Georgia has sought to shift its allegiance to the West following the Rose Revolution, Russia increasingly views its military and economic presence in South Ossetia as important sources of leverage against Mikhail Saakashvili’s government.

South Ossetia

South Ossetia, claiming a right to self-determination, wants to either achieve full independence or integration with the Russian Federation. South Ossetians assert that Ossetia was wrongfully divided between the Russian SSR and the Georgian SSR during the Soviet period. Ossetians have traditionally maintained good relations with Russia throughout Russia’s involvement in the area. Most South Ossetians have managed to obtain Russian citizenship and many have even attempted to migrate to Russia because of poor economic and political conditions. Many believe that their rights would be better protected within Russia. Since 1992, South Ossetia has developed greater economic ties with North Ossetia than with Georgia. As of 2006, South Ossetia has once again attempted to plead its case for integration to the Russian Constitutional Court.

United States

The United States (U.S.) supports both the preservation of Georgian territorial integrity and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The U.S. has played no direct role in the conflict, though U.S.-trained Georgian soldiers have served as peacekeepers in the area, much to Russia's dismay. The U.S. is also a staunch supporter of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili and his peace plan to resolve the conflict. In March 2006, the U.S. State Department expressed concern when a Russian diplomat said that the Russian Federation would "protect the interests of its citizens" because the statement seemed to endorse the view that South Ossetians are legitimate Russian citizens.

Special Report:

Georgian military and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists embroiled in conflict

On August 8, 2008, the Georgian military launched an attack against separatist targets in South Ossetia. The military offensive ensued only hours after the Georgian authorities and South Ossetia's separatists agreed to a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

The situation began when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region.

According to Russian media, several people were reported to have been killed in the shelling. As well, Georgian forces and South Ossetian separatists were reported to be exchanging heavy fire. To that end, explosions and rocket fire were heard in the area around Tskhinvali. The British newspaper, *The Independent*, reported that "the assault is coming from all directions."

For its part, Georgia said that it was taking this action to stabilize the territory [South Ossetia]. Georgian Minister for Integration, Temur Yakobashvili, said that his country was compelled to terminate South Ossetia's "criminal regime" and to "restore constitutional order" to the breakaway region. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili himself called for an end to bloodshed to end, but warned the South Ossetian separatists that Tbilisi's patience was not limitless.

On the other side of the equation, South Ossetian rebel leader Eduard Kokoity said that Georgia was carrying out "a perfidious and base" attack on Tskhinvali. He also confirmed the assault on Tskhinvali saying, "The storming of Tskhinvali has started." Eyewitnesses on the ground said that the city was being attacked, the hospital was destroyed and the university was on fire. The Red Cross reported that there were numerous casualties needing medical attention.

In response, Russia was said to be deploying troops to South Ossetia to assist peacekeepers operating there. Indeed, an aide to the Russian Land Forces commander confirmed that Russian tanks and troops had entered South Ossetia and were approaching Tskhinvali, which was reported to have been already devastated by the Georgian offensive there.

Russia's military presence in the region was not well-received by Georgia, given the fact that the Georgian government has long accused Russia of arming South Ossetian separatists. But Russia has its own counter-argument to levy against Georgia. It has accused Georgia of deliberately ramping up its own military presence in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and assuming a hard-line posture against these enclaves. Russia's tensions with Georgia have been partially rooted in another concern. Specifically, Russia has been opposed to pro-Western Georgia's ambitions to join NATO. This geopolitical element has textured the larger context of the territorial struggle being played out in South Ossetia.

It should be noted that Russia has enjoyed strong ties with South Ossetia, largely due to the fact that the ethnically-related province of North Ossetia is located within its borders, and both the south and the north have long hoped to unite. Indeed, many South Ossetians hold Russian citizenship. As such, with vested interests on both sides of the border, Russia called for an end to the ongoing violence. Russia also urged the international community to work cooperatively "to avert massive bloodshed and new victims."

However, the prospects for peace were not likely to be easily advanced, given the emerging situation in the region a day later. On August 9, 2008, Georgian authorities said that Russian jets had bombed military targets inside its territory – specifically in the Georgian town on Gori to the south of South Ossetia. They also said that one attack ensued close to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which is known to supply Caspian oil to the West. Georgia described the air strikes as "a full-scale military invasion" and Georgian President Saakashvili claimed that Russia was at war with his country.

Russia had a very different perspective and placed the blame squarely on the Georgians. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated the dire nature of the situation by asserting that already 1,500 people had died in the conflict and more than 30,000 South Ossetians had fled into Russia to escape the threat of death. The Russian government said that it had to act to protect the South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian citizenship. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said that Georgia also bore a responsibility for "protecting the [South Ossetian] population" and that his country's military action was intended "to force the Georgian side to peace."

By August 9, 2008, the Russian army had advanced to take complete control South Ossetia's capital of Tskhinvali. General Vladimir Boldyrev, the head of the Russian ground forces said, "Tactical groups have completely liberated Tskhinvali from the Georgian military." Boldyrev also

said that Russian forces would keep up the pressure on Georgian military units. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev explained his country's objectives in South Ossetia saying, "Under these circumstances, Russia is guided by one task -- to immediately stop violence and defend civilians and restore peace as soon as possible." President Dmitry Medvedev also demanded the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the conflict zone, saying that it was the only way to settle the "tragic crisis."

That same day, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili called for an end to hostilities saying, "We propose an immediate ceasefire and the beginning of the withdrawal of troops from the contact line." On the home front, the Georgia's parliament approved a presidential decree that essentially imposed two weeks of martial law in the country.

A day later on August 10, 2008, Georgia said that it was withdrawing its troops from the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali in the face of Russia's counter-offensive. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said his country's troops were returning to the positions they held before the conflict erupted days earlier. There was, however, some confusion about whether Georgian troops were pulling out of Tskhinvali or withdrawing entirely from South Ossetia. Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili confirmed that the troops left Tskhinvali but were remaining in other areas of South Ossetia. Russian sources said that Georgian military units were still active in South Ossetia.

Presumably due to the continued activity by Georgian military units in South Ossetia, and what Moscow described as continued Georgian offensive action, Russian forces were continuing to carry out its own military action into Georgian territory. Reports from the region suggested that Russia carried out an air strike on a military airfield near the Tbilisi International Airport.

With the situation grim despite the earlier declaration of a withdrawal of troops from Tskhinvali, Georgia said that it had submitted a note to the Russian embassy in Tbilisi calling for immediate negotiations with Russia regarding "an end to all hostilities and a ceasefire." Russia confirmed that the note had been received. Russia at the time also denied Georgia's claims that Russian air strikes had targeted populated areas.

But movement toward a resolution seemed no closer by August 11, 2008. Georgian authorities said that Russian air strikes hit communications facilities to the west of Tbilisi and the port city of Poti in the Black Sea. As well, Russian forces were reported to have led a raid through the other breakaway enclave of Abkhazia into the western Georgian town of Senaki. On the other side of the equation, Russia said that the Georgian military was still targeting positions in Tskhinvali, despite claims of a withdrawal and overtures of a ceasefire. In this way, both sides accused one another of continuing the hostilities and exacerbating the conflict.

On the international front, the United Nations Security Council had earlier convened an emergency

session to consider the rapidly deteriorating security crisis in the Caucasus. Little was actually accomplished at that session. Likewise, a spokesperson from NATO had already called on both sides -- Georgian and Russian -- to exercise restraint. However, with the violence ongoing, clearly restraint was not at hand.

Nevertheless, the United States said that it was sending a delegation to the region to try to negotiate a resolution. The United States Department of States said that the envoys would "engage with the parties in the conflict." As well, a European Union delegation was en route to the region and said that it was hoping to procure a ceasefire and withdrawal agreement from both Georgia and Russia. A separate Council of Europe delegation was also hoping to advance dialogue.

In the same time period, according to news reports, Russian President Medvedev reiterated the death toll -- in the thousands -- during a conversation with United States President George W. Bush. For his part, Bush, who was attending the Beijing Olympics, called for an end to the violence, warned of escalation beyond the zone of conflict, and endorsed the notion of international mediation.

Indeed, the international community's objective appeared to be focused on averting the prospects of a war in the restive Caucasus, which has long been regarded as something of a powder keg. Yet to be determined was the question of whether or not such efforts would actually yield positive results.

Days later, Russia noted that its military activity in the area was ending and Russian troops were seen retreating from the area. The hostilities flared again when Georgia sent in troops to try to regain control of South Ossetia. Nevertheless, witnesses said that the full brunt of the fighting in South Ossetia appeared to be ending. Elsewhere in the region, Russian troops were withdrawing from the other breakaway region of Abkhazia, however, separatist there were reported to be ensconced in some continuing clashes with the Georgian military in the Kodori Gorge.

Yet even with an official truce in the offing (as discussed below) and an end to the fighting, the situation was not peaceful. A war of words continued. On an official day of mourning in his country, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev charged that Georgia had launched "genocide of the South Ossetian people." At issue were the deaths of thousands of South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian passports, as well as the deaths and injuries to scores of Russian soldiers, including one general. The Russian leader used the Russian word "otmorozki," which roughly translates to "thugs" in English, to characterize Georgian troops. Meanwhile, Georgian President Saakashvili addressed a crowd of thousands gathered in Tbilisi's main and accused Russia of the "ruthless, heartless destruction" of Georgians. The Georgian leader also warned that his country would no longer be a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) -- a group consisting of former Soviet republics.

On August 13, 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy was leading diplomatic negotiations to help Georgia and Russia resolve the crisis that had been sparked when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region, and went onto gain military supremacy over large swaths of Georgian territory.

Sarkozy put forth a peace agreement that both sides signed days later. Central to the proposed plan for a truce was that all forces would pull back to pre-conflict positions. Other elements of the plan included an end to the use of force, an end to military action in perpetuity, as well as the free access of humanitarian aid. France, as the head of the European Union, has called on the European bloc to endorse the peace initiative ahead of its submission to the United Nations Security Council. The European Union was also expected consider deploying peacekeepers to the region to maintain peace and security, and also to protect the supply of humanitarian aid.

The remaining thorny issue, which was not included in the framework of the truce, was the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Neither Russian President Medvedev nor Georgian President Saakashvili was likely to find common ground on that matter in the immediate future. Indeed, the Georgian leader asserted, "The territorial integrity and belonging of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgia can never be put under doubt."

On August 17, 2008, Russia officially pledged to withdraw its forces from Georgian territory in keeping with the agreement. At the time, however, its forces had control over large swaths of Georgian territory, including the main east-west highway through that country. There was speculation that Russian troops might withdraw only as far as South Ossetia since Russia said it would only fully withdraw when Georgian police were ready to take over responsibility for security. NATO responded to anxieties that Russia would not abide by the withdrawal requirements of the agreement by warning that relations would be compromised if Russian troops remained in Georgia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia was not occupying Georgia and would not annex South Ossetia. However, he also characterized NATO as biased and intent on saving the "criminal regime" of Tbilisi.

Meanwhile, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev told his French President Nicolas Sarkozy that the Russian withdrawal would be complete by August 22, 2008, although approximately 500 troops would be installed as peacekeepers on both sides of South Ossetia's border. Russian troops were soon identified exiting Gori -- the largest town in Georgia located close to the border of South Ossetia. Sarkozy, during talks with Medvedev, acknowledged this withdrawal but noted that Russian troops were yet to exit Poti and Senaki. Russia had earlier indicated that it would not soon leave the port city of Poti, and claimed that this would be in keeping with the terms of the ceasefire agreement. Medvedev's government said that Russian peacekeepers were allowed to take

"additional security measures." However, the United States and the United Kingdom countered this claim noting that such buffer zones would violate the deal.

In other developments, the first United States ship with humanitarian aid was expected to dock in Georgia by the last week of August 2008. Two more ships were expected to arrive in Georgia as well.

In the last week of August 2008, Russia's Kremlin officially recognized the breakaway enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. South Ossetians and Abkhazians celebrated the news of this recognition of their self-proclaimed sovereignty. However, without wider international recognition of sovereign status, and with many countries of the West committed to the notion of Georgia's territorial integrity, the actual status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remained in the zone of "contested independent status."

By the start of September 2008, the European Union (EU) had decided to suspend talks on a new partnership pact with Russia, given the still-incomplete withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. EU-Russian negotiations on the partnership agreement had been scheduled for mid-September 2008 but were based on a shared understanding that Russian troops would withdraw to pre-conflict positions. The lack of progress on that withdrawal front, followed by the EU's response, signaled that relations between the EU and Russia were moving into highly challenging territory.

Following a meeting in the Belgian capital city of Brussels, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said that the bloc that he represented could not "continue as if nothing had happened." As well, the European bloc's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, said that the EU could deploy civilian monitors to Georgia to determine whether or not Russia was complying with the ceasefire agreement that had been brokered earlier. Meanwhile French President Sarkozy said, "The EU would welcome a real partnership with Russia, which is in the interests of all, but you have to be two to have a partnership."

On the other side of the equation, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that unchecked support by the EU and the United States for the government of Georgian President Saakashvili would be a "historic" mistake. He also introduced the notion of an embargo on arms supplies to Georgia until a new regime was established there. These declarations came in the background of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's assertion that his country's foreign policy principles would not be dictated by the hegemony of any single country, such as the United States.

In October 2008, months after the Russian-Georgian conflict over South Ossetia, Russia removed a checkpoint near the town of Gori. The removal of the checkpoint at Gori -- located in Georgian territory close to the separatist region of South Ossetia -- marked the first significant sign that Russia intended to comply with its withdrawal pledge, which was part of the ceasefire deal

negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy . Indeed, Russia has also pledged to withdraw troops from two buffer zones within Georgia -- now under European Union observation -- by October 10, 2008.

At the same time, Russia increased its troop presence in South Ossetia -- largely a result of an explosion that left eight Russian soldiers and three civilians dead in the early part of the month. Russia accused Georgia of orchestrating the attack; Georgia denied the accusation. Russia also maintained its troop presence in the other separatist region of Abkhazia. Russia has recognized both South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent while Western countries have backed Georgian territorial integrity. The matter of sovereignty has remained unresolved.

The fifth anniversary of the Rose Revolution, which swept President Mikhail Saakashvili to power, was marked by chaos. As the president traveled in a motorcade with Polish President Lech Kaczynski close to the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, shots were fired.

Although no one was hurt in the incident, both the Georgian president and his Polish counterpart accused Russian troops of being behind the apparent attack in an area that has been the site of much cross-border violence. According to Reuters, one individual in Saakashvili's entourage said that South Ossetians fired warning shots when their motorcade came close to a checkpoint at the quasi-border area. Meanwhile, President Saakashvili said that the situation was a "reminder" that Russia was in flagrant violation of the European Union-brokered ceasefire between Tblisi and Moscow. President Saakashvili also railed against the Russians saying, "Twenty-first Century occupiers, who have no legal, moral or other right to be there and oppress people, are stationed in the heart of Georgia."

On the other side of the equation, however, the Russian military as well as South Ossetian forces denied an involvement in the gunfire incident. In an interview with RIA Novosti, a South Ossetian spokeswoman, Irina Gagloyeva, asserted the following: "The South Ossetian side has nothing to do with it. There was no shelling from our side." A Russian spokesperson said to the Interfax news agency, "The claims that Russian servicemen were implicated in the shelling of the cortege do not correspond with reality."

August 2009 marked the one year anniversary of the war between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Both countries commemorated the war in ceremonies. In the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, midnight bonfires were ignited, and a minute of silence was observed as church bells rang to honor those who died in the war. In South Ossetia itself, there was a rally as well as a candlelight ceremony in South Ossetia are also planned. Meanwhile, a war of words was brewing with Georgia and Russia respectively accusing each other of being the cause of the conflict. While Georgia said that its assault on South Ossetia was in reaction to a clandestine plan by Russia to invade the territory. On the other side of the equation, Russia denied making the first move and said reacted to Georgia's "pre-planned criminal act."

On August 13, 2009, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited Abkhazia, where he promised to build a military base along the border with Georgia. Putin also said that such a move would help guarantee the stability of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Russian head of government said: "Russia is going to deploy its armed forces in Abkhazia and take the necessary efforts to build a modern border guard system in cooperation with the relevant Abkhazian authorities." He continued, "All these factors are serious guarantees of the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." Putin's pledge came on the first anniversary of the cease-fire, which ended Russia's war with Georgia over South Ossetia. As might be expected, Georgia decried the move, characterizing it as "yet another provocation," that could potentially "escalate tensions" in the region of the Caucasus.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region.

Special Report

EU-sponsored report places blame on Georgia for starting the 2008 war

A report commissioned by the Council of the European Union placed the blame for the start of the 2008 war over the semi-autonomous region of South Ossetia on Georgia. The report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia found that the war, which erupted on August 7, 2008, was spurred when Georgian forces attacked the breakaway republic of South Ossetia, in an attempt to re-establish sovereign control. Indeed, the report read: "The shelling of Tskhinvali [the capital of South Ossetia] by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia." The report unambiguously concluded that the attack by Georgia was not justified by international law as follows: "There is the question of whether [this] use of force... was justifiable under international law. It was not."

Still, the report did not cast Georgia as being the only guilty party. It noted that the hostilities between the two sides led to provocative actions by both Georgia and Russia. The report also acknowledged that after Georgia shelled South Ossetia, Russia responded by not only repelling the assault but, in fact, pressing further into Georgian territory. While Russia withdrew its forces several days later when a ceasefire was hammered out, it nonetheless retained a military presence in both South Ossetia and another breakaway republic of Abkhazia, which was also technically under Georgian rule. The report found that while Russia's initial actions -- responding to attacks on its own personnel in South Ossetia -- were justified, its continued advance into Georgian territory

"went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense." The report also found that the destruction that ensued after the ceasefire went into effect was "not justifiable by any means."

The report further dismissed Georgian claims that Russia carried out a large-scale incursion into South Ossetia ahead of the outbreak of war, noting that this accusation could not be substantiated. The European Union-sponsored report would only allow that there was some evidence of a low-level military build-up by the Russians in the area ahead of the conflict.

Perhaps not surprisingly, both Russia and Georgia interpreted the findings through an ideological prism most suited to their respective agendas. Russia asserted that the report had rendered an "unequivocal answer" on the question of who started the war. On the other side of the equation, Georgia said that the report showed that Russia had been spoiling for a fight throughout.

It should be noted that the report also registered the human toll of the conflict. Approximately 850 people died in August 2008, more than 100,000 were forced to flee their homes to escape the cross-fire of violence, and to date, about 35,000 people remain displaced. Humanitarian aid agencies have warned that there is a refugee crisis continuing in the region.

Special Entry

Georgia warns Russia against backing independence claims of Georgia breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

On Feb. 4, 2014, just ahead of the opening of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (Russia), Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili of Georgia warned Russia that it should refrain from taking any positions that might support the independence claims of the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Relations between Russia and Georgia have long been tense since the early 1990s when Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Relations devolved further over the years as Russia has supported the independence inclinations of the two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But relations between Georgia and Russia hit a nadir in 2008 when the two countries fought a brief war over South Ossetia. Since then, they have had no diplomatic ties.

With Russia in the international spotlight as it hosts the 2014 Winter Olympics, Georgia was adamant about ensuring that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not use the spotlight to advance the independence causes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of note was the fact that Russia's Olympic security zone was expanded into Abkhazia, which was less than 25 miles away from Sochi.

Prime Minister Garibashvili went to so far as to suggest that his country considered boycotting the Olympics in Russia. During a meeting with European Union and NATO officials in Belgium, he said, "It was a tough decision not to boycott the Games...But if there are any surprises we will of course react adequately."

Special Entry

Georgia and Moldova defy Russian threats and move forward with closer ties with European Union

In June 2014, the eastern European countries of Georgia and Moldova indicated that they were prepared to defy the threat posed by their former Soviet overlord -- Russia -- by signing a trade and political pact with the European Union.

It was a similar westward move by Ukraine at the start of 2014 that sparked an uprising in that country, that sparked the ousting the pro-Russian president of that country, followed by the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian area of Crimea. Since that time eastern Ukraine has been beset by violence at the hands of pro-Russian separatists. Both Georgia and Moldova are at risk of similar pro-Russian separatist uprisings in their own countries since they are home to semi-autonomous territories inhabited by ethnic Russians.

In Georgia, the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have evoked incidences of conflict with Russia over the years -- including a war in 2008. In Moldova, the issue at stake is Trans-Dnestr.

In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has sought to warn Georgia and Moldova against signing agreement that would bolster those breakaway former Soviet republics' ties with the West. However, in clear defiance of such threats, both Georgia and Moldova were making the calculation that they would benefit from closer European ties.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region. That being said, Georgia was not about to relinquish sovereignty easily, thus the defiance in signing the association agreement with the EU. As noted by Irakly Sesiashvili, the head of the parliamentary defense and security committee in Georgia, "There is an aggressive attitude from Russia not only towards us, but towards any ex-Soviet state which has European aspirations. But this does not mean that we will reject our free choice."

Shortly after Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Trans-Dniestr declared its independence from Moldova, sparking an armed conflict between Moldovan and Trans-Dniestrian forces. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has remained involved in negotiations over Trans-Dniestr's status since the conflict began, though a long series of negotiations have thus far failed to produce a final status agreement. Moldova has tried to accommodate its ethno-linguistic Russian minority in the region by offering broad cultural and political autonomy. But given Russia's success in Crimea, it was to be seen if the Russian argument that it must act to "protect" ethno-linguistic Russians would hold sway in Moldova. The Russia argument in that direction would be aided by the call from the speaker of Trans-Dniestr's parliament for Russia to incorporate the region.

The attention of Trans-Dniestr emerged in 2014 as speculation arose about Russia using its many political and economic levers to prevent Moldova from moving forward with its Western integration effort. At the top of Russia's list of objectives was likely to be the derailment of Moldova's proposed association and trade agreements with the European Union discussed here.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 2014, Russia held military exercises in Trans-Dniestr. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, United States Air Force General Philip Breedlove has noted that Russia had built up a "very sizeable" force on its border with Ukraine, that could easily be activated elsewhere in the region. Chief among the possibilities for expanded Russian encroachment, according to Breedlove, was the Moldovan territory of Trans-Dniestr. In his remarks to the Marshall Fund think tank, Breedlove said, "There is absolutely sufficient (Russian) force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Trans-Dniestr if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome." Breedlove thus added, "We need to think about our allies, the positioning of our forces in the alliance and the readiness of those forces ... such that we can be there to defend against it if required."

Of course, given the lack of international action -- including on the part of NATO -- in punishing Russia for seizing Crimea, it was barely conceivable that NATO would act to save Moldova's territorial integrity, should Russia choose to incorporate Trans-Dniestr. To date, Russia has paid no price for its action in the Russian-speaking regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which remain officially under Georgian jurisdiction. As well, sanctions and condemnations against Russia for annexing Crimea has resulted in only mocking responses from the Russian political class.

Special Entry

Russia launches military exercises at bases in Armenia and in disputed territories of Georgia --

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in

2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

The areas affected included the federal districts of Southern and North Caucasus, as well as the recently annexed Ukrainian region of Crimea. Military drills were also taking place on Russian military bases in Armenia, and in the Georgian separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The moves were being regarded as a symbolic illustration of Russian hegemony and influence in the region, irrespective of global outrage over Russia's backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine and the ensuing war that has rocked the region since 2014.

In fact, while global attention has focused on Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, Russia has been quietly working towards subsuming the semi-autonomous Georgian territory of South Ossetia into its fold. In fact, a treaty, known as the "Treaty of Alliance and Integration" was drafted in December 2014 with the intent of integrating the Russian speaking enclave, irrespective of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity or its legal claim on South Ossetia. At the end of January 2015, the leader of South Ossetia, Leonid Tibilov, dispatched finalized documents to Moscow. In February 2015, Russia and South Ossetia signed the "Treaty on the State Border," which was being viewed as a first step towards the signing of the broader "Treaty of Alliance and Integration." Once that integration accord was signed, South Ossetia would be absorbed by Russia over a period of months.

A similar process has been underway as regards the other Georgian semi-autonomous breakaway region, Abkhazia, which was also home to a Russian-speaking population. The alliance and integration measures related to Abkhazia, however, were not regarded as comprehensive as the integration accord at stake for South Ossetia.

Note that on March 18, 2015, Russian President Putin signed the aforementioned Treaty of Alliance and Integration," which (illegally) integrated the breakaway territory with Russia. The government of Georgia in Tbilisi cast the development as a provocation with the aim of stealing Georgian territory. As noted by Georgian Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili, "It's a cynical and provocative step by Russia ... We consider it a move aimed at annexation." Meanwhile, leading Western countries said it was a dangerous threat to regional stability.

As with the annexation of Crimea, the integration of Georgian territories had no chance of gaining international recognition, and instead, Russia's territorial encroachment has been widely condemned. Indeed, the United States and the European Union condemned the new treaty with South Ossetia. Jen Psaki, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State said, "The United States' position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains clear: these regions are integral

parts of Georgia, and we continue to support Georgia's independence, its sovereignty, and its territorial integrity." Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy head, said the treaty was "yet another step" intended to undermine "ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region."

Of course, as noted above, the loudest outrage as regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has come from Georgia, which already fought a war with Russia in 2008 over these very issues of control. Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was not expected to curtail his expansionist ambitions. In fact, the Russian leader was flexing his aggressive and hawkish muscles in the region as he ordered the Russian Northern Fleet to be on a state of full combat readiness in the Arctic. As well, Russia commenced major military exercises across northern Russia involving more than 45,000 troops, in what was a clear show of military strength intended to intimidate its neighbors.

Special Geopolitical Entry:

Russia encroaches into semi-autonomous Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia -- Some portions replicated from earlier entry above due to relevance--

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

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By mid-July 2015, the European Union was warning that while world attention remained on Russia's land grab in Ukraine, Russia was doing the same in the Georgian semi-autonomous regions. Of note was the fact that Russia had installed its own border signs inside South Ossetia, as it continued its quiet absorption of the Georgian territory. As the European Union had warned, Russia was intent on redrawing the regional map, effectively expanding its territory in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to the detriment of Georgian sovereignty. A statement by the European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, aimed to remind Russia that it was acting in violation of international law and read as follows: "The EU reaffirms its full support for Georgia's

territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders."

Meanwhile, the political landscape in Georgia was tense due to Russia's moves in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On July 18, 2015, thousands of demonstrators were on the streets of the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to register their outrage over what Russia's so-called "occupation" of the two semi-autonomous regions. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Tamara Chergoleishvili, a leading protest organizer, explained the mass action as follows: "The Kremlin continues to use both hard and soft power in its efforts to subjugate Georgia. We gathered here to show that Russia's aggressive policy doesn't belong to the 21st century."

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Sources --

BBC, Congressional Research Service, Federal Information and News Dispatch, U.S. State Department, Chicago Tribune

Appendix: Abkhazia

Special Report: Abkhazia

Summary

Ethnic Abkhazs in the strategically located province of Abkhazia on the Black Sea have sought to assert their independence from Georgia. In 1991, war erupted as Georgian troops battled Abkhaz forces, alleged to have the backing of Russia and various northern Caucasus militant groups. More than 250,000 ethnic Georgians fled Abkhazia because of the fighting, fueling accusations that

Abkhaz forces carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Throughout the 1990s, the United Nations (U.N.), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Group of Friends (consisting of American, British, German, French, and Russian envoys) have attempted to negotiate a resolution to the conflict, but the situation remains a stalemate. Abkhazia, which is economically isolated as a result of a Georgian embargo, operates as a de facto protectorate of Russia.

The geopolitical dimensions of the conflict have grown increasingly important, as Russia has sought to use its military support for Abkhazia as leverage against Georgia's pro-Western government. For its part, Georgia has accused Russia of seeking to informally annex Abkhazia. Nevertheless, Georgia has offered Abkhazia a high degree of autonomy, but insists on preserving its territorial integrity. Abkhazia, meanwhile, continues to demand independence.

Many outside observers stress the need to peacefully resolve the dispute because of fears that another armed conflict in Abkhazia could destabilize the region.

Editor's Note:

The 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia affected Abkhazia as well. The French-brokered peace agreement that was intended to end that crisis included implications for both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. See "Special Report" below for details about that situation.

Background/Context

The ethnic Abkhaz people have close historical, cultural, and linguistic ties to the peoples of the Russian North Caucasus and are ethnically distinct from the Georgian people. The Russian empire incorporated Abkhazia as a protectorate in 1810 and formally annexed the area in 1864. Many ethnic Abkhazians fled as Russians and Georgians arrived.

A few years after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets gave Abkhazia the status of an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). In 1931, however, Joseph Stalin, who liked to vacation in the area, allowed the Georgian SSR to formally annex Abkhazia. Although the area was still called an autonomous region, there was very little autonomy during Stalin's rule. Georgian became the official language while the Abkhaz people suffered cultural and linguistic oppression. The situation became less severe when Khrushchev came to power.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, less than one-fifth of the Abkhaz population were ethnic Abkhazians. Most were ethnic Georgians. When Georgia became independent, ethnic Abkhaz

wanted to declare their independence and establish closer ties with Russia. In 1992, the Georgian government sent 2,000 troops to Abkhazia to enforce the status quo. In 1993, however, Georgian troops were driven out by fierce fighting that killed 10,000. More than 250,000 Georgians became refugees and have been unable to return ever since. Georgia accused Russia of providing support to Abkhaz separatist forces. Militants from the north Caucasus also arrived to support Abkhazia. Chechen fighters, despite being openly hostile to Russia, also assisted the Abkhazs.

Russian, Georgian, and Abkhaz authorities signed a ceasefire agreement in Moscow in September 1992. The agreement stipulated that Georgian territorial integrity would be maintained. However, the agreement was never fully implemented and the ceasefire eventually collapsed in October 1992 as fighting resumed. Abkhaz forces captured most of the major cities and brought nearly 80 percent of the contested territory under Abkhaz control.

Georgia and Abkhazia signed a new ceasefire agreement in July 1993. At that point, the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council created the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) to verify compliance with the ceasefire. The ceasefire, however, again collapsed in September 1993 when Abkhaz forces launched more attacks, eventually gaining controlling of all of Abkhazia. The situation caused hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians to flee the area.

On April 4, 1994, Georgia and Abkhazia signed the Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz Conflict in Moscow, which committed both sides to observing yet another new ceasefire and cooperating to ensure the “safe, secure, and dignified” return of all civilians who had fled the zone of conflict. On May 14, 1994, both sides signed the Moscow Ceasefire Agreement, which created a demilitarized zone around the Inguri river. Russian peacekeeping troops, under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), were authorized to monitor the ceasefire. UNOMIG was also tasked with monitoring the ceasefire. Further negotiations took place in the context of the Geneva Peace Process, which was chaired by the U.N. The negotiations were observed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and by the “Group of Friends,” consisting of United States (U.S.), British, French, German, and Russian representatives.

Georgian and Abkhaz officials met in Geneva in 1997 for talks mediated by the U.N, where they agreed to establish a Coordination Council to resolve practical issues between them. The Coordination Council established three working groups to address security issues, refugees and internally displaced persons, and economic and social programs.

In May 1998, fighting broke out in the Gali district of Abkhazia when Georgian partisans attempted to take back control part of that district. By that point, tens of thousands of Georgian internally displaced persons had returned to their homes in the Gali district. Upwards of 40,000 Georgians were then expelled and 1,500 homes burned in an Abkhaz-sweep operation.

In 1999, Russia agreed to close its base at Gudauta in the conflict zone, pledging that it would only be used for peacekeeping purposes. However, Georgia expressed doubts that the base was being used solely for such operations, alleging that Russia still used it to provide military support to pro-independence Abkhaz forces. Georgia has complained about not being given access to inspect the Russian facilities.

In 2001, Georgia and Abkhazia signed an agreement not to use force against one another. In 2002, the U.N. and the Group of Friends presented a document that outlined a possible solution to the conflict based on the expectation of preserving Georgian territorial integrity. However, the Abkhaz side has never accepted the document as a basis for negotiation.

In 2001, the Russian conflict in Chechnya once again became intertwined with Georgia. Russia accused the Georgian government of providing sanctuary to Chechen rebels on Georgian territory. That autumn, Georgian partisans and Chechen fighters reportedly fought their way through Abkhaz lines.

In 2003, the Group of Friends sponsored a series of talks with the purpose of establishing the principles for a final political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. In 2004, these talks were broke off amid rising Georgian-Abkhaz tensions. Abkhazia continued to suspend its participation in the talks until it held elections for a new de facto president. Following the election of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili in 2005, the new governments of both sides resumed talks in Geneva with the Group of Friends.

Recent Initiative

In March 2006, the Georgian government announced it would reopen negotiations with Abkhaz officials. In May 2006, the Group of Friends and the U.N.-led Coordination Council sponsored talks between Georgia and Abkhaz officials in Tbilisi. The talks covered security issues in the Gali region of western Georgia, refugees and internally displaced persons, and economic plans for the zone of conflict. The de facto Abkhaz foreign minister stated that Abkhazia was satisfied with the talks and Georgian officials spoke of “cautious optimism.” In June 2006, the Georgian government presented a peace plan for ending the conflict to its parliament. The plan stresses the need for Georgian territorial integrity to be maintained, though it would seek to recognize the historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage of the Abkhaz people by granting the province “broad domestic sovereignty” over its internal affairs. The plan calls for the orderly return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the restoration of their lost property. The plan also pledges that the Georgian government will continue civil discussions with Abkhaz leaders and will continue to encourage the participation of multilateral institutions in facilitating the peace process. Abkhaz officials, however, have not embraced such a plan, instead demanding completely independence from Georgia.

In June 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili held talks in St. Petersburg covering a wide range of issues in Georgian-Russian relations, including Abkhazia. Though both sides stated that the talks failed to resolve key differences, they both pledged to work to improve ties. In July 2006, Georgia requested that the U.N. Security Council replace Russian troops with U.N. peacekeepers, citing concerns that Russia does not have a neutral position on the conflict. Georgia alleged that Russia is continuing to provide military support to Abkhaz separatists. President Saakashvili accused Russia of using its peacekeeping presence as pretext to informally annex Abkhazia. Russia vehemently denied the allegations. The U.N. Security Council is unlikely to grant Georgia's request considering that Russia, as a permanent member, has veto-power over all resolutions. The Abkhaz government said that the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers would destabilize the peace process and that Abkhazia would be forced to mine its border with Georgia.

Editor's Note:

The 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia affected Abkhazia as well. The French-brokered peace agreement that was intended to end that crisis included implications for both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. See "Special Report" below for details about that situation.

Foreign Policy Positions of Key Players

Georgia

Having been embroiled in a civil war with breakaway provinces such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia throughout the 1990s, Georgia insists on preserving its territorial integrity. Georgia believes that Russia played a crucial role in providing military and political support to Abkhaz separatists. Georgia has accused of Abkhaz forces of ethnic cleansing, an allegation which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has endorsed. Furthermore, Georgia believes that Russia is seeking to solidify its position in Abkhazia in order to achieve a de facto annexation of the province. After coming to power in the "Rose Revolution", President Saakashvili has pledged reintegrate breakaway provinces.

Abkhazia

Abkhazia demands the restoration of its pre-1931 status and insists that there can be no settlement until Georgia recognizes its independence, which it declared in 1994. No country has formally recognized Abkhazia's sovereignty. A Georgian economic embargo has further isolated Abkhazia, although Russia has sought to soften the consequences of this by maintaining a border crossing and railway line. Abkhazia is currently a de facto Russian protectorate with many of its citizens holding

Russian passports and using the Russian ruble as currency. Abkhaz officials want Russian oil companies to start drilling for oil along its coast in the Black Sea, though the Georgian government claims ownership of all natural resources in the area.

Russia

Russia has traditionally viewed the North Caucasus as its sphere of influence and has done much to support the Abkhaz cause. In recent years, Russia has also sought to use its military presence in Abkhazia as leverage against President Saakashvili's Western-oriented government, which is trying to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

United States

According to the U.S. Department of State, U.S. policy officially supports the preservation of Georgian territorial integrity through peaceful means. As a member of the Group of Friends, the U.S. supports negotiations toward a comprehensive settlement of the dispute, including the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Under the George W. Bush administration, the U.S. has sought to establish a strategic partnership with Georgia. Since coming to power in the Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili has supported American geopolitical objectives concerning energy and security issues.

United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia was established in August 1993 to monitor the ceasefire between Georgian and Abkhaz authorities. UNOMIG's mandate was further expanded in April 1994 to monitor the new ceasefire. In March 2006, the U.N. Security Council extended UNOMIG's mandate for six additional months.

Current countries that contribute military personnel to UNOMIG include Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

Special Report

France negotiates truce agreement for Georgia and Russia as fighting dies down in separatist enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia --

On August 8, 2008, the Georgian military launched an attack against separatist targets in South Ossetia. The military offensive ensued only hours after the Georgian authorities and South

Ossetia's separatists agreed to a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

The situation began when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region.

According to Russian media, several people were reported to have been killed in the shelling. As well, Georgian forces and South Ossetian separatists were reported to be exchanging heavy fire. To that end, explosions and rocket fire were heard in the area around Tskhinvali. The British newspaper, *The Independent*, reported that "the assault is coming from all directions."

For its part, Georgia said that it was taking this action to stabilize the territory [South Ossetia]. Georgian Minister for Integration, Temur Yakobashvili, said that his country was compelled to terminate South Ossetia's "criminal regime" and to "restore constitutional order" to the breakaway region. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili himself called for an end to bloodshed to end, but warned the South Ossetian separatists that Tbilisi's patience was not limitless.

On the other side of the equation, South Ossetian rebel leader Eduard Kokoity said that Georgia was carrying out "a perfidious and base" attack on Tskhinvali. He also confirmed the assault on Tskhinvali saying, "The storming of Tskhinvali has started." Eyewitnesses on the ground said that the city was being attacked, the hospital was destroyed and the university was on fire. The Red Cross reported that there were numerous casualties needing medical attention.

In response, Russia was said to be deploying troops to South Ossetia to assist peacekeepers operating there. Indeed, an aide to the Russian Land Forces commander confirmed that Russian tanks and troops had entered South Ossetia and were approaching Tskhinvali, which was reported to have been already devastated by the Georgian offensive there.

Russia's military presence in the region was not well-received by Georgia, given the fact that the Georgian government has long accused Russia of arming South Ossetian separatists. But Russia has its own counter-argument to levy against Georgia. It has accused Georgia of deliberately ramping up its own military presence in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and assuming a hard-line posture against these enclaves. Russia's tensions with Georgia have been partially rooted in another concern. Specifically, Russia has been opposed to pro-Western Georgia's ambitions to join NATO. This geopolitical element has textured the larger context of the territorial struggle being played out in South Ossetia.

It should be noted that Russia has enjoyed strong ties with South Ossetia, largely due to the fact that the ethnically-related province of North Ossetia is located within its borders, and both the south and the north have long hoped to unite. Indeed, many South Ossetians hold Russian citizenship. As such, with vested interests on both sides of the border, Russia called for an end to

the ongoing violence. Russia also urged the international community to work cooperatively "to avert massive bloodshed and new victims."

However, the prospects for peace were not likely to be easily advanced, given the emerging situation in the region a day later. On August 9, 2008, Georgian authorities said that Russian jets had bombed military targets inside its territory – specifically in the Georgian town on Gori to the south of South Ossetia. They also said that one attack ensued close to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which is known to supply Caspian oil to the West. Georgia described the air strikes as "a full-scale military invasion" and Georgian President Saakashvili claimed that Russia was at war with his country.

Russia had a very different perspective and placed the blame squarely on the Georgians. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated the dire nature of the situation by asserting that already 1,500 people had died in the conflict and more than 30,000 South Ossetian had fled into Russia to escape the threat of death. The Russian government said that it had to act to protect the South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian citizenship. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said that Georgia also bore a responsibility for "protecting the [South Ossetian] population" and that his country's military action was intended "to force the Georgian side to peace."

By August 9, 2008, the Russian army had advanced to take complete control South Ossetia's capital of Tskhinvali. General Vladimir Boldyrev, the head of the Russian ground forces said, "Tactical groups have completely liberated Tskhinvali from the Georgian military." Boldyrev also said that Russian forces would keep up the pressure on Georgian military units. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev explained his country's objectives in South Ossetia saying, "Under these circumstances, Russia is guided by one task -- to immediately stop violence and defend civilians and restore peace as soon as possible." President Dmitry Medvedev also demanded the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the conflict zone, saying that it was the only way to settle the "tragic crisis."

That same day, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili called for an end to hostilities saying, "We propose an immediate ceasefire and the beginning of the withdrawal of troops from the contact line." On the home front, the Georgia's parliament approved a presidential decree that essentially imposed two weeks of martial law in the country.

A day later on August 10, 2008, Georgia said that it was withdrawing its troops from the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali in the face of Russia's counter-offensive. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said his country's troops were returning to the positions they held before the conflict erupted days earlier. There was, however, some confusion about whether Georgian troops were pulling out of Tskhinvali or withdrawing entirely from South Ossetia. Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili confirmed that the troops left Tskhinvali but were remaining in other areas of South Ossetia. Russian sources said that Georgian military units were still active in South

Ossetia.

Presumably due to the continued activity by Georgian military units in South Ossetia, and what Moscow described as continued Georgian offensive action, Russian forces were continuing to carry out its own military action into Georgian territory. Reports from the region suggested that Russia carried out an air strike on a military airfield near the Tbilisi International Airport.

With the situation grim despite the earlier declaration of a withdrawal of troops from Tskhinvali, Georgia said that it had submitted a note to the Russian embassy in Tbilisi calling for immediate negotiations with Russia regarding "an end to all hostilities and a ceasefire." Russia confirmed that the note had been received. Russia at the time also denied Georgia's claims that Russian air strikes had targeted populated areas.

But movement toward a resolution seemed no closer by August 11, 2008. Georgian authorities said that Russian air strikes hit communications facilities to the west of Tbilisi and the port city of Poti in the Black Sea. As well, Russian forces were reported to have led a raid through the other breakaway enclave of Abkhazia into the western Georgian town of Senaki. On the other side of the equation, Russia said that the Georgian military was still targeting positions in Tskhinvali, despite claims of a withdrawal and overtures of a ceasefire. In this way, both sides accused one another of continuing the hostilities and exacerbating the conflict.

On the international front, the United Nations Security Council had earlier convened an emergency session to consider the rapidly deteriorating security crisis in the Caucasus. Little was actually accomplished at that session. Likewise, a spokesperson from NATO had already called on both sides -- Georgian and Russian -- to exercise restraint. However, with the violence ongoing, clearly restraint was not at hand.

Nevertheless, the United States said that it was sending a delegation to the region to try to negotiate a resolution. The United States Department of States said that the envoys would "engage with the parties in the conflict." As well, a European Union delegation was en route to the region and said that it was hoping to procure a ceasefire and withdrawal agreement from both Georgia and Russia. A separate Council of Europe delegation was also hoping to advance dialogue.

In the same time period, according to news reports, Russian President Medvedev reiterated the death toll -- in the thousands -- during a conversation with United States President George W. Bush. For his part, Bush, who was attending the Beijing Olympics, called for an end to the violence, warned of escalation beyond the zone of conflict, and endorsed the notion of international mediation.

Indeed, the international community's objective appeared to be focused on averting the prospects

of a war in the restive Caucasus, which has long been regarded as something of a powder keg. Yet to be determined was the question of whether or not such efforts would actually yield positive results.

Days later, Russia noted that its military activity in the area was ending and Russian troops were seen retreating from the area. The hostilities flared again when Georgia sent in troops to try to regain control of South Ossetia. Nevertheless, witnesses said that the full brunt of the fighting in South Ossetia appeared to be ending. Elsewhere in the region, Russian troops were withdrawing from the other breakaway region of Abkhazia, however, separatist there were reported to be ensconced in some continuing clashes with the Georgian military in the Kodori Gorge.

Yet even with an official truce in the offing (as discussed below) and an end to the fighting, the situation was not peaceful. A war of words continued. On an official day of mourning in his country, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev charged that Georgia had launched "genocide of the South Ossetian people." At issue were the deaths of thousands of South Ossetians, many of whom hold Russian passports, as well as the deaths and injuries to scores of Russian soldiers, including one general. The Russian leader used the Russian word "otmorozki," which roughly translates to "thugs" in English, to characterize Georgian troops. Meanwhile, Georgian President Saakashvili addressed a crowd of thousands gathered in Tbilisi's main and accused Russia of the "ruthless, heartless destruction" of Georgians. The Georgian leader also warned that his country would no longer be a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) -- a group consisting of former Soviet republics.

On August 13, 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy was leading diplomatic negotiations to help Georgia and Russia resolve the crisis that had been sparked when Georgian military troops and Russian-backed South Ossetian separatists were ensconced in violent clashes over the course of several days. Georgian tanks then attacked the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali, presumably in an effort to regain control of the region, and went onto gain military supremacy over large swaths of Georgian territory.

Sarkozy put forth a peace agreement that both sides signed days later. Central to the proposed plan for a truce was that all forces would pull back to pre-conflict positions. Other elements of the plan included an end to the use of force, an end to military action in perpetuity, as well as the free access of humanitarian aid. France, as the head of the European Union, has called on the European bloc to endorse the peace initiative ahead of its submission to the United Nations Security Council. The European Union was also expected consider deploying peacekeepers to the region to maintain peace and security, and also to protect the supply of humanitarian aid.

The remaining thorny issue, which was not included in the framework of the truce, was the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Neither Russian President Medvedev nor Georgian President Saakashvili was likely to find common ground on that matter in the immediate future.

Indeed, the Georgian leader asserted, "The territorial integrity and belonging of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgia can never be put under doubt."

On August 17, 2008, Russia officially pledged to withdraw its forces from Georgian territory in keeping with the agreement. At the time, however, its forces had control over large swaths of Georgian territory, including the main east-west highway through that country. There was speculation that Russian troops might withdraw only as far as South Ossetia since Russia said it would only fully withdraw when Georgian police were ready to take over responsibility for security. NATO responded to anxieties that Russia would not abide by the withdrawal requirements of the agreement by warning that relations would be compromised if Russian troops remained in Georgia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia was not occupying Georgia and would not annex South Ossetia. However, he also characterized NATO as biased and intent on saving the "criminal regime" of Tbilisi.

Meanwhile, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev told his French President Nicolas Sarkozy that the Russian withdrawal would be complete by August 22, 2008, although approximately 500 troops would be installed as peacekeepers on both sides of South Ossetia's border. Russian troops were soon identified exiting Gori -- the largest town in Georgia located close to the border of South Ossetia. Sarkozy, during talks with Medvedev, acknowledged this withdrawal but noted that Russian troops were yet to exit Poti and Senaki. Russia had earlier indicated that it would not soon leave the port city of Poti, and claimed that this would be in keeping with the terms of the ceasefire agreement. Medvedev's government said that Russian peacekeepers were allowed to take "additional security measures." However, the United States and the United Kingdom countered this claim noting that such buffer zones would violate the deal.

In other developments, the first United States ship with humanitarian aid was expected to dock in Georgia by the last week of August 2008. Two more ships were expected to arrive in Georgia as well.

In the last week of August 2008, Russia's Kremlin officially recognized the breakaway enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. South Ossetians and Abkhazians celebrated the news of this recognition of their self-proclaimed sovereignty. However, without wider international recognition of sovereign status, and with many countries of the West committed to the notion of Georgia's territorial integrity, the actual status of South ossetia and Abkhazia remained in the zone of "contested independent status."

By the start of September 2008, the European Union (EU) had decided to suspend talks on a new partnership pact with Russia, given the still-incomplete withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. EU-Russian negotiations on the partnership agreement had been scheduled for mid-September 2008 but were based on a shared understanding that Russian troops would withdraw to pre-conflict positions. The lack of progress on that withdrawal front, followed by the EU's

response, signaled that relations between the EU and Russia were moving into highly challenging territory.

Following a meeting in the Belgian capital city of Brussels, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said that the bloc that he represented could not "continue as if nothing had happened." As well, the European bloc's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, said that the EU could deploy civilian monitors to Georgia to determine whether or not Russia was complying with the ceasefire agreement that had been brokered earlier. Meanwhile French President Sarkozy said, "The EU would welcome a real partnership with Russia, which is in the interests of all, but you have to be two to have a partnership."

On the other side of the equation, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that unchecked support by the EU and the United States for the government of Georgian President Saakashvili would be a "historic" mistake. He also introduced the notion of an embargo on arms supplies to Georgia until a new regime was established there. These declarations came in the background of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's assertion that his country's foreign policy principles would not be dictated by the hegemony of any single country, such as the United States.

In October 2008, months after the Russian-Georgian conflict over South Ossetia, Russia has removed a checkpoint near the town of Gori. The removal of the checkpoint at Gori -- located in Georgian territory close to the separatist region of South Ossetia -- marked the first significant sign that Russia intended to comply with its withdrawal pledge, which was part of the ceasefire deal negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Indeed, Russia has also pledged to withdraw troops from two buffer zones within Georgia -- now under European Union observation -- by October 10, 2008.

At the same time, Russia has increased its troop presence in South Ossetia -- largely a result of an explosion that left eight Russian soldiers and three civilians dead in the early part of the month. Russia accused Georgia of orchestrating the attack; Georgia denied the accusation. Russia also maintained its troop presence in the other separatist region of Abkhazia. Russia has recognized both South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent while Western countries have backed Georgian territorial integrity. The matter of sovereignty has remained unresolved.

In June 2009, the western Georgian town of Zugdidi was the site of three bombings that resulted in some structural damage and injuries to one person. One explosion hit a train and resulted in the wounding of a train engineer; a second explosion occurred half an hour later and damaged train tracks; the third explosion hit a truck just outside the town. While there was no claim of responsibility for the attacks, the location of Zugdidi close to the breakaway region of Abkhazia indicated a possible political motive.

August 2009 marked the one year anniversary of the war between Georgia and Russia over the

breakaway republic of South Ossetia, which also had implications in Abkhazia, as discussed above.

On August 13, 2009, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited Abkhazia, where he promised to build a military base along the border with Georgia. Putin also said that such a move would help guarantee the stability of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Russian head of government said: "Russia is going to deploy its armed forces in Abkhazia and take the necessary efforts to build a modern border guard system in cooperation with the relevant Abkhazian authorities." He continued, "All these factors are serious guarantees of the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." Putin's pledge came on the first anniversary of the cease-fire, which ended Russia's war with Georgia over South Ossetia. As might be expected, Georgia decried the move, characterizing it as "yet another provocation," that could potentially "escalate tensions" in the region of the Caucasus.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region.

Updates:

Abkhazia leader survives assassination attempt --

On Feb. 22, 2012, the president of Georgia's breakaway republic of Abkhazia survived an attempted assassination while he was en route to work in the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi. President Aleksandr Ankvab was targeted when his motorcade struck a remote-controlled roadside bomb and then came under gunfire by five assailants. While President Ankvab survived the attack, two of his bodyguards were not so fortunate and died as a result. Officials from Abkhazia's National Security Council said that efforts were being made to find the perpetrators of the violent assault on the president. It should be noted that there were no claims of responsibility for the attack, and this assassination attempt was the latest in a long list of such efforts to take Ankvab's life.

Georgia warns Russia against backing independence claims of Georgia breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia --

On Feb. 4, 2014, just ahead of the opening of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (Russia), Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili of Georgia warned Russia that it should refrain from taking any positions that might support the independence claims of the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Relations between Russia and Georgia have long been tense since the early 1990s when Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Relations devolved further over the years as Russia has supported the independence inclinations of the two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But relations between Georgia and Russia hit a nadir in 2008 when the two countries fought a brief war over South Ossetia. Since then, they have had no diplomatic ties.

With Russia in the international spotlight as it hosts the 2014 Winter Olympics, Georgia was adamant about ensuring that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not use the spotlight to advance the independence causes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of note was the fact that Russia's Olympic security zone was expanded into Abkhazia, which was less than 25 miles away from Sochi.

Prime Minister Garibashvili went to so far as to suggest that his country considered boycotting the Olympics in Russia. During a meeting with European Union and NATO officials in Belgium, he said, "It was a tough decision not to boycott the Games...But if there are any surprises we will of course react adequately."

Georgia and Moldova defy Russian threats and move forward with closer ties with European Union

In June 2014, the eastern European countries of Georgia and Moldova indicated that they were prepared to defy the threat posed by their former Soviet overlord -- Russia -- by signing a trade and political pact with the European Union.

It was a similar westward move by Ukraine at the start of 2014 that sparked an uprising in that country, that sparked the ousting the pro-Russian president of that country, followed by the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian area of Crimea. Since that time eastern Ukraine has been beset by violence at the hands of pro-Russian separatists. Both Georgia and Moldova are at risk of similar pro-Russian separatist uprisings in their own countries since they are home to semi-autonomous territories inhabited by ethnic Russians.

In Georgia, the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have evoked incidences of conflict with Russia over the years -- including a war in 2008. In Moldova, the issue at stake is Trans-Dnestr.

In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has sought to warn Georgia and Moldova against signing agreement that would bolster those breakaway former Soviet republics' ties with the West. However, in clear defiance of such threats, both Georgia and Moldova were making the calculation that they would benefit from closer European ties.

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia during a war in the 1990s, which followed on the heels of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russia as sovereign states, but have nonetheless remained internationally-recognized as Georgian territories. They have increasingly become flashpoints in the region. That being said, Georgia was not about to relinquish sovereignty easily, thus the defiance in signing the association agreement with the EU. As noted by Irakly Sesiashvili, the head of the parliamentary defense and security committee in Georgia, "There is an aggressive attitude from Russia not only towards us, but towards any ex-Soviet state which has European aspirations. But this does not mean that we will reject our free choice."

Shortly after Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Trans-Dniestr declared its independence from Moldova, sparking an armed conflict between Moldovan and Trans-Dniestrian forces. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has remained involved in negotiations over Trans-Dniestr's status since the conflict began, though a long series of negotiations have thus far failed to produce a final status agreement. Moldova has tried to accommodate its ethno-linguistic Russian minority in the region by offering broad cultural and political autonomy. But given Russia's success in Crimea, it was to be seen if the Russian argument that it must act to "protect" ethno-linguistic Russians would hold sway in Moldova. The Russia argument in that direction would be aided by the call from the speaker of Trans-Dniestr's parliament for Russia to incorporate the region.

The attention of Trans-Dniestr emerged in 2014 as speculation arose about Russia using its many political and economic levers to prevent Moldova from moving forward with its Western integration effort. At the top of Russia's list of objectives was likely to be the derailment of Moldova's proposed association and trade agreements with the European Union discussed here.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 2014, Russia held military exercises in Trans-Dniestr. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, United States Air Force General Philip Breedlove has noted that Russia had built up a "very sizeable" force on its border with Ukraine, that could easily be activated elsewhere in the region. Chief among the possibilities for expanded Russian encroachment, according to Breedlove, was the Moldovan territory of Trans-Dniestr. In his remarks to the Marshall Fund think tank, Breedlove said, "There is absolutely sufficient (Russian) force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Trans-Dniestr if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome." Breedlove thus added, "We need to think about our allies, the positioning of our forces in the alliance and the readiness of those forces ... such that we can be there to defend against it if required."

Of course, given the lack of international action -- including on the part of NATO -- in punishing Russia for seizing Crimea, it was barely conceivable that NATO would act to save Moldova's territorial integrity, should Russia choose to incorporate Trans-Dniestr. To date, Russia has paid no

price for its action in the Russian-speaking regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which remain officially under Georgian jurisdiction. As well, sanctions and condemnations against Russia for annexing Crimea has resulted in only mocking responses from the Russian political class.

Russia launches military exercises in disputed territories of Georgia

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

The areas affected included the federal districts of Southern and North Caucasus, as well as the recently annexed Ukrainian region of Crimea. Military drills were also taking place on Russian military bases in Armenia, and in the Georgian separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The moves were being regarded as a symbolic illustration of Russian hegemony and influence in the region, irrespective of global outrage over Russia's backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine and the ensuing war that has rocked the region since 2014.

In fact, while global attention has focused on Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea, Russia has been quietly working towards subsuming the semi-autonomous Georgian territory of South Ossetia into its fold. In fact, a treaty, known as the "Treaty of Alliance and Integration" was drafted in December 2014 with the intent of integrating the Russian speaking enclave, irrespective of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity or its legal claim on South Ossetia. At the end of January 2015, the leader of South Ossetia, Leonid Tibilov, dispatched finalized documents to Moscow. In February 2015, Russia and South Ossetia signed the "Treaty on the State Border," which was being viewed as a first step towards the signing of the broader "Treaty of Alliance and Integration." Once that integration accord was signed, South Ossetia would be absorbed by Russia over a period of months.

A similar process has been underway as regards the other Georgian semi-autonomous breakaway region, Abkhazia, which was also home to a Russian-speaking population. The alliance and integration measures related to Abkhazia, however, were not regarded as comprehensive as the integration accord at stake for South Ossetia.

Note that on March 18, 2015, Russian President Putin signed the aforementioned Treaty of Alliance and Integration," which (illegally) integrated the breakaway territory with Russia. The government of Georgia in Tbilisi cast the development as a provocation with the aim of stealing Georgian territory. As noted by Georgian Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili, "It's a cynical and

provocative step by Russia ... We consider it a move aimed at annexation." Meanwhile, leading Western countries said it was a dangerous threat to regional stability.

As with the annexation of Crimea, the integration of Georgian territories had no chance of gaining international recognition, and instead, Russia's territorial encroachment has been widely condemned. Indeed, the United States and the European Union condemned the new treaty with South Ossetia. Jen Psaki, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State said, "The United States' position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains clear: these regions are integral parts of Georgia, and we continue to support Georgia's independence, its sovereignty, and its territorial integrity." Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy head, said the treaty was "yet another step" intended to undermine "ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region."

Of course, as noted above, the loudest outrage as regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has come from Georgia, which already fought a war with Russia in 2008 over these very issues of control. Nevertheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin was not expected to curtail his expansionist ambitions. In fact, the Russian leader was flexing his aggressive and hawkish muscles in the region as he ordered the Russian Northern Fleet to be on a state of full combat readiness in the Arctic. As well, Russia commenced major military exercises across northern Russia involving more than 45,000 troops, in what was a clear show of military strength intended to intimidate its neighbors.

Russia encroaches into semi-autonomous Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

-- Some portions replicated from earlier entry above due to relevance--

In the backdrop of Russia's encroachment into eastern Ukraine, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, surrounding countries have watched warily, wondering if its territories would be similarly affected. In March 2015, Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that large-scale military exercises involving 2,000 Russian troops had commenced in the southern part of the country, along contested borders and even in disputed regions.

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By mid-July 2015, the European Union was warning that while world attention remained on

Russia's land grab in Ukraine, Russia was doing the same in the Georgian semi-autonomous regions. Of note was the fact that Russia had installed its own border signs inside South Ossetia, as it continued its quiet absorption of the Georgian territory. As the European Union had warned, Russia was intent on redrawing the regional map, effectively expanding its territory in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to the detriment of Georgian sovereignty. A statement by the European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, aimed to remind Russia that it was acting in violation of international law and read as follows: "The EU reaffirms its full support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders."

Meanwhile, the political landscape in Georgia was tense due to Russia's moves in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On July 18, 2015, thousands of demonstrators were on the streets of the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to register their outrage over what Russia's so-called "occupation" of the two semi-autonomous regions. In an interview with Agence France Presse, Tamara Chergoleishvili, a leading protest organizer, explained the mass action as follows: "The Kremlin continues to use both hard and soft power in its efforts to subjugate Georgia. We gathered here to show that Russia's aggressive policy doesn't belong to the 21st century."

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman

Core research sources listed in Bibliography

Sources: BBC, International Crisis Group, Voice of America, United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, Chicago Tribune, Agence France Presse

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Georgia is a small transition economy with a population of 4.54 million (2015). Georgia's rich natural resource base offers strong potential for economic growth. Fertile land and a favorable climate enable diverse agricultural production, including a range of fruits and vegetables, livestock, dairy products, nuts and tea. Recent investments in oil exploration indicate significant oil and gas potential, and numerous fast-flowing rivers offer good hydropower potential. The country also benefits from its rich tourist resources as well as an educated labor force and a long tradition of entrepreneurship. After independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia suffered severe political and economic turbulence as a result of the impact of the civil war and the loss of both preferential accesses to former Soviet Union markets and large budget transfers from the central government of the former Soviet Union. Over the following decade, the Georgian government had some success in steadying the political and economic situation by stabilizing prices, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and by implementing fiscal and financial reforms. Economic growth and reform slowed in the late 1990s due to the Russian financial crisis and political instability caused by the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The economy started to pick up in 2000 and has seen impressive performance in recent years. Until mid-2008 the Georgian economy was growing rapidly, fueled by high levels of foreign direct investment and strong credit growth. However, the armed conflict with Russia over the disputed region of South Ossetia in August 2008 had a severe impact on Georgia's economy, and in the months that followed, the already difficult economy was hit by the global economic crisis. As a result, economic growth slowed sharply in 2008 and turned to substantially negative in 2009. The devastating economic situation prompted the Georgian government to request a Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) from the IMF and to secure emergency financing from donors. The immediate objectives of the SBA program were to restore confidence and stabilize the financial situation. With continued good performance under the SBA and the objectives being met, economic recovery started in mid-2009, and was expected to continue at a moderate pace in 2010. The economy rebounded in 2010 as evidenced by the performance of its largest banks, many of which returned to profit. In February 2011, Georgian TBC Bank reported a profit of US\$24 million in 2010, 36 times more than in 2009.

Overall, the economy continued to rebound – and strongly - in 2011. Inflation dropped to single digits, government debt declined to 34 percent of GDP and international reserves rose to US\$2.8 billion. But FDI inflows remained subdued and unemployment high. And as of 2012, unsettled

global economic and financial conditions had increased external risks. In April 2012, the IMF approved a Stand-By Arrangement and Stand-By Credit Facility for Georgia totaling about US\$385.6 million. The cautionary approval was to allow Georgia access to IMF resources should it see a significant worsening of external economic and financial conditions. By May 2012, President Saakashvili predicted the country would continue to see strong growth in 2012 and 2013. Looking ahead, the IMF said Georgia needs to work on lowering its current account deficit (11.8 percent of GDP in 2011) and reducing unemployment (16.3 percent in 2010) through sound policies to encourage private investment and education and training reforms to improve labor-market skills. Overall, growth was indeed strong in 2012.

By August 2013, though, Fitch Ratings warned that Georgia's economic expansion would slow sharply – likely by a 50 percent drop in growth rate - for the year due mainly to a decline in both public and private-sector investment following the change in government in October 2012. The government has seen tensions between Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili and President Mikheil Saakashvili since the former's Georgian Dream coalition unexpectedly won power from Saakashvili's United National Movement the prior year's parliamentary elections. The slowdown shrank tax revenues in the first half of 2013 but capital spending declined by half, as the government reviewed investment projects. As such, the government was running a higher cash surplus than in the same period in 2012. Meanwhile, imports had dropped.

In January 2014, Georgia's prime minister predicted that Georgia's economy would expand 6 percent to 7 percent for the year, driven by investments such as a \$5 billion seaport and infrastructure development. In the first half of the year, the country launched a new \$6 billion, state-run sovereign wealth fund with the goal of attracting investors. Around that time, Moody's Investors Service rated the country's debt at Ba3, three steps below investment grade and on par with Bangladesh and Portugal. Then in July 2014, the IMF signed off on a three-year, \$154 million loan program for Georgia. It was aimed at shoring up reserves and addressing economic vulnerabilities.

By early 2015, it was clear that Georgia's economy had been hit by a combination of severe external shocks: the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the deepening recession in Russia (both of which created ripple-effects through the region) and currency devaluations in trading partner countries. Because of these shocks, Georgia's exports were 30 percent lower than one year ago, and remittances from Georgian workers abroad were down 25 percent.

As a result, the economy was slowing. In January 2015, output grew by only 0.5 percent compared to the year prior. The economies of many of Georgia's main trading partners were slowing by even more, and the depreciation of their exchange rates was hurting Georgia's competitiveness.

Also, because foreign earnings were lower, the Lari had depreciated by more than 20 percent against the US dollar since January 2014. The Lari's depreciation against the U.S. dollar was

expected to increase costs for those who have borrowed in foreign currency and ultimately slow down economic growth. Remittances from abroad were down 23.3 percent from a year earlier to \$75.5 million.

In February 2015, Georgia announced plans for a reform drive including privatizations, budget cuts and restructuring of foreign currency bank loans to contain the country's economic crisis. By July 2015, Reuters was reporting that Georgia's economic growth had slowed to 2.6 percent in the first half of the year compared with 6 percent in the same period last year, according to the National Statistics service. The Georgian parliament confirmed the government's decision to halve the country's growth forecast for this year to 2 percent from 5 percent, and decided to reduce budget spending by 160 million lari (US\$70.5 million).

Economic Performance

Following rapid growth from 2005 to 2007, real GDP slowed sharply in 2008 and turned negative in 2009, reflecting both the impacts of the armed conflict with Russia in 2008 and the global economic crisis. However, growth picked up in 2010. Inflation climbed in 2008 because of major transportation and supply disruptions, before falling rapidly in 2009. Growth continued to be robust in 2011 and 2012 before slowing sharply in 2013.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 6.3 percent

The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -0.4 percent

Inflation was measured at: 8.2 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: Roubini Global Economics, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Monetary Fund, Interfax and Reuters

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	24.344	26.167	26.847	29.187	30.865
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	17.358	7.490	2.599	8.714	5.749
Consumption (LCU billions)	18.057	19.101	19.193	20.742	20.872
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	4.431	4.632	4.479	4.866	4.896
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	6.368	7.575	6.653	8.689	9.964
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	8.823	9.983	11.998	12.518	12.738
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	13.334	15.124	15.475	17.627	17.605

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Population, total (million)	3.890	3.837	3.783	3.730	3.697
Population growth (%)	-1.3692	-1.3625	-1.4073	-1.4010	-0.8847
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	6,258.09	6,819.72	7,096.84	7,824.92	8,348.66

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	11.860	12.619	13.038	13.659	13.929
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	7.185	6.401	3.320	4.766	1.976
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	205.265	207.366	205.919	213.679	221.585
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	9.491	1.024	-0.6978	3.768	3.700

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	7.081	7.737	7.705	8.699	9.109
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	3.252	9.264	-0.4136	12.901	4.713
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	28.221	28.811	27.533	27.971	28.074
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	6.870	7.539	7.392	8.164	8.665
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-0.2110	-0.1980	-0.3130	-0.5350	-0.4440
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-0.8667	-0.7567	-1.1658	-1.8330	-1.4385

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	7.098	7.904	9.837	11.190	11.833
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	14.499	11.355	24.455	13.757	5.749
Lending Interest Rate (%)	14.995	14.808	13.595	11.910	14.355
Unemployment Rate (%)	15.062	15.034	14.563	12.400	11.318

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/\$US)	1.686	1.651	1.663	1.765	2.244
Trade Balance NIPA (\$US billions)	-2.6750	-3.1136	-2.0906	-2.8946	-2.1687
Trade Balance % of GDP	-18.5316	-19.6478	-12.9522	-17.5046	-15.7691
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves (\$US billions)	2.818	2.873	2.823	2.699	2.395

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (\$US billions)	14.435	15.847	16.141	16.536	13.753
Exports (\$US billions)	5.232	6.046	7.213	7.092	5.676
Imports (\$US billions)	7.907	9.159	9.304	9.987	7.845

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (TBPB)	21.997	21.916	21.000	21.111	21.313
Petroleum Production (TBPB)	1.000	1.000	1.004	0.9845	1.003
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPB)	-20.9968	-20.9159	-19.9962	-20.1261	-20.3095
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	52.840	62.508	71.689	70.400	73.755
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	0.2209	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	-52.6191	-62.5076	-71.6894	-70.4000	-73.7546
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	162.040	288.806	303.889	270.756	274.703
Coal Production (1000s st)	151.377	263.770	233.732	217.464	217.754
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	-10.6631	-25.0357	-70.1574	-53.2914	-56.9490
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	7.811	7.151	8.100	7.839	7.849
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.0470	0.0468	0.0448	0.0451	0.0455
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.0021	0.0022	0.0022	0.0022	0.0017
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0448	-0.0446	-0.0427	-0.0429	-0.0438
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.0539	0.0638	0.0731	0.0718	0.0752
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.0002	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0537	-0.0638	-0.0731	-0.0718	-0.0752
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0032	0.0058	0.0061	0.0054	0.0055
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0031	0.0056	0.0049	0.0043	0.0039
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0002	-0.0002	-0.0012	-0.0011	-0.0016
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0781	0.0715	0.0810	0.0784	0.0785
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum-WTI (\$/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub (\$/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian (\$/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	1.049	1.045	1.002	1.007	1.017
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	0.8573	1.014	1.163	1.142	1.197
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.0929	0.1655	0.1742	0.1552	0.1574
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	1.999	2.225	2.339	2.304	2.371

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	292.879	267.003	380.158	371.215	329.210
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	269.100	266.188	362.417	352.511	328.543
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-23.7787	-0.8150	-17.7406	-18.7041	-0.6669
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	2.146	2.229	3.523	3.494	3.022
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	2.203	2.296	2.286	2.263	2.091
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	0.0571	0.0672	-1.2369	-1.2316	-0.9314
Rice Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	0.4613	0.5406	0.3995	0.2584	0.2231
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-0.4613	-0.5406	-0.3995	-0.2584	-0.2231
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	3,471.00	3,643.00	4,186.00	4,600.34	4,186.59
Coffee Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	-3471.0000	-3643.0000	-4186.0000	-4600.3397	-4186.5872
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	18.502	25.000	31.498	39.685	40.440
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	-18.5020	-25.0000	-31.4980	-39.6850	-40.4396

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	700.999	803.891	585.403	441.816	360.125
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	96.585	81.127	80.873	50.366	41.918
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-604.4140	-722.7638	-504.5299	-391.4504	-318.2069

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	70.321	26.744	72.731	25.881	21.842
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-70.3210	-26.7440	-72.7310	-25.8810	-21.8420
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	7.309	0.3210	2.370	0.2170	0.1889
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-7.3090	-0.3210	-2.3700	-0.2170	-0.1889
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	0.9230	4.251	1.756	6.726	6.053
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-0.9230	-4.2510	-1.7560	-6.7264	-6.0534

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	1.783	1.783	1.783	2.000	1.561
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	-1.7828	-1.7828	-1.7828	-2.0000	-1.5606
Gold Consumption (kg)	1,541.54	79.000	15.000	3,278.85	2,793.32
Gold Production (kg)	2,319.94	4,209.00	4,633.48	5,915.41	5,935.10
Gold Exports (kg)	778.398	4,130.00	4,618.48	2,636.56	3,141.78
Silver Consumption (mt)	16.000	2.000	36.000	70.000	55.986
Silver Production (mt)	1.458	1.530	1.555	1.609	1.479
Silver Exports (mt)	-14.5416	-0.4697	-34.4450	-68.3907	-54.5068

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper (\$/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc (\$/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin (\$/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead (\$/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel (\$/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold (\$/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver (\$/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Foreign Investment Assessment

Openness to Foreign Investment

The legislative framework of Georgia conforms to internationally accepted norms and principles. Legislation governing foreign investment has evolved rapidly in Georgia since 1995 and is now largely in place. This legislation, in concert with the government's economic strategy, aims to establish favorable conditions, but not preferential treatment, for foreign investors. An early law granting a tax holiday to foreign investors was repealed in 1996 in favor of a regime guaranteeing national treatment in all but a very limited number of cases.

The principal legislation impacting on the investment climate includes the constitution (1995), the civil code (1997), the tax code (1997), and the customs code.

Georgian law allows unlimited foreign ownership in most sectors, but it has limited foreign investment in some infrastructure projects. Recent legislation allows non-Georgians to own non-agricultural land indirectly, through a legal entity registered under the laws of Georgia. However, foreigners are not permitted to own agricultural land.

Transparency of Regulatory System

The state tax service is the only body legally empowered to inspect the tax payment status of an enterprise. The tax service's regulations do not discriminate between foreign and local enterprises. Tax inspectors sometimes exceed their authority, however, and act arbitrarily. Moreover, investors report difficulties in ascertaining exactly what tax rates apply to a given activity. Some have encountered difficulties with changing tax rates and tax payment instructions.

While only a few years into the transformation from a command to a market economy, Georgia has made considerable progress, especially very recently, towards establishing the legal underpinnings of an open and competitive market. The country has begun to develop the regulatory framework intended to foster competition. By the standards of other countries of the former Soviet Union the country can be regarded as progressive and quite well advanced in the

transformation process. However, the regulatory system has far to go to meet the standards of transparency familiar to businesspersons in advanced western democracies.

Labor, health and safety laws are by no means considered an impediment to investment. The labor force is among the best educated and well trained in the former Soviet Union. There is an abundant supply of professionals and skilled technicians at labor costs that are, for the moment, extremely low by western European and American standards. The combined rate of social charges represents 33 percent of base salary. The largest part of these charges is social security contributions, at 27 percent of salary. As salaries are so low, these rates are not generally considered a deterrent by foreign investors. However, the relatively high rates may discourage job creation in local firms.

Labor Force

Total: 2.1 million estimated

By occupation: agriculture 40%, industry 20%, services 40%

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture products: citrus, grapes, tea, hazelnuts, vegetables, livestock

Industries: steel, aircraft, machine tools, electrical appliances, mining (manganese and copper), chemicals, wood products, wine

Import Commodities and Partners

Commodities: fuels, machinery and parts, transport equipment, grain and other foods, pharmaceuticals

Partners: Russia 14%, UK 12.8%, Turkey 9.9%, Azerbaijan 8.3%, US 8%, Germany 7.3%, Ukraine 7.1%, France 4.9%

Export Commodities and Partners

Commodities: scrap metal, machinery, chemicals, fuel re-exports, citrus fruits, tea, wine

Partners: Russia 17.7%, Turkey 17.3%, Turkmenistan 12.3%, Armenia 8.6%, Switzerland 7%, Ukraine 6.4%, UK 5.9%

Telephone System

Telephones- main lines in use: 650,500

Telephones- mobile cellular: 522,300

General Assessment: N/A

Domestic: T'bilisi and K'ut'aisi have cellular telephone networks; urban telephone density is about 20 per 100 people; rural telephone density is about 4 per 100 people; intercity facilities include a fiber-optic line between T'bilisi and K'ut'aisi; nationwide pager service is available

International: country code - 995; Georgia and Russia are working on a fiber-optic line between P'ot'i and Sochi (Russia); present international service is available by microwave, landline, and satellite through the Moscow switch; international electronic mail and telex service are available

Internet

Internet Hosts: 5,160; Internet users: 150,500

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Railways: 1,612 km; Highways: 20,229 km

Ports and harbors: Bat'umi, P'ot'i, Sokhumi

Airports: 30; w/paved runways: 17

Legal System and Considerations

Georgia's legal system is based on a civil law system.

Dispute Settlement

While Georgia has no significant experience in dealing with judgments by foreign courts, the legal basis meets international requirements. On February 3, 1994, parliament ratified a decree on accession to the International Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. In addition, Georgia has a number of other decrees on accession to the UN international selling/purchasing 1980 Vienna Convention, the international pact on economic, social, and cultural rights, and on accession to other international conventions. The government accepts binding international arbitration of investment disputes between foreign investors and the state, although no relevant cases have been registered to date.

All disputes between foreign investors and local entities are to be resolved according to the rules agreed on by the parties or through the Georgian court system. Disputes between a foreign investor and a governmental body should be resolved in Georgian courts or at the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), unless a different method of dispute settlement is agreed between the parties.

If the dispute is not considered at ICSID, the foreign investor has the right to submit the dispute to an ICSID supplementary institution or to any arbitration agency founded in accordance with arbitration rules of the commission of the United Nations for International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Decisions of international arbitrary bodies are final and binding and appeals may not be lodged against such decisions. Their enforcement is guaranteed by the state. Georgia is not a member of ICSID or the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards.

The constitution provides for protection of ownership rights, specifically the universal rights to ownership, acquisition, disposal or inheritance of property. Foreign citizens living in Georgia possess rights and obligations equal to those of the citizens of Georgia.

Under the constitution, restriction or revocation of property rights is allowed only in cases of public necessity directly determined by law, by a decision of the court, or through "urgent necessity envisaged by organic law," meaning essentially a state of emergency properly declared according to procedures set out by the constitution. In all cases of revocation or restriction of property rights, the state must compensate the injured party. However, the constitution makes no provision for guarantee of prompt transfer of the compensation abroad.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See this Country Review for current ranking for Georgia as reported by Transparency International, from the least to most corrupt countries (1-163).

Cultural Considerations

In Georgia it is customary to be both formal and punctual. It is important to always address people by their title and last name until invited to do otherwise, and to be punctual to both business and social events.

For more information see:

United States' State Department Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5

Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5

Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7

Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5

France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5

India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5

Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8

Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8

Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5

Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5

Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9

Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#), suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and [Latvia](#) have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern [Ukraine](#) fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring [Russia](#).

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for [Mali](#) and [Nigeria](#) versus the [Central African Republic](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Burundi](#). [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in [Nigeria](#) generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of [Burundi](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eyebrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#) have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. [Syria](#) incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. [Iraq](#) saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. [Yemen](#), likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) maintaining their low ratings.

The [United States](#) continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of [Mexico](#), there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In [Argentina](#), a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4

11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1
27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9

27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8

46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3

65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3

83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2

99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3

111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7

130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d'Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4

154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9

168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of [Serbia](#), is not listed above. No calculation is available for [Kosovo](#) at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, [China](#) claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a [United States](#) domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: <http://www.transparency.org>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010

Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1

Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5

Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9

Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5

Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9

Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12

Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a

Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The [United States](#) falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by [Sweden](#) and [Singapore](#) in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of [China](#) continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- [Germany](#) moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- [Switzerland](#) tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: <http://www.weforum.org>

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

Background

In June 1997, the Georgian parliament passed the first Georgian Tax Code, which incorporates and supersedes all previous laws and presidential decrees on taxation. The main provisions of the tax code came into effect on July 25, 1997. The chapters on excise tax, VAT, and Article 64 of the chapter on corporate tax came into effect on September 1, 1997. Chapters on income and corporate taxes, property tax, land tax, vehicles ownership tax, tax on transfer of property, social tax, natural resources utilization tax, tax for environmental pollution with hazardous materials, and the tax on imported automobiles came into effect on January 1, 1998. The Tax Code offers equal treatment to Georgian and foreign businesses and investors.

Corporate tax

The corporate tax rate is 20 percent.

Individual tax

The individual tax rate is 12 percent.

Capital gains

Capital gains are taxed as income.

Indirect tax

The value added tax (VAT) is at a standard rate of 18 percent. VAT is paid on all stages of production, goods, supplies or services. Certain items and activities such as financial services, supply and import of securities, national and foreign currency, lease payments, medical services, pharmaceutical production imports, and others are exempt from VAT. As well, the Host Government Agreement has meant that goods and services to and by contractors involved with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project are taxable at zero percent.

Stock Market

The Caucasian Exchange, consisting of the Caucasian Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange and the Caucasian Stock Exchange, was founded in 1991 and has an authorized capital of 80 million roubles.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Cultural Identity

The people of Georgia do not generally call themselves Georgians. Instead, they refer to themselves as "Kartvelbi" and they call the land of Georgia "Sakartvelo." The etymology of these names come from the name of an ancient divinity called "Kartlos" who is regarded as the father or the people of present-day Georgia.

The contemporary name of the nation state, Georgia, has often been associated with the apparent patron saint, St. George. However, scholars have suggested that this is an incorrect association. Instead, they assert that the name of the country comes from the names "Kurj" and "Gurj," which may actually be linked in some way with Arab and Persian roots. Others suggest that the name comes from the Greek word "Geo" for earth or land and dates back to the time in which Greeks came to the area of present-day Georgia and saw people working on the land.

The country of Georgia was known as "Gruzzia" in Russia part of the Soviet empire until it gained official independence in the early 1990s. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it had been under continuous Russian jurisdiction and influence. This was because of Russian annexation, which had been issued in order to gain protection from Persia.

Prior to that time, some combination of the territories that comprise modern Georgia had been ruled by the Bagratid Dynasty for about 1,000 years, including periods of foreign domination and fragmentation

Cultural Context

Georgia's location at a major commercial crossroads and among several powerful neighbors has provided both advantages and disadvantages through some twenty-five centuries of history. Georgia is comprised of regions having distinctive traits.

The ethnic, religious, and linguistic characteristics of the country as a unit coalesced to a greater degree than before under Russian rule in the nineteenth century. Then, beneath a veneer of

centralized economic and political control imposed during seventy years of Soviet rule, Georgian cultural and social institutions survived, thanks in part to Georgia's relative distance from Moscow.

As the republic entered the post-Soviet period in the 1990s, however, the prospects of establishing true national autonomy based on a common heritage remained unclear.

Cultural Demography

Today, ethnic Georgians comprise approximately 70 percent of a total population of around five million. An estimated eight percent of the population is Armenian; Russians, Azeris, Ossetians and Abkhazi make up the remainder.

While Georgian is the official language, Russian, Armenian, Azeri and Abkhaz are also spoken. Abkhaz is the official language of the Abkhazia region.

In terms of religious affiliation, 75 percent of Georgians are Christian Orthodox (65 percent are Georgian Orthodox; 10 percent are Russian Orthodox); 11 percent are Muslim and eight percent are Armenian Apostolic.

Human Development

The average life expectancy of Georgians at birth, according to recent estimates, is 65 years (61 years for males, 68 years for females). The infant mortality rate is rated as low as 19 deaths per 1,000 live births and as high as 51 deaths per 1,000 live births, depending on the source. An estimated 99 percent of the total population, age 15 and older, can read and write.

About 3.2 percent of GDP is spent in the country on educational expenditures. About 11.3 percent of GDP is spent on health expenditures. Access to sanitation, water, and health care is considered to be good.

One notable measure used to determine a country's quality of life is the Human Development Index (HDI), which has been compiled annually since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a recent ranking of 169 countries, the HDI placed Georgia in the high human development category, at 74th place.

Editor's Note: Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-

ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com; see Bibliography for research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana

4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Suriname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti

21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia

36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's [Human Development Index](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) available at URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33

9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33

27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33

45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220

63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33

81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67

99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67

117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33

135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67

153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33

171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), [Austria](#) resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Ukraine](#) ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Burundi](#) found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. [Japan](#) was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as [Brunei](#) and [Malaysia](#) were in the top tier, while [Pakistan](#) was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bag with Saudi Arabians reporting healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? *Psychtalk* 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the [United States](#) will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1

2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3

20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9

38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8

56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5

74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5

92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3

110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2

128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: *The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>*

Status of Women

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

Not Ranked

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

67th out of 80

Female Population:

2.6 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

68 years

Total Fertility Rate:

1.4

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):

32

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

410-3,200

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

16%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

24

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

41%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

Almost universal

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

71%

Female-Headed Households (%):

N/A

Economically Active Females (%):

55.7%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

57%

Female Estimated Earned Income:

\$1,566

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):

Lower or Single House: 9.4%

Upper House or Senate: N/A

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:

1918 (partial recognition)

1921 (full recognition)

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

1918 (partial recognition)

1921 (full recognition)

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9

Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17

Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32

Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72

Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84

Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93

Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106

Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122

Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as [Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, [France](#) has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the [United States](#) has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. [Canada](#) has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. [Lesotho](#) and South African ranked highly in the

index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite [Lesotho](#) still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The [Philippines](#) has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the [United Arab Emirates](#) held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

<http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende>

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Culture and Arts of Georgia

Music

Music is the living testament to the Georgian people of its rich cultural and intellectual past. Georgian folk music has managed to preserve throughout the ages, withstanding outside influence by invading foreign cultures (Greeks, Romans, Persians, Turks, Russians), and up until recently, was only orally passed down from generation to generation.

Folk music from antiquity lives on in polyphonic singing and over the centuries it has become a

rhythmically sophisticated and highly stylized art form. Typically the music is composed of a three-part polyphony. Georgian polyphony can be heard in all aspects of social life; from the ceremonies of the Orthodox Church (where this style was especially fine tuned in the 11th and 12th centuries) to the celebrations of family and friends centered at the dinner table.

There are several Georgian polyphonic ensembles throughout the country that have continued to preserve and record Georgia's musical heritage. Some of the finest include the Rustavi Choir (formed in 1968), Ensemble Georgika, Mtiebi, and Tbilis.

Among symphonic composers Alexander Porfir'yevich Borodin (1833-1887), Zakhari Paliashvili (1871-1933) and Giva Kancheli (b. 1935) have received international acclaim.

Troubadour

<http://www.northernharmony.pair.com/Georgianmusic.htm>

About Georgia: Georgian Songs and Music:

<http://members.tripod.com/ggdavid/georgia/music/index.htm>

<http://music.gateway.ge/index.php3?sc=22>

Deep Down Productions: Georgia:

<http://www.deepdownproductions.com/world/georgia.htm>

Georgia-Gateway: Georgia and its Music:

<http://www.georgia-gateway.org/music/index.php3?sc=3>

Giya Kancheli: The Music of a Georgian Dualist:

<http://www.siue.edu/~aho/musov/kancheli/kancheli1.html>

Mtiebi:

<http://www.crosswinds.net/georgia/~mtiebi/>

Welcome To Sakartvelo: Georgian Music

<http://www.angelfire.com/ga/Georgian/music.html>

Dance

The spectacular Georgian folk dances reflect the social customs found in the different regions of the country. Military dances, courtship dances, and competitive dances between men that feature the performers dancing on their toes. Folk dances are accompanied by such instruments as the pandur (a three stringed lute), salamuri (a recorder), chewneri (a bowed, three stringed instrument), chonguri (a four stringed lute), and diduki (a double reed).

Georgian dance "Samaia"

<http://music.gateway.ge/index.php3?&sc=1>

Georgian National Ballet

The Georgian National Ballet company was founded in 1945. The founders were Iliko Sukhishvili and Nino Ramishvili. A talented ballet master and dancer Iliko Sukhishvili (1907-1985) received his training at Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre. Full of ideas, the most important of which was the desire to set up the Georgian state dance company. He wanted to show the rest of the world his different view of the fantastic ballet created on the border of the Georgian traditional art and modernism. Nino Ramishvili (1910) trained as a classical dancer at Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theatre. She became chief choreographer and matriarch of the Georgian National Ballet.

Art

Some of the most original examples of ancient architecture are found in the cave cities, such as Uplistsetke.

Georgian architecture is unique and is famous for its innovation of the cupola.

During the Georgian “Golden Age” (11th and 12th centuries), mural painting, metal –working, stone carvings, and architecture flourished. The remnants of that time period are found in several Orthodox churches throughout the country.

Key Georgian artists include --

Niko Pirosmani (1862-?) primitivism

Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980)

Korneli Sanadze – (1907-1975)

Sergio Kobuladze (1909-) painter and illustrator of “The Knight in Panther Skin”

Ekaterine Baghdavadze (1916-1975)

Karlo Kacharava (1964)

Archil Vepkhvadez (b. 1967)

Otar Imerlishvili (b. 1970)

Elguja Amasukheli (b. 1928) Sculptor

Film

In film, writer/director, Tengiz Abuladze won Special Jury Prize at Cannes Film Festival 1987 for

his groundbreaking film, *Repentance* (1984). *Repentance* was one of the first Soviet films directly influenced by glasnost, a change in Soviet ideology in which the past could be dealt with and criticized openly. Other notable film directors include Merab Kokochashvili, Nodar Managadze, Giorgi Shengelaia, and Nana Djordjadze.

Literature

Georgian literary tradition dates back to 5th ad with the work *The Martyrdom of the Saint Shushanik*. Shota Rustaveli (1172-1216) wrote the national epic poem, “*The Knight in the Panther Skin*”. Meanwhile, scholars have compared the 12th century Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli to Dante and Shakespeare. Other notable writers include: Sulkhan-Saba Orbelian (1658-1725) author of *the Book of Wisdom and Lies*, poet David Guramishvili (1705-1792)

Note on Russian Occupation: As a reaction, one group of Georgians including the poets Alexander Chavchavadze (1786-1846) and Grigol Orbeliani (1800-1883), plotted to break free. The conspiracy of 1832 ended in their arrest. They led a romantic school of literature concerning itself largely with the loss of Georgians former glory.

Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) and Akaki Tsereteli (1840-1915), known as the "Men of the 60s," came back from Russian universities with a new spirit of social activism and democratic idealism reflected in their writings. Ilia Chavchavadze became the recognized leader and spiritual father of the nation. One can hardly recall any project or event in the social and cultural life of Georgia of this period, that was not either initiated and led by him or in which he did not participate.

In the 1890s a group of Georgian intellectuals returned to their homeland, having imbibed the new doctrine of Marxism while studying abroad. Georgians actively participated in the revolutionary events of 1905-1907.

Alexander Chavchavadze (1786-1846), Nikoloz Barashvili (1818-1845) supported the nationalist movement with his poetry. The poem “*Merani*” in particular captures the spirit of Georgia’s nationalist ideas.

Other notable writers --

Grigol Orbeliani (1804-1883) – Romantic poet

Llia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) – poet/writer/publicist.

In 1987, the Georgian Orthodox church canonized Chavchavadze. Alaki Tseretli (1840-1915) – poet/writer and representative of the nationalist movement

Vaja-Pshavela (1861-1915) - poet

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia (1891-1975) - novelist

<http://www.opentext.org.ge/art/liter.htm>
<http://www.opentext.org.ge/art/RUSTAVEL.HTM>
<http://sangha.net/countries/Georgia/shota.htm>
<http://www.stalker.iberiapac.ge/knight/2.html>

Cuisine

Vegetarian's beware: Meat is the backbone of Georgian gastronomy and the good Georgian chef utilizes every edible animal part. Georgian cuisine is not the best known in the world, yet there is a consensus among those who have had the privilege to taste Georgian cuisine that it is outstandingly good. Georgians themselves consider their cuisine to be one of their national treasures. The flavorful and aromatic dishes have been among the best loved of all the former Soviet states. Walnuts accent most dishes. Cilantro, parsley, dill, marigold and garlic are favorite herbs. Eggplants, beans, beets, tomatoes, cabbage, mushrooms and potatoes are common ingredients for side dishes and soups. Pickled fruits and vegetables and fresh breads such as khachapuri (a type of cheese bread) are present at every dinner. Some specialties include khinkali (a boiled meat filled pastry), khashi (a tripe soup), satsivi (poultry in a flavorful walnut sauce), basturma (grilled skewered meat), tevzi brotseulis tsvenshi (cold fish with a walnut and pomegranate sauce) and lobio (a salad with kidney beans and walnuts).

Georgia has an ideal climate for wine production. Archeologists have discovered that wine grapes have been domesticated vineyards have been cultivated in Georgia since 7000 B. C. Furthermore, the grapevine is a symbol of national pride. Today 500 varieties of wine grow in Georgia. Tsinandali and Rkatsiteli are a favorite vintage whites, while Kvareli and Teliani outstanding reds. Rkatsiteli and Saperavi are the important grape varieties of Georgia

About Georgia: Georgian Cuisine:

<http://members.tripod.com/ggdavid/georgia/cuisine/>

Little Russia in US: Georgian Cuisine:

<http://russia-in-us.com/Cuisine/Dadiani/georindex.html>

Welcome To Sakartvelo: The Georgian Cuisine

<http://www.angelfire.com/ga/Georgian/cousine.html>

For more information about the culture and arts of Georgia:

Parliament of Georgia: Monuments of Ancient Georgia:
<http://www.parliament.ge/CULTURE/ANCIENT/mon2.htm>

The British Council: Pirosmeni and Beyond:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org.uk/visitingarts/v11g7.htm>

Parliament of Georgia: Sergio Kobuladze:
<http://www.parliament.ge/CULTURE/ART/MURAL/GEORGHY/shota.html>

Niko Pirosmeni:
<http://www.steele.com/pirosmani/>

Parliament of Georgia: Monuments of Ancient Georgia:
<http://www.parliament.ge/CULTURE/ANCIENT/mon.html>
<http://www.opentext.org.ge/art/treasure/archit~1.htm>

Temple of Georgia: Georgian Culture:
<http://sangha.net/countries/Georgia/CULTURE/CULTURE.HTM>
<http://geoart.iatp.org.ge/>
<http://www.opentext.org.ge/art/treasure/archit~1.htm>
<http://www.pbs.org/weta/faceofrussia/timeline/1900/1984.html>

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. Handshakes are the customary forms of greeting.
2. Always address people by their title and last name until invited to do otherwise.
3. Visitors should always be punctual for both business meetings and social events.
4. Toast making is part and parcel of social life. Georgian toasts are elaborate and have a specific order in which they are to be said. A toastmaster or "tamada" initiates and directs the toasts throughout the course of the dinner or social gathering.

5. Wine is never drunk without first some form of a toast being said. One should never drink while a toast is being made (unless you are drinking beer).
6. It is better not to toast when drinking beer.
7. It may be best for the visitor to avoid initiating conversations dealing with domestic politics. This is especially true if he or she does not know the person that they are speaking with very well. Family, sports, food, and culture make fine topics of conversation.
8. Yawning in public is considered rude.
9. Do not point your fingers at anyone.
10. When invited to a home for dinner, it is fine to bring a gift for the host or hostess. Souvenirs from your country, chocolates, and flowers (ask the florist about the appropriate type and number) are welcome gifts.

Travel Information

Please Note: This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea,

Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.
7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.
8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.
9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these

complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male or female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

- Check with your embassy, consulate, or appropriate government institution related to travel before traveling.
- Most citizens require entry visas, which are available on arrival at Tbilisi Airport at a cost of \$80. However we advise getting them before traveling.
- Leave details of your plans, your passport and your credit cards with friends or relatives at home. Remember to carry emergency telephone numbers for credit cards and insurance.
- Keep your belongings in a safe place.

- Carry a copy of the data page of your passport with you, separate from your actual passport, in case it becomes necessary to replace a stolen/lost passport.
- Enter your next of kin details in the back of your passport.
- Insurance. Make sure you are adequately covered by both medical and travel insurance. Check that your medical insurance covers medical evacuation. Insure against unexpected loss (e.g. missed flight, lost passport, stolen or lost credit cards and cash). Robberies and pick pocketing do occur in Georgia and violent crime is increasing.
- Funds. Ensure that you have enough funds for the duration of your stay and return flight. Carry small denominations of US Dollars. Exchange foreign currency at Government licensed booths. These can be found in or near major stores or supermarkets and shopping centers, hotels and banks. Secure most of your money in a money belt, and carry the rest in small notes in a dummy wallet. Consider putting an old, expired, unusable credit card in the wallet.
- Overstaying. Do not overstay beyond the limit of your visa. The Georgian authorities consider overstaying a serious matter and you may be held in detention, fined and deported, or removed at your own expense. If staying in Georgia for more than three days, register with the British Embassy and OVIR, the Registration Office at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.
- Do not carry drugs - penalties can be severe.
- The squash ball. It is not uncommon, especially in Eastern European hotels or guesthouses not to be provided with plugs bathrooms. Consider taking a squash ball. It will fit many sizes of sink or bath and is easily squashed into place.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

For general information on etiquette in Georgia see our Cultural Etiquette page.

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Visa Information from the Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html>

Passport Information from the Government of Australia

<https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx>

Passport Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro

<http://www.visapro.com>

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General>

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/>

Travel Tips from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html>

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist>

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc>

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm>

World Weather Forecasts

<http://www.intellicast.com/>

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock

<http://www.timeanddate.com/>

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

International Airport Codes

<http://www.world-airport-codes.com/>

International Dialing Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm>

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

International Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm>

International Mobile Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm>

International Internet Café Search Engine

<http://cybercaptive.com/>

Global Internet Roaming

<http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm>

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

World Television Standards and Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm>

International Currency Exchange Rates

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World

<http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html>

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator

<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>

International Chambers of Commerce

<http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html>

World Tourism Websites

<http://123world.com/tourism/>

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.usembassy.gov/>

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/>

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html>

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions

<http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx>

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World

<http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm>

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/>

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll>

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?>

[pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926](http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926)

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide

<http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng>

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html>

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety

<http://www.faasafety.gov/>

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)

<http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html>

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information

<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

Information on Human Rights

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/>

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola

Liberia - Ebola

Nepal - Earthquake zone

Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio

Somalia - Polio

Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone

Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever
Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles
Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Health Information for Travelers to Georgia

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout Eastern Europe and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Risk for malaria exists only in small southern border areas of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Travelers to these areas should take chloroquine to prevent malaria. For more detailed information about malaria in this region, see Malaria Risk and Prevention in Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/easteurp.htm>).

A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries if you are coming from a tropical South American or sub-Saharan African country. (There is no risk for yellow fever in Eastern European and NIS countries.) For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm>).

An outbreak of diphtheria is occurring in all the states of the former Soviet Union. Travelers to these areas should be sure that their diphtheria immunization is up to date.

Tickborne encephalitis, a viral infection of the central nervous system occurs chiefly in Central and Western Europe. Travelers are at risk who visit or work in forested areas during the summer months and who consume unpasteurized dairy products. Vaccine for this disease is not available in the United States at this time. To prevent tickborne encephalitis, as well as Lyme disease, travelers should take precautions to prevent tick bites (see below).

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for 11- to 12-year-olds who did not receive the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap

water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.

- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- If you are going to visit risk areas for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals), and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into boots or socks as a deterrent to ticks.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague).

What You Need To Bring with You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects.
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. The insecticide permethrin applied to clothing is an effective deterrent to ticks.
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See above for more information about water filters.
- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after your trip—even as long as a year after you return—tell your doctor where you

have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (NIS).

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects

Lyme disease, Malaria

Carried in Food or Water

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease"), Cholera, *Escherichia coli*, diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact

Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, also check the Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>) section and the Health Topics A-Z (<http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm>).

Note:

Georgia is located in the Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States (NIS) health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm>

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

Georgia 's environmental challenges are predominantly the result of Soviet-era industrialization.

Current Issues:

- air pollution, particularly in Rust'avi
- heavy pollution of the Mtkvari River and the Black Sea
- inadequate supplies of potable water
- soil pollution from toxic chemicals

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

3.2

Country Rank (GHG output):

123rd

Natural Hazards:

- earthquakes

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Georgia is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife (GCCW)
- Noah's Ark Center for the Recovery of Endangered Species (NACRES)

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Air Pollution
- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Ship Pollution
- Wetlands

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

1999

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy

12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt

30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel

48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh

66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia

84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova

102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay

120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas

138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda

156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands

174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia

Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd
 Cook Islands are ranked 184th
 Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike,

are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region

includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and

landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies—a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of

the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation,

nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the [United States](#), the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading

cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change

emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the [United States](#). It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chloroflorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of

solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and

demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This

phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical

rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western [United States](#), current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots.

Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.
- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.
- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionuclides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionuclides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remedial approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be

dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the [United States](#), how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in [China](#), elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously

generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "[Biodiversity Assessment](#)"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The [United Kingdom](#) identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the

interrelationship between agrodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

Specific sources used for this section:

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USFWS. 1994. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report to Congress, cited in news release 21 July 1994.

Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

U n i t e d N a t i o n s E n v i r o n m e n t a l P r o g r a m . U R L : http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

[<http://www.unep.net/>](http://www.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

[<http://climatechange.unep.net/>](http://climatechange.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

[<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>](http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

[<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm)

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

[<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>](http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm)

World Resources Institute.

[<http://www.wri.org/>](http://www.wri.org/)

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

[<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>](http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html)

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

<http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/>

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and

global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discussions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, [Japan](#) in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the [United States](#) (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and [Japan](#), are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries - - with the obvious exceptions of [India](#) and [China](#) -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases

as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and [Japan](#), are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to

reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, [Germany](#), in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, [Morocco](#), to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as [Russia](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto, Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of

Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and [United States](#) President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in [Mexico](#) City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as [South Africa](#), had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. [Bangladesh](#) identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But [Australia](#) went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as [China](#) and [India](#). Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like [China](#) and [India](#), with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, [China](#) -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, [China](#) had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, [China](#) was now accusing the [United States](#) and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas

emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the [United States](#) -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with [Japan](#) for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, [China](#) demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on [India](#) -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in [India](#), who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in [India](#) was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and [India](#) were joined by [Brazil](#) and [South Africa](#) in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in [Denmark](#) would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts

everyone on the planet."

Likewise, [Tuvalu](#) demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. [Tuvalu](#) also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from [Kiribati](#) joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of [Kiribati](#) could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as [Tuvalu](#) and [Kiribati](#) in the Pacific, and the [Maldives](#) in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant [Saudi Arabia](#) was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the [United States](#) demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. [United States](#) President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the [United States](#) Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the [United States](#) Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, [United States](#) Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major

reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the [United States](#) was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US\$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of [Sweden](#) -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by [China](#) and [India](#), appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, [United States](#) President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the [United States](#) and [China](#). At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The [United States](#) argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being

cultivated. A draft text called for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in [Qatar](#) extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of [Nauru](#), a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: "We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us."

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with [United States](#) President Barack Obama's request for \$60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on

the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the [United States](#) and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around \$10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as [Kiribati](#) and [Tuvalu](#), are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities

were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including [Fiji](#), [Kiribati](#), [Samoa](#) and [Tonga](#), and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in [Qatar](#) (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: <http://aosis.org/>

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, [France](#), ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement

was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The [United States](#) leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former [United States](#) Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accomplishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new

greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years

- \$100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, [Denmark](#), in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as [China](#) and [India](#), objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the \$100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around \$44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the \$100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the [United States](#), which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, [China](#) and [India](#) were not held to the same standards as the [United States](#) and European

countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in sea level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of [Tuvalu](#) issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future ... is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of [Tuvalu](#). No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find consensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the [United States](#) and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Fiji](#), and the [Marshall Islands](#), called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time

of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of [Kiribati](#), “Imagine living in a place where you know it’s going to go away someday, but you don’t know what day that wave’s going to come over and wash your home away.” He added, “It’s a disaster we know is going to happen.” Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as [Kiribati](#). Stone explained, “For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion,” Stone explained. “So it’s not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it’s also about the day that there’s just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island.” Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, “If you look ahead 50 years, a country like [Kiribati](#) could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere.”

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the [United States](#). He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: “We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival.” Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, “Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era.”

Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, “Climate change won’t stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on [Environmental Policy](#):

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), the [Marshall Islands](#), [Fiji](#), among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and climate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the

Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being uninhabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in [France](#), with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1992

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1971 (1971 Fund Convention), Brussels, 1971

Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

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United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Montego Bay, 1982

Regional Conventions

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention), Oslo, 1972

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1974 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1992 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1992

Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, [Kuwait](#), 1978

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Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), Paris, 1972

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Nairobi, 1992

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Washington, D.C., 1973

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Ramsar, 1971

Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Paris 1994

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994), Geneva, 1994

Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANE)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

Appendices

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

derived from a mix of sources including the Altapedia, Central Intelligence Agency Factbook, Infoplease, and State Department Background Notes.

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-- See also list of News Wires services below, which are also used for research purposes. --

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original Country Reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

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United States Geological Service, Mineral Information

United States Department of State, Country Commercial Guides. Washington, D.C. [United States](#) of America. URL:http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/com_guides/index.html

The World Bank, Global Development Finance, Country Tables. 1999 to present. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

The World Bank Group, World Development Indicators. 1999 to present. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, World Tourism Organization. 1998 to present. Madrid: The World Tourism Organization.

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- [Serbia](#) & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

In these cases, other data and/or estimates by CountryWatch.com were utilized.

Investment Overview

C o r r u p t i o n a n d T r a n s p a r e n c y I n d e x . U R L :
<http://www.transparency.org/documents/cpi/2001/cpi2001.html#cpi>
<<http://www.transparency.org/documents/>

Deloitte Tax Guides. URL: <http://www.deloittetaxguides.com>

Trade Policy Reviews by the World Trade Organization . URL: http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp_rep_e.htm#bycountry

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

United States Department of State, Background Notes. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

United States Department of State, Country Commercial Guides. 1996-2006. Washington, D.C. U n i t e d S t a t e s o f A m e r i c a . U R L : http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/com_guides/index.html

World Bank: Doing Business. URL: <http://www.doingbusiness.org>

World Bank: Governance Indicators. URL: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance>

Social Overview

Borden, G.A., Conaway, W.A., Morrison, T. 1994. *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to do Business in Sixty Countries*. Holbrook, Massachusetts, 1994.

Center for Disease Control. URL: <http://www.cdc.gov>

Eldis Country Profiles. URL: <http://www.eldis.org/country/index.htm>

Ethnologue. URL: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Government of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. URL: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo>

Government of Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade. URL: http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular_home-e.htm

Library of Congress Country Studies. URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

Lonely Planet. URL: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/>

Steve Kropla's Online Help For World Travelers. URL: <http://www.kropla.com/>

[United Kingdom](http://www.fco.gov.uk/) Ministry of Foreign and Commonwealth Office. URL: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

United Nations Human Development Report. URL: <http://www.undp.org/hdro>

UNICEF Statistical Database Online. URL: <http://www.unicef.org/statis/atoz.html>

[United States](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html) Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook. 2001. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group. URL: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

United States Department of State, Background Notes. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

United States Department of State, Commercial and Business Affairs: Travel Tips. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/cba_travel.html

United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. URL: <http://travel.state.gov/>

World Health Organization. URL: <http://www.who.int/home-page/>

World News Connection, National Technical Information Service. Springfield, Virginia, USA.

Internet News Service, Xinhua News Agency (U.S.) Inc. Woodside, New York. URL: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the [Human Development Index](#) (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US\$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: <http://www.undp.org>

Note on [History](#) sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

Environmental Overview

Environmental Profiles: A Global Guide to Projects and People. 1993. Linda Sobel Katz, Sarah Orrick, and Robert Honig. New York: Garland Publishing.

The Environment Encyclopedia and Directory, 2nd Edition. 1998. London: Europa.

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

Introduction to Global [Environmental Issues](#), 2nd Edition. 1997. Kevin Pickering and Lewis Owen.

London: Routledge.

Trends: Compendium of Data on Global Change. URL: http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/emis/em_cont.htm

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

World Climate Data Online. URL: <http://www.worldclimate.com>

World Directory of Country Environmental Studies. 1996. The World Resource Institute.

World Factbook. US Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group.

1998-1999 World Resources Guide to the Global Environment by the World Resources Institute. May, 1998.

1998/1999 Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development. 1998. London: Earthscan Publications.

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Other Sources:

General information has also been used in the compilation of this review, with the courtesy of governmental agencies from this country.

News Services:

CANA Daily Bulletin. Caribbean Media Agency Ltd., St. Michael, [Barbados](#).

Central and Eastern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa.

Daily News, Panafrican News Agency. Dakar, [Senegal](#).

PACNEWS, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association. Suva, [Fiji](#).

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Washington D.C. USA.

Reuters News. Thomson Reuters. New York, New York. USA.

Southern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Southern Africa.

Voice of America, English Service. Washington D.C.

West Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa. 1998-1999

Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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MLA STYLE OF CITATION

Commentary

For items in a "Works Cited" list, CountryWatch.com suggests that users follow recommended patterns for indentation given in the *MLA Handbook*, 4th edition.

Individual Works

Basic form, using an Internet protocol:

Author/editor. *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. Available Protocol (if applicable):Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.

Note:

This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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Author/editor. "Part title." *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. AvailableProtocol (if applicable): Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

Note:

This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

For further source citation information, please email: editor@countrywatch.com or education@countrywatch.com.

CountryWatch

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