



# Georgia [Republic]: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests

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September 23, 2010

**Congressional Research Service**

7-5700

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

97-727

**CRS Report for Congress**

*Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress*

## Summary

The small Black Sea-bordering country of Georgia gained its independence at the end of 1991 with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. The United States had an early interest in its fate, since the well-known former Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, soon became its leader. Democratic and economic reforms faltered during his rule, however. New prospects for the country emerged after Shevardnadze was ousted in 2003 and the U.S.-educated Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president. Then-U.S. President George W. Bush visited Georgia in 2005, and praised the democratic and economic aims of the Saakashvili government while calling on it to deepen reforms. The August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict caused much damage to Georgia's economy and military, as well as contributing to hundreds of casualties and tens of thousands of displaced persons in Georgia. The United States quickly pledged \$1 billion in humanitarian and recovery assistance for Georgia. In early 2009, the United States and Georgia signed a Strategic Partnership Charter, which pledged U.S. support for democratization, economic development, and security reforms in Georgia.

The United States has been Georgia's largest bilateral aid donor, budgeting cumulative aid of \$2.1 billion in FY1992-FY2008 (FREEDOM Support Act and agency funds). Georgia has regularly ranked among the top world states in terms of per capita U.S. aid. U.S.-budgeted foreign assistance for Georgia was \$312 million in FY2009, and an estimated \$321 million in FY2010, and the Administration request for foreign operations for FY2011 is \$90 million, with the aid fairly equally distributed among security, economic, and democratization programs (FY2009, FY2010, and FY2011 figures exclude Defense Department and other agency funding, and FY2009-FY2010 figures include parts of the \$1 billion in recovery aid). Georgia also has an agreement (termed a "compact") with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for \$395 million for road-building, rehabilitating infrastructure, and energy development.

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## Political Background

Georgia gained its independence at the end of 1991 with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. Its elected president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, faced insurrection and fled the country in January 1992. Coup leaders invited former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to head a ruling State Council, and he was elected the speaker of the legislature in late 1992 and president under a new constitution in 1995. The country was roiled by secessionist conflict by South Ossetia and Abkhazia that resulted in cease-fires in 1992 and 1994, respectively. Shevardnadze was ousted in the wake of a suspect legislative election in late 2003, and coup co-leader Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president in January 2004. A November 2007 government crackdown on political oppositionists led Saakashvili to step down as president in the face of domestic and international criticism to seek a mandate on his continued rule. He was reelected president in January 2008 with 53% of the vote. Electoral observers hosted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) stated that the election broadly met its standards, but that irregularities needed to be addressed.

In an address at the U.N. General Assembly on September 23, 2008, President Saakashvili announced new democratization initiatives as a means to strengthen Georgia's sovereignty and independence and thereby prevent Russia from subverting Georgia's statehood. After lengthy attempts, President Saakashvili met with a few opposition leaders in April-May 2009 to discuss setting up a constitutional commission to work out changes to the political system. In June 2009, President Saakashvili formed the constitutional commission, and the former president of the Constitutional Court, Avtandil Demetrashvili, was appointed chairman.<sup>1</sup> In his March 2010 state of the nation address, Saakashvili called for a new wave of democratic reforms.

Local elections to 64 city councils, as well as the first popular election of Tbilisi's mayor, were held at the end of May 2010. The ruling NM won over 65% of the vote in the city council races, followed by the moderate opposition Christian Democratic Alliance party bloc with about 12% of the vote. In the Tbilisi mayoral race, the NM incumbent was reelected with about 55% of the vote, followed by the moderate opposition Alliance for Georgia leader Irakli Alasania with about 19%. In the Tbilisi city council race, 39 of 50 seats were won by NM candidates, the Alliance for Georgia (a bloc consisting of Our Georgia-Free Democrats, the Republican Party, the New Rights Party, and Georgia's Way) won 5 seats, the Christian Democratic Alliance won 3 seats, the radical

### Georgia: Basic Facts

**Area and Population:** 26,872 sq. mi., slightly larger than West Virginia. The population is 4.62 million (*The World Factbook*, mid-2010 est.). Administrative subdivisions include the Abkhazian and Ajarian Autonomous Republics.

**GDP:** \$20.23 billion in 2009; per capita income is about \$4,400 (*World Factbook* est., purchasing power parity).

**Political Leaders:** President: Mikheil Saakashvili; Prime Minister: Nika Gilauri; Speaker of the Parliament: Davit Bakradze; Defense Minister: Bacho Akhalaia; Foreign Minister: Grigol Vashadze.

**Biography:** Saakashvili, born in 1967, received his Master's at Columbia Univ. and his Ph.D. at George Washington Univ. He was elected to the legislature in 1995 and 1999, where he chaired the Constitutional Committee and headed the ruling party's faction. In 2000, he became minister of justice, but resigned in late 2001, accusing the government of corruption and forming the National Movement party bloc. In 2002-2003, he chaired the Tbilisi city council. He was elected president in 2004 and reelected in 2008.

<sup>1</sup> EIU, Georgia Country Report, June 4, 2009. Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report*, May 11, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950119; May 18, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950073; June 4, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950186; June 8, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950139.

opposition National Council (a bloc consisting of the Conservative Party, the Party of People, and the Movement for Fair Georgia) won 2 seats, and the moderate opposition Industry Will Save Georgia Party won 1 seat.

The election was widely viewed as a rehearsal for the planned 2012 legislative election and 2013 presidential election, and as such appeared to be a mandate for the NM and a legitimization of the moderate opposition, according to some observers. The boycott of the election by much of the radical opposition—including Nino Burjanadze’s party Democratic Movement-United Georgia, Levan Gachechiladze’s Defend Georgia, and Irakli Okruashvili’s For a United Georgia—appeared to marginalize them in the public’s eyes, according to some observers. The inability of the opposition to unite harmed their electoral chances, these observers argued. Perhaps illustrative of this problem, the Alliance for Georgia party bloc disbanded in June 2010.<sup>2</sup>

Monitors from the OSCE reported that the local elections “marked evident progress towards meeting OSCE and Council of Europe [democratization] commitments,” but that “significant remaining shortcomings include[d] deficiencies in the legal framework, its implementation, an uneven playing field, and isolated cases of election-day fraud.” Assistant Secretary of State Philip Crowley repeated the findings of the OSCE that the local elections showed progress in democratization, but that “significant shortcomings need to be addressed.”<sup>3</sup>

In May 2010, the constitutional commission agreed on amendments to slightly reduce the power of the president and increase the powers of the legislature and prime minister. Most of these changes will not come into effect until after the next presidential election, scheduled for early 2013. Under the draft amendments, the party that has the largest number of seats in the legislature will nominate the candidate for prime minister. This nominee will select ministers and draft a program, and upon approval by the legislature, the president will appoint the prime minister. The draft also proposes that regional governors be appointed by the prime minister rather than the president, as is currently the case. Public discussion of the draft amendments began in July 2010 prior to legislative debate and voting later in the year. The Venice Commission, an advisory body of the Council of Europe, has raised concerns that the proposed presidential powers are still substantial relative to those of the prime minister and legislature, and that clashes between the president and prime minister could emerge on foreign policy and other matters. The Venice Commission suggests that a more powerful legislature might appoint the prime minister, be able to remove the prime minister with a simple majority vote (rather than 60% of the vote), and approve changes to the cabinet. A citizen’s group likewise has complained that the legislature’s powers remain weak and has criticized the retention of gubernatorial appointments.<sup>4</sup>

The legislature began hearings on the constitutional changes in late September 2010. Some opposition parties have alleged that the constitutional changes are designed to permit Saakashvili to serve as prime minister after his term as president ends, and have called for the constitutional amendments to include one banning a former president from subsequently serving as prime minister.

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<sup>2</sup> Christofer Berglund, “Georgia’s Local Elections: Revitalizing the Rose Revolution?” *CACI Analyst*, June 9, 2010; *CEDR*, May 31, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-46023; *Open Source Feature*, May 19, 2010, Doc. No. FEA-5119; May 31, 2010, Doc. No. FEA-5598.

<sup>3</sup> OSCE. ODIHR. *International Election Observation Mission Georgia — Municipal Elections, 30 May 2010: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*, May 31, 2010. U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, June 2, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> *CEDR*, September 6, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-964002; September 14, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-964028.

## Human Rights

According to the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009*, the Georgian government made significant progress in human rights by amending the election code to permit the first direct election of the Tbilisi mayor (see above), giving the Public Defender's Office authority to monitor prisons to prevent torture and other abuse, and amending the criminal procedure code to enhance the right to a free trial and to start jury trials for aggravated murder cases in Tbilisi. The new criminal procedure code, many parts of which go into force on October 1, 2010, bars the use of illegally seized evidence and directs that defendants are to be advised of their legal rights when they are arrested.

Despite these reforms, human rights problems continued. NGOs claimed that police could still resort to torture or other abuse with limited risk of exposure or punishment. The number of alleged cases of arbitrary arrest and detention increased, with police reportedly in many cases planting drugs or weapons on political oppositionists. The police on occasion reportedly used excessive force to disperse protests. Many NGOs complained that government prosecutors and officials continued to have overweening control over the judicial process. Respect for media freedom declined and the media environment was highly polarized between the government and opposition. NGOs and journalists accused government officials and opposition politicians of exercising influence over editorial and programming decisions. There were also reports that local officials and opposition politicians carried out or incited physical abuse against journalists. One positive sign was legislation passed providing the station with guaranteed government funding. There was a low incidence of corruption among low-level government employees such as police, but some NGOs alleged that high-level officials engaged in corruption with impunity. Instances of trafficking in persons during the year declined.<sup>5</sup>

## Economic Conditions

Georgia's economy suffered in 2008-2009 from the after-effects of the world economic downturn and the Russia-Georgia conflict, but began to recover in 2010. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) estimates that Georgia's GDP will expand by 4.6% in 2010, after declining by 3.9% the previous year. The EIU also estimates that inflation will increase slightly from 1.7% in 2009 to 5.7% in 2010.<sup>6</sup> Economic activities include agriculture, mining, and a small industrial sector. Civil conflict and poverty have spurred the emigration of about one-fifth (1 million) of the population since 1991. After being reduced as a result of the world economic downturn, the contribution of remittances abroad to GDP increased in 2010, as economic growth returned to Russia, the United States, and other host countries. Georgia is a member of the World Trade Organization. In 2009, Georgia exported \$513.4 million in goods and imported \$1.98 billion. Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine were Georgia's main trade partners. Georgia's main exports during the first half of 2010 were ferrous metals, automobiles, and ferrous scrap. U.S. exports to Georgia were \$172 million during the first half of 2010 (less than one-half those of the previous year) and U.S. imports from Georgia were \$85.1 million.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009*, March 11, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Georgia: Country Report*, Economist Intelligence Unit, September 2010.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Foreign Trade Statistics. *Trade in Goods (Imports, Exports and Trade Balance) with Georgia*, at <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c4633.html#2010>.

Georgia is a transit state for a pipeline completed in mid-2006 carrying 1 million barrels per day of Azerbaijani oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan or BTC pipeline). Another pipeline completed in early 2007 initially carries 2.2 billion cubic meters of Azerbaijani natural gas to Georgia and Turkey, lessening their dependence on Russia as a supplier. Every year since 2005, Russia's state-owned Gazprom gas firm announced increases in the price of gas shipped to Georgia. Azerbaijan has provided some gas supplies to Georgia, easing dependence on Gazprom. In the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict, Gazprom continued to provide gas to Georgia (Armenia likewise receives gas transited from Russia through Georgia.)

## Foreign Policy and Defense

Among its neighbors, Georgia has developed close ties with Azerbaijan and maintains good relations with Armenia. Georgia has an ongoing interest in ties with about 1 million Georgians residing in Turkey and about 50,000 Georgians in Iran. Ties with Russia have sharply deteriorated during Saakashvili's presidency. After the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, Georgia broke off diplomatic relations with Russia and withdrew as a member of the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Georgia's ground forces, air force, and coast guard numbered 21,150 at the beginning of 2010. There were also 5,400 border guards, 1,578 national guard troops, and 6,300 Interior (police) Ministry troops.<sup>8</sup> According to the Georgian defense ministry, 160 military personnel were killed during the Russia-Georgia conflict.<sup>9</sup> In March 2010, Defense Minister Akhalaia released a *Minister's Vision 2010*—a document providing guidance until a new national security concept, threat assessment, and strategic defense review are drawn up reflecting the lessons of the August 2008 conflict—that calls for enhancing defense capabilities for territorial defense, ensuring NATO interoperability of the armed forces, and increasing military management and military training. In a speech to Defense Ministry staff in July 2010, Saakashvili stated that “the year 2008 clearly showed the whole world that there is no 100-per cent effective political deterrent. This is why we need total defense, we need experience. This is why we are in Afghanistan.” He stated that although the defense budget had been reduced in 2009-2010, it would be increased to reflect the need for “total defense.” He praised reforms that had eliminated 800 officers and called for bolstering officer training at the National Defense Academy. He also praised the recreation of a Cadet Corps (a secondary educational institution), a greater stress on physical training of troops, and support for military industry to enhance self-sufficiency.<sup>10</sup>

Marking the shift toward more security ties with the West, Georgia withdrew from the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1999. Georgia assumed full control from Russia over guarding its sea and land borders in 1999. Georgia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994 and has hosted PFP exercises annually since 2001. NATO signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with Georgia in October 2004 to deepen cooperation and launched an “intensified dialogue” with Georgia in September 2006 on reforms necessary for possible NATO membership. A NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia was a matter of contention at the April

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<sup>8</sup> *The Military Balance* (Stockholm: International Institute of Strategic Studies, February 3, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), September 2, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950366.

<sup>10</sup> *CEDR*, July 29, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950074.

2008 NATO Summit. Although Georgia was not offered a MAP, the Alliance pledged that Georgia would eventually become a member of NATO. After the Russia-Georgia conflict, a NATO-Georgia Council was set up to further systematize NATO reform guidance. At the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Council in June 2010, on the sidelines of the NATO Defense Ministers' Meeting, the ministers reaffirmed the Alliance's continued support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and its aspirations for NATO membership, and thanked Georgia for its troop contributions to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

## **The August 2008 Russia-Georgia Conflict**

Simmering tensions between Georgia and its breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia erupted on the evening of August 7, 2008. Georgia claims that South Ossetian forces did not respond to a cease-fire appeal to end mutual shelling of villages but intensified their shelling, "forcing" Georgia to send troops into South Ossetia that soon controlled the regional capital of Tskhinvali. The Russian military soon pushed Georgian forces out of South Ossetia, repeated this action in Abkhazia, and launched air strikes throughout Georgia. On August 15, the Georgian government accepted a French-brokered 6-point cease-fire that left Russian forces in control of the two regions, and two weeks later, Russia recognized their independence. On August 26, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In September 2008, Russia, Georgia, and the breakaway regions signed follow-on cease-fire accords that called for bolstering the number of international monitors of the cease-fire, setting up an international conference on ensuring security and stability in the region, resettling refugees and displaced persons, and working out a peace settlement. The European Union has deployed 320 cease-fire monitors. The international conference has held several meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, but so far has agreed only to some incident notification measures to reduce tensions. Georgia, the United States, and others have argued that in violation of the cease-fire accords, Russia has maintained troops in some areas instead of pulling them out, has not reduced the number of its troops in the regions to pre-conflict levels, and has forced out OSCE and U.N. observers from the regions. Russia has established military bases in each of the regions and a naval base in Abkhazia and has deployed up to 1,800 troops and over 1,000 border troops in each of the regions.

The EU and World Bank convened a donors' conference in Brussels on October 22, 2008, to garner international funds for Georgia's rebuilding. Thirty-eight countries and fifteen international organizations pledged approximately \$4.5 billion in aid to Georgia for the 2008-2010 period. The amount pledged was higher than the basic needs outlined in a Joint Needs Assessment report presented to the conference, indicating the high level of international concern over Georgia's fate.<sup>11</sup> The pledges are addressed to meet urgent social needs related to internally displaced people, as well as damaged infrastructure; budgetary shortfalls; loans, equity, and guarantees to the banking sector; and core investments in transportation, energy, and municipal infrastructure that will boost economic growth and employment. The United States pledged the largest amount—\$1 billion—for these efforts.

On September 30, 2009, a special EU fact-finding mission led by Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini released a report on the origins and outcome of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. On the one hand, the mission concluded that "open hostilities began with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali [in South Ossetia] and the surrounding areas, launched in

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<sup>11</sup> The World Bank. *Georgia: Summary of Joint Needs Assessment Findings Prepared for the Donors' Conference of October 22, 2008 in Brussels*, n.d.



the night of 7 to 8 August 2008. Operations started with a massive Georgian artillery attack.” The mission also argued that the artillery attack was not justifiable under international law. However, it also argued that the artillery attack “was only the culminating point of a long period of increasing tensions, provocations and incidents” by the parties to the conflict. On the other hand, the mission suggested that “much of the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense,” and that such “action outside South Ossetia was essentially conducted in violation of international law.” In Abkhazia, actions by Russian-supported militias in the upper Kodori Valley “constituted an illegal use of force ... not justified under international law.” The mission likewise asserted that actions by South Ossetian militias “against ethnic Georgians inside and outside South Ossetia, must be considered as having violated International humanitarian law and in many cases also human rights law.”<sup>12</sup> Commenting on the release of the report, a U.S. State Department spokesman stated that “we recognize that all sides made mistakes and miscalculations through the conflict last year. But our focus is on the future.”<sup>13</sup>

The International Crisis Group (ICG), a non-governmental organization, estimated in June 2010 that there may be fewer than 30,000 people residing in South Ossetia, and that the population continues to decline (a 1989 census, taken before the beginning of conflict, reported a regional population of 98,500). The ICG suggests that the region is increasingly less able to govern or sustain itself economically, so it must rely on Russian aid and thousands of Russian construction and government workers, troops, and border guards that are deployed there.<sup>14</sup>

## **U.S. Relations**

Signed in January 2009, the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership reflects strong U.S. support for Georgia’s continued sovereignty and independence. In the security realm, “the United States and Georgia intend to expand the scope of their ongoing defense and security cooperation programs to defeat [threats to global peace and stability] and to promote peace and stability.” Such cooperation will “increase Georgian capabilities and ... strengthen Georgia’s candidacy for NATO membership.” In the economic realm, the two countries “intend to pursue an Enhanced Bilateral Investment Treaty, to expand Georgian access to the General System of Preferences, and to explore the possibility of a Free-Trade Agreement.” Energy security goals include “increasing Georgia’s energy production, enhanc[ing] energy efficiency, and increas[ing] the physical security of energy transit through Georgia to European markets.” In the realm of democratization, the two countries “pledge cooperation to bolster independent media, freedom of expression, and access to objective news and information,” and to further strengthen the rule of law. The United States pledged to train judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and police officers.<sup>15</sup>

The first meeting of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission was held on June 22, 2009, in Washington, DC, led by Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze. The Security Working Group also met, co-headed on the U.S. side by Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon and Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow, and headed on the Georgian side by Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria. There were other working groups on the economy, democracy, and people-to-people exchanges. All the

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<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, Vol. 3.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, September 30, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> International Crisis Group. *South Ossetia: The Burden of Recognition*, June 7, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of State. *U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership*, January 9, 2009.

working groups have held subsequent meetings. The second plenary meeting of the commission will be held on October 6, 2010, in Washington, D.C.

Cumulative U.S. budgeted assistance to Georgia for FY1992-FY2008 was \$2.1 billion (Freedom Support Act and agency funding). U.S.-budgeted foreign assistance for Georgia was \$312 million in FY2009, and an estimated \$321 million in FY2010, and the budget request for foreign operations for FY2011 is \$90 million, with the aid fairly equally distributed among security, economic, and democratization programs (FY2009, FY2010, and FY2011 figures exclude Defense Department and other agency funding, and FY2009-FY2010 figures include the final parts of the \$1 billion in recovery aid).<sup>16</sup> Georgia also has an agreement (termed a “compact”) with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for \$395 million (including \$100 million added in 2008) for road-building, rehabilitating infrastructure, and energy development. The MCC reported in April 2010 that it had so far disbursed \$203.7 million out of \$333 million of contract commitments to Georgia.

At a press conference after meeting with Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev on July 6, 2009—part of the U.S. “reset” of relations with Russia—President Obama reported that he had “reiterated my firm belief that Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. Yet even as we work through our disagreements on Georgia’s borders, we do agree that no one has an interest in renewed military conflict.”<sup>17</sup> In Georgia, many officials and others viewed the meeting positively as lessening the chances of renewed Russia-Georgia conflict and as a reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment to Georgia. Perhaps to further reassure Georgians, Vice President Joseph Biden visited Georgia in late July 2009 to emphasize the U.S. commitment to its sovereignty and independence.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on July 4-5, 2010. Clinton paid a six-hour visit to Georgia on July 5. She urged Georgians not to focus on the past, possibly referring to the Russia-Georgia conflict, but to be “focused on what you can do today and tomorrow to improve your lives and the lives of your family and the lives of your fellow citizens by building your democracy and opening your economy and providing more justice and social inclusion, that, to me, is the great mission of Georgia.” While stating that the United States continued to call for Russia to pull back its troops to their positions on August 6, 2008 (in line with the 6-point cease-fire agreement), she also “strongly urged” Georgia to “not be baited or provoked into any action that would give any excuse to the Russians to take any further aggressive movements.”<sup>18</sup> Vice President Biden revisited Georgia on July 23, 2010—as in 2009, just after a U.S.-Russia summit—to reassure Georgia of U.S. interest in its fate. He urged Georgia to continue to develop democratic institutions and free markets, including as the best means to attract the people of the breakaway areas to reintegrate with the rest of Georgia. He called for further democratization, including constitutional changes to create a balance of power between the legislative and executive branches of government.

Some observers have called for a reevaluation of some aspects of U.S. support for Georgia. These critics have argued that many U.S. policymakers have been captivated by Saakashvili’s

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2011*, March 2010.

<sup>17</sup> The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *Press Conference by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia*, July 6, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Remarks by Secretary Clinton: Joint Press Availability With Georgian President Saakashvili*, July 5, 2010; *Remarks at a Town Hall With Georgian Women Leaders*; July 5, 2010.

charismatic personality and pledges to democratize and have tended to overlook his bellicosity. They have warned that U.S. acceptance of Georgian troops for coalition operations in Afghanistan must not lead to U.S. defense commitments to Georgia, and a few have suggested that the United States should not unquestionably back Georgia's territorial integrity, but should rather encourage reconciliation and the consideration of options short of the near-term reintegration of the regions into Georgia. Other observers have called for a more robust U.S. and NATO effort to resupply Georgia with defensive weaponry so that it might deter or resist Russian aggression. At the same time, most observers advise against extending diplomatic recognition to breakaway regions without an international consensus.<sup>19</sup>

## **Contributions to Counter-Terrorism Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan**

The former president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, immediately condemned the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, and offered "airspace and territory" for U.S. coalition operations in Afghanistan. Georgia was among the countries in 2003 that openly pledged to support the U.S.-led Operation Iraqi Freedom. In August 2003, Georgia dispatched 69 troops to Iraq, boosted them to over 850 in March 2005, and increased them to 2,000 by September 2007, making it among the top contributors of troops. Georgian troops served under U.S. command. Many provided security in the "Green Zone" in Baghdad, the town of Baqubah northeast of Baghdad, and in Wasit Governorate, along the Iranian border. Most of the troops pulled out in August 2008 in connection with the Russia-Georgia conflict, and the rest pulled out by the end of November 2008.

Georgia contributed about 50 troops during Afghan elections in late 2004-early 2005. On November 16, 2009, Georgia sent 173 troops for training in Germany before their scheduled deployment at the end of March 2010 to support the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. These troops have been boosted to 925 as of mid-2010. A small number serve with French forces and the rest with U.S. Marines in Helmand Province.

Among U.S. security programs in Georgia, a \$64 million Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) began in 2002. U.S. troops provided training to 200 officers, some 2,000 soldiers, and a small number of Interior (police) Ministry troops and border guards. According to the U.S. Defense Department, the GTEP aimed to help Georgia "to resist pressure to allow the Russian military to pursue Chechen rebels" into Georgia, help it combat terrorists inside the country, and block those trying to infiltrate Georgia. Small arms, communications and medical gear, and uniforms were provided. The program ended in 2004 but a follow-on Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP) was launched in FY2006, funded at \$60 million. SSOP provided training for 2,000 troops, in part to support U.S.-led coalition operations, along with advisory assistance for defense reforms and maintenance for previously supplied helicopters. SSOP was continued in FY2007 at \$28 million and FY2008 at \$71 million. Prior to the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, the Defense Department planned to budget approximately \$35 million for

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Cooley and Lincoln Mitchell, "No Way to Treat Our Friends: Recasting Recent U.S.-Georgian Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, January 2009, pp. 27-41; Lincoln Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); "A Georgia-Russia War Discussion between Gordon Hahn and Johnson's Russia List," *Russia: Other Points of View*, October 17, 2008, at <http://www.russiaotherpointsofview.com>; Paul Saunders, "Help Has Strings Attached," *Washington Times*, December 17, 2009.

training for new troop deployments to Iraq (however, Georgia pulled its troops out of Iraq in the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict).<sup>20</sup> Congress provided \$50 million in FY2008 and \$50 million in FY2009 under the authority of Section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006 (P.L. 109-163) for reconstruction and stabilization activities in Georgia, of which only a small portion was defense-related (the restoration of Coast Guard infrastructure; none was weapons-related, see below). Under Section 1206 of the Act, Congress provided \$11.5 million to Georgia in FY2008 for special forces training and \$20.5 million in FY2010 for training and equipping troops for service in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup>

Assistant Secretary Vershbow testified in August 2009 that the Obama Administration was “focusing on building defense institutions, assisting defense sector reform, and building the strategic and educational foundations that will facilitate necessary training, education, and rational force structure design and procurement. We are assisting Georgia to move along the path to having modern, western-oriented, NATO-interoperable armed forces capable of territorial defense and coalition contributions.” He stressed, however, that “the United States has not ‘rearmed’ Georgia as some have claimed. There has been no lethal military assistance to Georgia since the August [2008] conflict.”<sup>22</sup> Although President Saakashvili seemed to indicate during Secretary Clinton’s July 2010 visit that U.S. security cooperation with Georgia was adequate, he stated in September 2010 that “leaving Georgia defenseless doesn’t help the situation. Georgia cannot attack Russia, while a defenseless Georgia is a big temptation for Russia to change our government through military means.... As part of ongoing security cooperation, we hope that the U.S. will help us with defense-weapons capabilities.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee. Hearing on the Georgia-Russia Crisis. *Testimony of Eric S. Edelman, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy*, September 9, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> CRS Report RS22871, *Department of Defense “Section 1207” Security and Stabilization Assistance: Background and Congressional Concerns*, by Nina M. Serafino, and CRS Report RS22855, *Security Assistance Reform: “Section 1206” Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Europe. Hearing on Georgia: One Year After the August War. *Testimony of Alexander Vershbow, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs*, August 4, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Jerry Guo, “Russia’s Occupation Won’t Last,” *Newsweek*, September 12, 2010.

Figure I. Map of Georgia



Source: Map Resources.

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