

FMO Country Guide: Republic of Georgia

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Formal name: Republic of Georgia.

Short name: Georgia.

Capital: Tbilisi.

Estimated population: 4,989,285 (July 2001 est.).

Date of independence: 9 April 1991.

Websites

CIA World Factbook 2001

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<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/>

Maps

UNHCR map of Georgia 2001

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PUBL&id=3dee2c6e0&page=publ>

Summary

Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991. During the first years of its independence Georgia experienced rising nationalism, a civil war, a struggle for control of the government, and ethnic conflicts. During the Soviet period, and in order to accommodate the concentration of non-Georgian people, part of Georgian territory was divided into an autonomous region (South Ossetia) and two autonomous socialist republics (Abkhazia and Ajaria). The largest of these is the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic. This regional ethnic distribution is the main factor provoking conflict and responsible for the massive displacement of people in post-Soviet Georgia.

The international community identifies five areas of conflict or potential conflict in Georgia. These are: the Abkhazia region; the South Ossetia region; the Ajaria region; Javakheti province; and Pankisi Gorge. In addition there is the issue of the return of the Meskhetian Turks, an ethnic group forcibly relocated in other Soviet republics during the Stalin era. The displacement of people in Georgia is the direct result of ethnic conflicts in two of the regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The separatist wars that took place in the early 1990s in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have resulted in massive internal displacement. People from different ethnic backgrounds swapped places as the conflicts forced them to leave their homes and seek protection among their ethnic communities/regions. In 1993 Abkhazian separatists won control of the region, expelling or forcing into flight approximately 270,000 people, most of which were ethnic Georgian. The ethnic conflict in South Ossetia displaced 60,000 people. It is estimated that around 40,000 South Ossetians crossed into Russia and sought refuge in the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of Russia. There are also around 7,000 refugees from the conflict in Chechnya that have sought refuge in Georgia. The conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved. The situation in Abkhazia is the most tense as the ceasefire in the area has been violated by sporadic incidents of violence. Today the government of Georgia has no effective control over the

autonomous republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and its authority over the autonomous region of Ajaria has weakened.

Georgia is still in the early stages of transition from the Soviet system. This process of transition has been delayed and made more difficult by civil war and ethnic conflicts, as well as by the need to maintain a precarious social stability. Within the present context of Georgia, political stability is a higher priority, and has to some extent been achieved over the last nine years. At the same time, the same context has slowed down the process of transforming Georgian society into a market economy, and a democratic and pluralistic society, particularly in rural areas.

Overview

Historical background

Since the nineteenth century Georgia has almost continuously been part of a Russian or Soviet empire. In the nineteenth century most of the regions that constitute modern Georgia accepted (from a position of weakness) annexation into Russia in order to gain protection from Persia. During that time, the ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups of the country entered into a coalition of a type that had not been experienced before. Georgia's relationship with Russia was one of subordination and in the late half of the nineteenth century the process of Russification intensified, as did Georgian rebellion against it. During World War I the Caucasus became a major battleground as the Russians pushed into eastern Turkey. The region was left in economic misery, social discontent against Russia was widespread, and the area hosted hundreds of thousands of war refugees. In 1918 Georgia declared its independence under the protection of Germany. This move aimed to deter any possible invasion by the Turks. Georgia's independence was recognized by the major European powers, but was short-lived. In 1920 Georgia became part of the Soviet Union, and for the next seven decades, and in political and economic terms, was thoroughly integrated into the Soviet system. In cultural terms, Georgia maintained some independence, and the question of Georgian nationalism remained an important, though at times muted, issue.

Stalin, himself a Georgian, oppressed the people of Georgia, as did citizens of other Soviet republics. In 1924 Stalin ordered the execution of 5,000 nobles in response to a Menshevik revolt, and he purged Georgian intellectuals and artists in 1936–7. During the last two decades of Stalin's rule Georgia experienced rapid urbanization and industrialization, and there was a drastic reduction in illiteracy. Georgian nationalism lessened during World War II and became diffused. One contributory factor was the 1943 restoration of the autonomy of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Another important factor was that in the late Stalinist period, Georgians enjoyed preferential treatment at the expense of other ethnic minorities in the republic. For instance, the Georgian language was constitutionally recognized as the official state language. After Stalin's death in 1953 Georgian nationalism re-emerged. Between 1952 and 1972 the policy of decentralization was used, among other things, by the Georgian communists to reduce even further the influence of other ethnic groups in Georgia. In 1972 the corruption and economic inefficiency that characterized Soviet Georgia was finally acknowledged by Moscow, and Eduard Shevardnadze became the Communist Party First Secretary. He launched a campaign against corruption and chauvinism, which had made Georgian's ruling elites infamous throughout the Soviet Union. By

1980 his economic reforms had significantly increased agricultural and industrial production, and as part of his political reforms he dismissed around 300 members of the party's hierarchy. But when Shevardnadze left office in 1985, significant corruption at government level remained.

During the 1970s and early 1980s Georgians' aspirations for national autonomy increased, and ethnic disputes began to emerge. Georgian nationalists and dissidents gathered around academician and anti-Soviet Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who later became the first president of the Republic of Georgia. Ethnic disputes began in the form of accusations made to central government regarding unfair cultural, linguistic, political, and economic restrictions imposed by Tbilisi. The most serious of these ethnic tensions arose when leaders of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic threatened to break away from Georgia. Shevardnadze responded by implementing an affirmative action programme that gave Abkhazians political power disproportionate to their minority status as a group in Abkhazia. By 1989 the Abkhaz population made up only 17.8 per cent of the population in the autonomous region. The majority of the population in Abkhazia were ethnic Georgians (44 per cent), and 16 per cent were Russians.

The year 1989 was characterized by a rise in Georgian nationalism and calls for independence from Moscow. Gamsakhurdia organized a referendum on Georgian independence that was approved by 98.9 per cent of Georgian voters. The Georgian parliament passed a declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The response of Zviad Gamsakhurdia towards ethnic separatist movements was a military one, and, following independence, Georgia became engaged in a year-long battle against South Ossetians. Gamsakhurdia also isolated Georgia economically from Moscow. Gamsakhurdia was violently evicted from office and went into exile, where he organized his forces. He committed suicide in 1994. Another man who has greatly influenced political life in newly independent Georgia is Eduard Shevardnadze. He became head of government in 1992 and again won the April 2000 presidential elections. He has maintained a strong hold on central power to prevent regional separatism. Today the most pressing ethnic conflicts are with the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia. The Georgian government has no effective control over these two regions.

Websites:

CIA World Factbook 2001

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications>

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[http://lcweb2loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fdr/cstdy:@field\(DOCID\)+ge0013](http://lcweb2loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fdr/cstdy:@field(DOCID)+ge0013)

Politics

In April 1991 the Republic of Georgia became independent from the Soviet Union, and since then Georgian political life has undergone considerable changes. National elections were held in 1989, 1990, 1992, and 2000. Inter-ethnic conflicts have prevented elections in a few administrative districts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 1995 Georgia adopted its first democratic, multi-party constitution. According to the

constitution, presidential elections are held every five years. Georgia is made up of sixty-three districts, as well as two autonomous republics (Abkhazia and Ajaria), both located on the Black Sea coast, and one autonomous region (South Ossetia).

The constitution provides for a strong executive presidency and a 235-member unicameral parliament. The government was defined as an advisory body to the president, to whom it was directly subordinated.¹ The principles of the constitution provide the state with a democratically based structure including the separation of powers, and anticipate the establishment of new institutions to protect basic freedoms and human rights. But democratic institutions have evolved slowly. The main political parties are: the Citizen's Union of Georgia or CUG (headed by Eduard Shevardnadze); the Georgian United Communist Party or UCPG; Industry will Save Georgia or IWSG; the National Democratic Party or NDP; Socialist Party or SPG; the Union for 'Revival' Party or AGUR; and the United Republican Party (URP).

Georgian refugees from Abkhazia (the Abkhaz faction in the Georgian parliament), separatist elements in the breakaway region of Abkhazia, and supporters of the late deposed president Zviad Gamsakhurdia are all opposition/pressure sources inside Georgia.

Websites:

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The Constitution of Georgia, English version

<http://elaw.org/assets/word/georgia.constitution.doc>

¹ 'Georgia', *The Europa World Year Book 1999*, London, Europa Publications

Library of Congress

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ge0069\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ge0069))

Culture

Georgia's twenty-five centuries of history and geographic position have resulted in a rich religion, as well as cultural influences from Persia, Turkey, Russia, and the West. Until the post-Soviet era, Georgia had a reputation for tolerance of minority religious and ethnic groups. However, after 1991, sharp conflicts developed among ethnic groups long considered to be part of the national fabric.

Ethnic groups

The last reported census was conducted during the Soviet period in 1989. According to the Soviet census of 1989, the resident population of Georgia was 5,443,359. At the time of the census the population consisted of 437,211 Armenians (8.1 per cent); 341,720 Russians (6.3 per cent); 307,556 Azeri (5.7 per cent); 164,055 Ossetian (3 per cent); 100,342 Greeks (1.9 per cent); 33,333 Kurds (0.6 per cent); and 24,795 Jews (0.5 per cent). Ethnic Georgians comprise about 70 per cent (3.8 million) of the population. Georgian ethnic and national groups contain a number of sub-groups, such as the Svans, Ajars, Khevsur, and Mingrelians. They all speak Georgian and, with the exception of the Muslim Ajars, are predominantly Christian .

Religions: Georgian Orthodox 65 per cent; Muslim 11 per cent; Russian Orthodox 10 per cent; Armenian Apostolic 8 per cent; unknown 6 per cent.

Languages: Georgian (official) spoken by 71 per cent of population; Russian spoken by 9 per cent; Armenian by 7 per cent; Azeri by 6 per cent; other 7 per cent.

It is thought that there was a decline in the population of Georgia from 5,447,300 in 1992 to 5,368,000 in 1996. Emigration is thought to have markedly increased since 1989, contributing to a decline in population growth. Sources estimate that the total population of Georgia currently stands at 4,989,285 (e.g., CIA World Factbook 2001). In January 2002 the government of Georgia conducted a census, but results have not yet been published.

Websites:

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The World Directory of Minorities 1997. Minority Rights Group International, London

US Department of State

http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/georgia_9811_bgn.html

Minority ethnic groups, location, and religion

Armenians are geographically highly concentrated. They live mainly in Javakheti province in the southern part of Georgia on the borders with Armenia and Turkey. Armenians make up 90 per cent of the population in the province and have strong links to Armenia. The urban populations speak Georgian to a limited extent, and schooling is in Armenian. The region is underdeveloped. There is also hostility between Armenians and Azeris due to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, expressed in terrorist actions on gas pipelines and roads leading to Armenia or Azerbaijan

The Azeris are concentrated in the south-eastern districts of Marneuli, Bolsini, Dmanisi, and Gardabani, and in the town of Rustavi and elsewhere in eastern Georgia. Most of the Azeri population is rural and most of them are Shia Muslims. The Azeris play a significant role in agricultural production. The districts populated by the Azeris are underdeveloped and in great need of social and economic development. There is a high birth rate among the Azeris

Russians are not geographically concentrated in Georgia and this restricts their political/ethnic representation. Most Russians emigrated to Georgia during Soviet rule, and they settled in significant numbers in urbanized areas, especially in Rustavi and Tbilisi, as well as in Abkhazia. Russians are migrating to Russia in large numbers, but also to Canada and elsewhere. This is leading to a loss of qualified labour from Georgian industry. Most Russians are Greek Orthodox, and this ethnic group is characterized by a low birth rate

The Ossetians are the last descendants of a nomadic people of Iranian origin and speak a language, derived from that of a northern Iranian people, whose use in the region can be traced back to the fourth century.² Ossetia has experienced many border changes. Stalin divided North Ossetia into the Russian Federation and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. South Ossetia is located in northern Georgia and shares its northern border with the Republic of North Ossetia (of the Russian Federation).

Ossetians include both Orthodox Christians and some Muslims. There are mixed Ossetian–Georgian families. The young generation has been less inclined to learn the Georgian language, preferring Russian instead .

² *The World Directory of Minorities 1997*, Minority Rights Group International, London 1997.

Abkhazians are considered to be autochthonous to the Caucasus and speak a north-western Caucasian language related to Circassian.³ The region of Abkhazia is located in the north-west of Georgia along the Black Sea coastline; it is an autonomous region within Georgia. There are both Christians and Muslims among the Abkhaz.

Greeks live mostly in south-eastern Georgia, in large cities, around the Black Sea coast in western Georgia, mainly in Abkhazia and Ajaria. The Greeks emigrated to Georgia in the nineteenth century from Anatolia and other parts of Turkey. Greeks are mainly Orthodox Christians, and many are currently emigrating to Greece.

Most of the Jews in Georgia are either Ashkenazim or Georgian Jews (Georgian-speaking and considered to be of Sephardic origin). Jews are believed to have lived in Georgia for more than twenty centuries. The great majority of Jews from Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Oni, etc. have recently moved to Israel or to the West.

Most Kurds arrived in Georgia at the time of the Ottoman Empire, having fled religious repression there. They now live mainly in Tbilisi or Rustavi. Kurds are mostly urbanized and socially integrated, but preserve their ethnic identity, language, and cultural traditions. Kurds in Georgia are sympathetic to the aspirations of the Kurd nationalist movements in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.

The Meskhetian Turks originate from the north-western part of Javakheti province, but in 1944 Stalin ordered their deportation from their homeland in the south of Georgia to Central Asia. According to the *World Directory of Minorities* (1997), over 115,000 Meskhetian Turks were uprooted.⁴ The majority of Meskhetian Turks were deported to Uzbekistan (106,000), but some live in Kazakstan (50,000) and Kyrgistan (21,000).

Websites:

Georgian Parliament Homepage

<http://www.parliament.ge/index.html>

Guretsky, V. The Question of Javakheti. *Caucasian Regional Studies* Vol. 3, Issue 1 1998

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‘Georgia’, *The Europa World Year Book 1999*, London, Europa Publications

Geography, society and economy

The size of Georgia is approximately 69,875 square kilometres. It is located in south-western Asia between Turkey and Russia, and borders the Black Sea. In the east Georgia has borders with Azerbaijan, and in the south with Armenia. At present Georgia has a GDP of US\$1.5 billion, about \$324 per capita. Thirty per cent of its

³ *ibid.*

⁴ See also V. Guretsky. The Question of Javakheti. *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, 1998

GDP comes from agriculture. The Department of Statistics estimates 52.6 per cent of the population live below poverty level. The unemployment rate is 14.9 per cent. In the early years of the post-Soviet era, Georgia's economy experienced negative growth due to destruction of its infrastructure, lack of investment, and the failure to reorganize economically. In 2001 three main problems affected Georgia's economy and made short-term economic predictions difficult. These were a growing trade deficit, continuing problems with tax evasion and corruption, and political uncertainty. Traditionally, Georgia's economy has revolved around Black Sea tourism, the cultivation of citrus fruits, tea, and grapes, the mining of manganese and copper, and small-scale industries producing wine, metals, machinery, chemicals, and textiles. It has few domestic energy bases and 95 per cent of its energy is imported (mostly in the form of oil and natural gas). It has high potential for hydroelectric power, but this is mainly untapped. Power output does not meet domestic needs.

Georgia's main natural resources include forests, hydropower, manganese deposits, iron ore, copper, and small coal and oil deposits. The coastal climate and soils allow for important tea and citrus cultivation.

Currently, the most pressing environmental issues are air pollution, particularly in Rustavi, heavy pollution of the Black Sea and the Mtkvari River, inadequate supplies of potable water, and soil pollution from toxic chemicals.

Georgia's terrain is diverse, with mountainous regions comprising two-thirds of the territory. The Greater Caucasus Mountains dominate the north, and the Lesser Caucasus Mountains dominate the south. Georgia has many rivers that flow through mountain gorges into the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The Kolkhida Lowland area opens to the Black Sea in the west. The east consists mainly of plains.

The climate of Georgia is also varied. Along the coast there is a subtropical, humid climate. The mountains protect Georgia from northern climatic influences, and temperature zones reflect elevation. The plains in the east have a continental climate. In the highest mountains there is snow throughout the year.

During the Soviet period Georgia's system of universal free health care was considered among the best. However, the social security system has collapsed and has not been replaced because of the financial problems of the state. The health care system came under severe stress after 1991. Today, any medical services have to be paid for by the patient. A medical insurance system does not exist. Civil war and political instability blocked the reform programme of the early 1990s. Health facilities have been further stretched by refugee influxes and emergency care requirements.

Infant mortality rates are high, 52.37 per 1,000 live births, while the fertility rate is low: the average number of children born per woman is 1.45. Most of the population, 67.91 per cent, is between 15 and 64 years of age. Average life expectancy is 64.57 years, 61.04 years for men and 68.28 years for women. The net migration rate stands at -2.48 migrant(s) per 1,000. All these figures are estimates for 2001.

Education is free and compulsory through secondary school. The Soviet system attempted to strengthen Georgian language and history. Some teaching continues in

minority languages. There are nineteen institutions of higher learning. Literacy was estimated at 100 per cent in the 1980s.

Websites:

CIA World Factbook 2001

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications>

Library of Congress Country Studies

<http://lcweb2loc.gov/fdr/cs/getoc.htm/>

US Department of State

http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/georgia_9811_bgn.html

Causes and consequences

Conflict-induced displacement

Under Soviet rule, nationality was separated from the concept of citizenship.⁵ This enabled members of ethnic minorities in the USSR to retain their national identity as well as their political status as Soviet citizens

Ethnic conflict has been the single most important issue of conflict-induced displacement in Georgia's post-Soviet era. Regional ethnic distribution is the main cause of the problem. As Georgia broke away from the former USSR, conflict began as different ethnic regions began to make claims to sovereignty on the basis of national difference.

The international community identifies five areas of conflict in Georgia. These are: the Abkhazia region; the South Ossetia region; the Ajaria region; Javakheti province; and Pankisi Gorge. The autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia deserve some detailed attention because tension between these republics and Tbilisi continues.

Ajaria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia were incorporated into the Republic of Georgia during the Soviet era. After Georgia gained independence in 1991, there was armed conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, and Georgia and South Ossetia. Georgia did not win these conflicts, but both republics failed to gain recognition or independence.

South Ossetia

South Ossetia has long wanted independence from Georgia, but the recent conflict began in 1989, when South Ossetia, fearing that its political autonomy would be eliminated and its cultural identity destroyed, challenged the government of Georgia. In 1989 the Georgian Supreme Soviet adopted a law to strengthen the position of the Georgian language. In December 1990 Gamsakhurdia's regime swiftly abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status within Georgia. In December 1991 Georgian troops entered South Ossetia, and the Ossetians responded by demanding reunification with the republic of North Ossetia, part of the Russian Federation. The fighting that followed claimed the lives of thousands of people. The conflict created tens of thousands of refugees on both sides of the Georgian–Russian border. It is estimated that 40,000 South Ossetians crossed into the Russian Federation and sought

⁵ *The World Directory of Minorities 1997*, Minority Rights Group International, London 1997.

sanctuary with their ethnic kinsmen in the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of Russia. Equal numbers of ethnic Georgians living in South Ossetia and ethnic Ossetians living in Georgia swapped places, and several thousand people were displaced within South Ossetia itself.

Yeltsin mediated a ceasefire in July 1992, and this was enforced by Ossetians and Georgian troops, together with a Russian peacekeeping force that was deployed to monitor the region. Representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) attempted mediation, but the two sides remained intractable. In July 1993 the South Ossetian government declared negotiations over and threatened to renew large-scale combat, but the ceasefire held. In 1996 both sides agreed to renounce violence and seek a political solution. A peaceful solution to this conflict seems possible, but the government of Georgia has been unable to fulfil its commitments to the peace agreement due to economic difficulties.

Abkhazia

Conflict in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic of Georgia started because, like the Ossetians, Abkhazians feared that the Georgians would eliminate their political autonomy and discriminate against their language and culture. The Abkhaz and the Georgians have a long history of ill will due to the minority status of the Abkhaz within the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic, the result of Georgianization campaigns of the Soviet regime and, later, the Georgian government. By 1978 Moscow was dealing with Abkhazian demands for independence by allocating up to 67 per cent of party and government positions to the Abkhaz, despite the fact that, according to the 1989 census, 2.5 times as many Georgians as Abkhaz lived in Abkhazia. This unequal distribution of political and administrative positions favouring the Abkhaz was resented by the Georgian majority.

Tensions in Abkhazia have led to open warfare on a much larger scale than in South Ossetia. In July 1992 the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet voted to return to the 1925 constitution under which Abkhazia was separated from Georgia. In August 1992 a force of the Georgian National Guard was sent to the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi with orders to protect Georgian rail and road supply lines, and to secure the border with Russia. The Abkhazian authorities viewed this as a transgression of their self-proclaimed sovereignty, and armed conflict followed. Hundreds were killed in the fighting and large numbers of refugees fled across the border into Russia or into other parts of Georgia. The Abkhazian government was forced to flee Sukhumi.

The Abkhaz have long viewed Russia as a protector of their interests against the Georgians. So, following the Georgian incursion of 1992, Abkhazians asked Russia to intervene and settle the issue. Allegations of Russian interference in the ethnic crisis in Georgia have coloured the relationship between the two countries. In September 1993 Abkhazian forces captured Sukhumi and drove the remaining Georgian forces out of Abkhazia. By 1993 there had been three failed ceasefires.

Abkhazia and Georgia signed a ceasefire agreement in 1993, and a peace agreement in 1994. They were followed in 1994 by the deployment of 3,000 Russian peacekeeping troops, representing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), along the Inguri River on the Georgia–Abkhazia border. The Russian troops were

deployed with the agreement of Abkhaz separatists. In 2001 the Georgian parliament passed a resolution to remove the CIS (Russian) peacekeeping force from Abkhazia. Since August 1993 there has been a UN Observer Mission (UNOMIG) in Abkhazia. At present its role is to promote a peace settlement in the region.

The agreements outlined above provide for a political solution but are paralysed by two main issues: the political status of Abkhazia and the mechanisms for repatriation of the displaced Georgians.⁶ In March 1998 local elections were held in Abkhazia, but due to ethnic clashes between Abkhazians and Georgians, the UN Security Council declared the vote illegitimate on the eve of the elections. By May 1998 ethnic hostilities had broken out in the Gali district, and since then the situation has remained fragile. The UN Special Representative for Georgia reported in July 1999 that the general situation in the conflict zone of Abkhazia remained calm but unstable.

Ajaria

The dispute between Ajaria and central government is political rather than ethnic. The leader in Ajaria, Abashidze, has increased the *de facto* autonomy of the region slowly and peacefully. This region has the advantage of a fairly strong economic base supported by its agricultural production. Abashidze's power derives from a controlled political base in Ajaria, a Russian military base, efficient local services and alleged financing from Russian sources. Finally, it is reported that Ajaria is developing closer links to Javakheti province with the aim of establishing a common coalition against the central authorities in Tbilisi. The two areas have closer political and economic relations with each other than both of them have with Tbilisi. According to a USAID conflict assessment, a coalition between both ethnic groups is unlikely to happen due to religious differences. Furthermore, as the political and economic situation in Georgia stabilizes, Adjaria's importance as an independent power base will in time be reduced.

Javakheti

Javakheti province is an area of concern to the central government of Georgia on two major counts. First is the question of the Meskhetian Turks who originated from the north-western part of the province. The second issue is that the central government authorities' control of Javakheti province is weak. Armenians make up 90 per cent of the province's population and have strong ties to Armenia. The Armenians are politically organized under an umbrella group called Javakhk – its official aim is the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage. The situation in the region is precarious due to the existence of a radical nationalistic group called Virk (which emanated from Javakhk) and because of the existence of paramilitary groups.

Meskhetian Turks

For Georgia the return of the Meskhetian Turks has been a critical issue since 1989 when the Turks became the targets of pogroms in Uzbekistan. The majority of them fled and became refugees in various countries in the region. The Council of Europe is concerned with the question of the repatriation of Meskhetian Turks, and this was one condition for Georgia's admittance to membership of the council. The condition remains unfulfilled though Georgia became a member of the Council of Europe in April 1999. Georgia is resisting the return of the Meskhetian Turks because of fears

⁶ IDP Global Survey, Norwegian Refugee Council, 1998.

concerning the ethnic composition of Javakheti province and the reactions of the province's ethnic Armenians, who are traditionally considered anti-Turk. Another reason put forward by Georgia is economic difficulties. Finally, there is the issue of whether Meskhetian Turks want to be repatriated. This is difficult to assess. A document produced by the Council of Europe recommended conducting a survey to determine the precise number, needs, and intentions of displaced Meskhetian Turks throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union concerning resettlement (1998). In Azerbaijan and Ukraine, Meskhetian Turks have been granted citizenship, thus promoting their legal integration.

Websites:

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

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The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia-Abkhazia Case By Catherine Dale, August 1997

<http://www.unchr.org/refworld/country/writenet/wrigeo.htm>

USAID/CAUCASUS Georgia Strategic Plan 2000 – 2003. USAID 1999

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Norwegian Refugee Council. Global IDP Project

http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurveys.nsf/wView_Countries/

Internally displaced persons

Numbers: Government figures (January 2001)

Total 272,101

Female 150,270

Male 121,500

Locations: UNHCR figures (26 January 2001)

Ajaria	7,946
Guria	587
Imereti	33,234

Kakheti	1,294
Kvemo Kartli	11,185
Shida Kartli	9,364
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	1,292
Racha-Lechkhumi	1,364
Samegrelo	114,178
Samtskhe-Javakheti	2,977
Tbilisi	88,680

In Georgia there is a Ministry for Refugees. Its resource data on IDPs is used by national and international organizations (Dale 1997).

Refugees

There are around 7,000 refugees from Chechnya living in Georgia. The refugees are concentrated in the Pankisi Gorge region and the majority (80 per cent) live with local families, most of whom are ethnic Chechens. The UNHCR local office in the town of Ahmeta remains open. The World Food Programme provides food rations for refugees.

Georgia does not have an effective law concerning refugee settlement or the granting of political asylum, in accordance with the principles of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. There is a Georgian-style asylum law, passed in 1998, which does not fully comply with international standards.

Websites:

The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia-Abkhazia Case By Catherine Dale, August 1997

<http://www.unchr.org/refworld/country/writenet/wrigeo.htm>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

<http://www.unchr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/hpme?page=search>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2002

Global Report 2001 - Strategies and Activities (Geneva: UNHCR)

<http://www.unchr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/template/+2wLFqPp1xceUh5cTPeUzknwBoqeRS3n+XXWeRS3n+XXWBdqeybnM>

Assistance Georgia Demographic Data for IDPs provided by the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation. January 2001

http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/cgi-bin/redirect?url=%2Frefugees%2Fidp_dem0.htm&image123.x=29&image123.y=38

Internally displaced people: needs and responses

For humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR the situation in Georgia is particularly problematic. On the one hand, the civilians, such as the South Ossetians, who fled across the border to Russia are internationally recognized as refugees – people who have sought refuge in another country. The large majority of people involved in this conflict zone, on the other hand, have been displaced within Georgia, their country of nationality, and are therefore classified as internally displaced people. Thus, Georgians are subject to different sets of rules and standards on the part of the aid agencies depending on whether they are recognized as refugees or internally displaced people. For UNHCR, Georgia is perhaps the only country in the world where the organization is involved in two simultaneous but separate ongoing conflicts.

Abkhazian conflict

The Abkhazian conflict has resulted in the movement of several different ethnic populations in various ways.

Georgians

Georgians are certainly the largest group affected by the war in Abkhazia. The vast majority of Georgians who were living there left and settled in other parts of Georgia, while others fled to Russia. It is estimated that by 1997 there were around 140,000–150,000 internally displaced Georgians in Georgia (Dale 1997). Other sources put the number of Georgians that were uprooted in the 1992–3 Abkhazia war to more than 250,000.

There are large numbers of Georgian IDPs settled in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi, and they tend to live in close proximity to one another. This is particularly true for the 40–50 per cent of IDPs living in collective centres. Collective centres accommodate IDPs in empty administrative buildings, such as schools, hotels, tourist camps, etc. The IDP residents of most collective centres come from various districts in Abkhazia, and here a pattern emerges. For instance, the IDP population from Zugdidi tends to come from the adjacent Gali district, and Kutaisi has a large number of IDPs from the Ochanshire district. Dale (1997) concludes that the pattern of settlement of IDPs throughout Georgia works to create a relatively bounded and identifiable population.

In April 1994 an agreement was signed on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons under the auspices of the United Nations, the Russian Federation, UNHCR, and the parties to the conflict. According to UNHCR (2000) an estimated 40,000 Georgian IDPs had spontaneously returned to the Gali district of Abkhazia. It should be noted, however, that the Gali region – one of the most fertile in Georgia – is now considered one of the most militarily dangerous areas in the country. Parts of the area are no-man's land, often too dangerous to travel through by road, and mine fields are widespread. Dale (1997) has made the important point that people were returning to places which they could flee from quickly should the fighting start again. Returnees are in a highly vulnerable position and until now the pattern of return has been seasonal, that is IDP returning home in times of planting and harvesting, but not to settled permanently

In Georgia IDPs are in many ways organized separately from the local population. This is particularly true for those who live in collective centres rather than with

friends and/or relatives outside these compounds. Unemployment tends to be higher among IDPs than among locals. Throughout Tbilisi IDPs have set up improvised fruit and vegetable markets. Those who work also tend to sell cheap Russian cigarettes at these markets. The government pays an IDP pension which by 1997 was less than \$7 per month (Dale 1997).

Specific needs such as housing have led IDPs to mobilize, including the organization and staging of a protest, which drew the attention of the authorities and NGOs. Many separate schools have been established for IDP children, complete with IDP teachers. Examples are the First Secondary School in Zugdidi and the Sixth Secondary School in Kutaisi. The intention seems to be twofold: to limit contact between IDP children and local children, and to prepare the IDP children for their return (Dale 1997).

The IDP population has ties to an official political structure, the Abkhaz Government in Exile. The cities of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi have a double significance for IDPs. These cities have become the focal points of political organizations linking IDPs to the government in exile, and they are also economic centres for the displaced. The IDPs in Georgia reflect political and economic patterns which help to divide them from the rest of the population as a group and geographically to reorient the population towards Abkhazia.⁷

Abkhaz

The Abkhaz did not leave the territory of Abkhazia but experienced substantial internal displacement both during and after the war. After the war, many Abkhaz returning home found themselves unable to do so due to the scale of destruction of living space and economic infrastructure that had taken place. In fact, some parts of Abkhazia are simply depopulated, as is the case with the industrial city of Tkvarcheli, whose pre-war population of 22,000 has been reduced to about 8,000 due to the total collapse of industry, and communication and transportation networks (Dale 1977). The other phenomenon is that many urban dwellers have left cities for rural areas to work the land and produce food. And where rural homes and villages have been destroyed, Abkhaz have left for the cities.

Dale (1997) points out that the solutions Abkhaz have found in order to survive in the post-war setting involve subsistence agriculture, not sustainable incomes, and temporarily occupied housing, not reconstruction.

Other official nationalities affected by the war were the Greeks, Russians, and Armenians. Greece evacuated the entire Greek population of Abkhazia (around 15,000). Most of the Russian and Armenian populations, consisting of about 75,000 people in each case, seem to have left for Russia.

International organizations, particularly UNHCR, faced a difficult, highly politicized scenario. On the one hand, Georgian officials argue that the failure of international organizations to repatriate the displaced is deliberate unwillingness to recognize a clear case of ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, Abkhaz officials argue that

⁷ Dale, C., *The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia--Abkhazia Case*, Writenet Country papers, 1997.

UNHCR's sole purpose is to repatriate all IDPs without any concern for the social, economic, or political consequences of such a programme (Dale 1997).

South Ossetian conflict

In this conflict South Ossetians and Georgians switched places: entire all-Georgian villages in South Ossetia headed for the Georgian control areas, while South Ossetians living in Georgia moved back to South Ossetia. At the same time, several thousand people were displaced within South Ossetia itself. The situation in this region is calmer than in Abkhazia, and this may have contributed to the return of several thousand refugees from across the border in Russian and some IDPs from Georgia proper. UNHCR and other agencies are helping with the reconstruction of homes, protection work, and medical care, and are providing other assistance to facilitate the return process. There are still many problems to be resolved, for example property disputes, but the main reason blocking the return of most IDPs is fear of a repeat of the ethnic violence of the early 1990s.

* * *

In general, the situation of IDPs is very difficult. The Georgian government and the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions are too poor to support their displaced populations in any way other than by providing token support. Lack of adequate shelter is a major problem. Many IDPs have lived for years in squalid collective centres and have few rights. IDPs find it difficult to access health care, which aggravates the effects of poor living conditions. In some regions, such as Abkhazia, health care facilities have seriously deteriorated. In Georgia proper IDPs have neither the right to vote nor the freedom to start their own businesses. The most vulnerable, such as the sick, the elderly, and the disabled, rely almost entirely on food parcels and other basic items provided by international agencies. Until recently, the attention of government and international organizations has been mainly directed towards Tbilisi and the places in western Georgia (e.g., Zugdidi) where the majority of IDPs from the Abkhaz and Ossetian conflicts have settled. More recently, some developmental work is taking place in areas of potential conflict such as Javakheti in south Georgia. Some humanitarian agencies are concentrated in particular regions – for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which works primarily in Abkhazia. Security constraints affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly in western Georgia (Abkhazian border).

Websites:

Assistance Georgia

<http://assistancegeorgia.org.ge>

ICRC

http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteen0.nsf/html/57JR59?OpenDocument&style=custo_final11/06/02

Norwegian Refugee Council. Global IDP Project

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewCountries/>

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Georgia Briefing Notes on South Ossetia 2001

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/f303799b16d2074285256830007fb33f/a4ec0aeb52cc7abc1256a10004e7043?OpenDocument>

U.S. Department of State 2001, Georgia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2000, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/760.htm>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2001

<http://www.unchr.org/pubs/fdrs/my2001/my2001toc.htm>

World Food Programme (WFP), 1999, Emergency Food Assistance for Internally Displaced Persons and Other Vulnerable Groups in Georgia

http://web.archive.org/web/19990224114239/www.wfp.org/OP/Countries/georgia/emop5315_04.html

The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia-Abkhazia Case By Catherine Dale, August 1997

<http://www.unchr.org/refworld/country/writenet/wrigeo.htm>

Internal legal framework

The current constitution of Georgia does not address some critical issues relating to the ongoing conflicts in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These issues are territorial arrangements, decentralization, and local government. These are considered too politically sensitive to be dealt with. The constitution does envisage eventual political settlement in the separatist regions. Following this, the Georgian parliament will be transformed into a bicameral body consisting of a Council of the Republic and a Senate, the latter representing the various territorial units of Georgia, such as Abkhazia and Ajaria. The constitution has a firm stand on secession movements, affirming in its second article that ‘the alienation of the territory of Georgia’ is forbidden.

Chapter 2 of the constitution is devoted to provisions for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, as they can be found in international human rights instruments: for example, ‘torture, inhumane, brutal or degrading treatment or punishment is impermissible’ (article 17) and ‘every individual has the right to freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion and belief’ (article 19). Article 6 states that international treaties or agreements reached with and by Georgia take precedence over domestic normative acts as long as they do not contradict the constitution of Georgia.

Websites:

The Constitution of Georgia, English version

<http://elaw.org/assets/word/georgia.constitution.doc>

Georgian Parliament Homepage

<http://www.parliament.ge/index.html>

International legal framework

Georgia is a state party to the following international conventions:

Convention	Date
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)	May 1994
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	May 1994
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	May 1994
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)	June 1994
Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (1979)	October 1994
Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)	October 1993 (ratified)
Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity (1968)	May 1995
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)	October 1994 (ratified)
European Convention of Human Rights	May 1999

Georgia is *inter alia* not state party to the following conventions:

- the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless
- the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
- the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- The 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

Websites:

Georgia Parliament Homepage
<http://www.parliament.ge/index.html>

The Constitution of Georgia, English version
<http://elaw.org/assets/word/georgia.constitution.doc>

Disaster-induced displacement

Earthquakes and landslides in mountainous areas present a significant threat to life and property. Among the most recent natural disasters were massive rock and mud slides in Ajaria in 1989, which displaced thousands in south-western Georgia, and

two earthquakes in 1991, which destroyed several villages in north-central Georgia and South Ossetia.

The last earthquake took place on 25 April 2002 in the capital Tbilisi, but did not provoke large-scale displacement. Victims included many IDPs living in the capital who were relocated due to unsafe dwellings. Urgent relief needs, such as food, tents, beds, clothes, hygiene kits, etc., were identified and the Disaster Management Team (DMT) distributed emergency relief aid to victims.

Website:

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

<http://www.unisdr.org/>

International Federation of the Red Cross

<http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/webinator/texis.exe/webinator/search/?pr=english&order=r&query=georgia>

Development-induced displacement

Development-induced displacement, which may result from initiatives such as dams, urban renewal, transportation projects, national parks, and so on, does not seem to account for any significant displacement of people in Georgia. One of the most important development projects currently taking place is the construction of the oil pipeline from Azerbaijan and Central Asia to a port on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. This project may attract migration to the construction sites, rather than cause displacement. Many of those who will seek work will be IDPs.

Websites:

US Department of State

<http://www.state.gov/www/background-notes/georgia-9811-bgn.html>

Eurasia Organization

<http://www.eurasianet.org/>

Human rights

The new constitution of 1995, which provides for an independent judiciary, the creation of democratic institutions such as the office of public defender (ombudsman), and a separate constitutional court, provides the foundations for the protection of human rights in the country. However, the legal instruments to protect human rights in Georgia have not led to significant changes in practice (e.g., Amnesty International Annual Report on Georgia 1999, US State Department Country Report on Georgia 2002). Human rights protection has been hindered in post-Soviet Georgia by political and military emergencies, and by the existence of semi-independent military forces. International human rights organizations have limited access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Consequently, there is little information on the human rights situation in these regions.

Both sides of the Abkhazian conflict claimed military abuses of civilian rights on the part of their opponents. Among the charges were abuse of military prisoners, taking civilian hostages, and shelling and blockading civilian areas. In 1993 the Shevardnadze government began addressing claims of human rights abuse against its

military and police. In the case of the Abkhazian conflict, the challenge for the Georgian government is to tread the line between necessary wartime controls and the need to protect human rights.

During the 1992–3 fighting both Georgians and Abkhazian laid tens of thousands of landmines. The 2000 Landmine Monitor Report stated that in 1999 and 2000 this activity was continued by Georgian groups allegedly connected to the Georgian government.

In January 1993 the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Ethnic Minority Affairs formed the Council of Ethnic Minorities, which met with representatives of the Meskhetian Turk exile population to resolve the grievances of that group. At the same time, the Interethnic Congress of the People of Georgia was formed to improve ethnic Georgians' appreciation of minority rights.

In 1996 a decree was issued authorizing the return of 1,000 Meskhetian Turks per year for five years. The decree has never been implemented, and to date the few hundred Meskhetian Turks who have returned are still illegal immigrants. In Georgia there is official and public opposition to their return, probably due to fear of a violent reaction on the part of the ethnic Armenian inhabitants of the Samtske-Javakheti region.

The 2002 annual report of the US Department of State identified several areas where human rights records remain poor or have worsened. These include serious irregularities in the October 1999 parliamentary elections and the April 2000 presidential elections. Security forces continued to beat and otherwise abuse detainees, to force confessions, and to fabricate or plant evidence. Several deaths in custody were blamed on physical abuse, torture, or inhuman or life-threatening prison conditions. Some reform of the prison system is taking place. Arbitrary arrest and detention continues. The press has generally been free, but on occasion security forces have intimidated and used violence against journalists. There is limited information available on the human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia due to problems in accessing these regions. Corruption at different levels of society is pervasive and still remains significant within the law enforcement agencies.

Websites:

Amnesty International Annual Report on Georgia 1999
<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar99/eur56.htm>

Civil Georgia On–line Magazine
<http://www.civil.ge/cgi-bin/newspro/fullnews.cgi?newsid1020855212,67349>,

U.S. Department of State 2002, Georgia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2001, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/760.htm>

National security and international support

One main issue that colours Georgian–Russian relations, notwithstanding Georgia's independence in 1991, is the perceived threat of Russification to Georgian national

identity. Despite this, Georgia and Russia have had close links. In 1993 Shevardnadze appealed to the Russians for military assistance when the Republic of Georgia was in serious danger of disintegration, and at its weakest because of the advance of Gamsakhurdia's rebel forces in western Georgia and the defeat of Georgian troops in Abkhazia. Russian military and technical assistance helped to bring an end to hostilities on the part of Gamsakhurdia's forces.

More recently, following the events of 11 September 2001, Georgia has entered into military partnership with the USA. The Georgian Training and Equipment Program (GTEP), which was officially launched in Tbilisi on 27 May 2002, is an extension of the ongoing cooperation between Georgia and the USA. Georgia has received \$100 million in aid and ten Huey helicopters. The main area of concern for both parties is the Pankisi Gorge, which is affected by the anarchy of neighbouring Chechnya.

Websites:

Civil Georgia On-Line Magazine

<http://www.civil.ge/cgi-bin/newspro/fullnews.cgi?>

Library of Congress Country Studies

<http://lcweb2loc.gov/fdr/cs/getoc.htm/>

The Observer

<http://www.observer.co.uk/international/story>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

<http://www.rferl.org>

Religious minorities

Georgia experiences problems with discrimination and harassment of some religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the New Apostolic Church, and Hare Krishnas. The Georgian Orthodox Church has lobbied parliament and the government for laws that would grant it special status and restrict the activities of missionaries from 'non-traditional' religions. There are no laws that require the registration of religious groups, unless they are involved in charitable work.

Websites:

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

http://www.csce.gov/digest_text.cfm?digest_id=30

UN Human Rights System 1999, Georgia Thematic Reports

<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/vol5/georgia.htm>

U.S. Department of State 2002, Georgia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2001, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/760.htm>

Women

Two main problems affect the rights of women in Georgia: violence and/or discrimination against them, and trafficking in women for the purpose of forced prostitution. There are no laws that specifically criminalize spousal abuse or violence against women. Domestic violence continues to rise, and women are reportedly discriminated against in the workplace, with many employers withholding gender-specific payments such as maternity benefit. Trafficking in women for forced prostitution is a feature of organized crime. Women, primarily Georgian women, are taken from Georgia to Turkey, Greece, Israel, and Western Europe. Women from Russia and the Ukraine have been taken through Georgia to Turkey. The government programme to combat violence against women, including measures to eliminate trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, has not been implemented due to financial limitations. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in combating trafficking and helping the victims. In 2000 the NGO Women Aid Georgia launched a public information campaign to educate women about the dangers of trafficking.

The economic effects of forced migration among displaced women who have fled Abkhazia and South Ossetia have led to changes in gender roles. Women have tended to adapt more readily to their new situation as displaced persons than men and have become the main household earners. They work on tea plantations and farms, or are market traders or sellers on street corners. Many of those who have crossed the border into the Gali region of Abkhazia to tend family farms abandoned during the conflict are women. Prior to displacement 72 per cent of women were fully employed, but in 1999 60 per cent were formally unemployed. IDP women are beginning to set up organizations to care for the specific needs of IDPs.

Websites:

IDP Project Norwegian Refugee Council
<http://www.db.idpproject.org>

U.S. Department of State 2002, Georgia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2001, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/760.htm>

Women Aid International
<http://www.womenaid.org/humanitarianaid/caucasus.html>

Civil society organizations in Georgia

With considerable assistance from USAID and other international donors, civil society organizations have mushroomed in Georgia since the mid-1990s. In 1995 there were four NGOs in Georgia. By 2000 this sector had grown to more than 3,000. According to international experts, however, most of these NGOs are in the initial stage of their development. They are having to cope with a lack of knowledge, skills, and experience of NGO work. Only a handful have reached the level of experience, organizational strength, and professional performance to have a tangible impact on their target groups. Recently, the State Ministry (Chancellery of the President) established the Department for Political Parties and Non-governmental Organizations.

It is responsible for the promotion and coordination of relationships between NGOs and governmental bodies.

Most of the Georgian NGOs were originally located in the capital Tbilisi. In the last couple of years, and due to international agencies' initiatives in rural areas, there has been an emergence of local NGOs. They face particular problems, such as the availability of support and their acceptance by local state authorities. In general, in most of the country NGO work is still practically unknown.

Most Georgian NGOs work in the fields of environmental issues, human rights, and civil society building, as well as on social and educational issues. One main problem for the work of NGOs in Georgia is related to the role of the third/independent sector; the idea of civil society is still hardly understood.

Three Georgian NGOs often referred to in the development literature are: the Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG); the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA); and the Farmers' Coordination International Centre (FCCI), formerly the International Centre for Coordination of Farmers' Education and Training (ICCFET).

Websites:

Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)
<http://ssgdoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/vlib/ssgfi/infodata/002249.html>

Open Society - Georgia Foundation
<http://www.osgf.ge/>

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)
<http://www.idea.int/georgia>

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
<http://www.usaid.gov/democracy/ee/georgia.html>

International organizations

UNHCR

UNHCR is present in Georgia in six locations. The main office is in Tbilisi, and smaller offices exist in the towns of Zugdidi, Gali, and Sukhumi (north-west). It also has two mobile teams in the north, based in Tskhinvali and Gori.

UNHCR's programme in Georgia consists of activities relating to IDPs and returnees, the capacity building of authorities, and the establishment of a legal framework for the repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks. Georgia is perhaps the only country in the world where UNHCR is involved in two simultaneous but separate ongoing conflicts, and where the organization is directly involved in peace negotiations to end these crises. In addition, it works to assist displaced civilians both as refugees (those who fled to Russia) and IDPs (the majority who remained inside Georgia).

The European Union

Tacis is a specific programme of the European Union (EU) for the Caucasus region. Tacis activities are concentrated into six areas: institutional, legal, and administrative

reforms; private sector and economic development; the consequences of change in society and infrastructure networks; environmental protection; the rural economy; and nuclear safety. Funding is allocated through national country programmes: regional programmes and small-project programmes. Georgia received a grand total of 332.6 million Euros for the period between 1992–2000.

The focus of EU assistance to Georgia has shifted from humanitarian assistance to promoting trade and investment. It is also involved in rehabilitation of conflict areas by promoting regional cooperation and by linking assistance levels to progress in conflict resolution.

The International Monetary Fund

In January 2001 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a three-year loan of about \$141 million to support the Georgian government's new Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Programme for 2001–2003.

The World Bank and other agencies

The World Bank has implemented sixteen large projects and allotted \$567 million since 1994. Early in 2002 it began to prepare its FY02-04 Country Assistance Strategy for Georgia, after having decided to continue financial support.

The World Bank, IMF, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have been working on the macroenvironment in areas such as economic restructuring, the policy and institutional reform needs of the social safety net, health reform, and education. The UN, EU, and a number of bilateral donors (such as USAID, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Italy) have worked on various aspects of local community development.

The World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the EU, and USAID among others, are assisting parliament and the judiciary in implementing internal reforms. UNDP, for instance, assists with civil service reform and other improvements aimed at eliminating the permissive climate and opportunities for corruption.

The World Bank focuses on municipal infrastructure development, which should improve economic conditions in key municipalities over the strategy period. Other donors fill equally valuable niches. For example, the UNDP is prominent in its support of Georgian think-tank publications which enrich current political analysis, and Great Britain gives support for tailored skills training in journalism.

Regarding the targeting of assistance, a key problem is that the most vulnerable populations have not been identified and kept track of (USAID 2000). Former Soviet social categories such as pensioners or multi-child families were initially used to target assistance, but proved unreliable.

The EU, UNDP, Great Britain, Germany, the British Know-How Fund, the Soros Foundation, and other private foundations have been active in their support of civil society and citizen participation. Local government strengthening is a new area in which international agencies (e.g., the EU, UNDP, and USAID) are starting to develop programmes.

The primary components for assistance are the same as for Azerbaijan: the assistance of communities in their transition from relief to longer-term development by encouraging self-sufficiency, especially in potentially volatile regions of the country and/or among the most vulnerable groups. In addition, international humanitarian agencies continue to maintain the capacity to respond to emergencies, should they arise.

A number of programmes are encouraging and supporting the process of dialogue between conflict groups in the Caucasus region. One example was the Georgian-Abkhaz meeting on environmental problems organized by LINKS in Turkey on 9–10 April 1999.

Other resources

Georgian newspapers

Georgia Times

Sarbieli

Other electronic resources

Assistance Georgia. Overview of humanitarian and aid activities in Georgia.

[http:// assistance.georgia.org.ge](http://assistance.georgia.org.ge)

Eurasia Foundation South Caucasus Cooperation Program.

<http://www.efscpp.org>

Georgian–European Policy and Legal Advice (GEPLAC). EU-funded body providing advice to the Georgian authorities on legal, economic, and trade issues

<http://www.geplac.org/>

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

<http://www.ifes.ge/>

National Democratic Institute (NDI). A US organization.
<http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/eurasia/georgia>

Open Society–Georgia Foundation. A member of the Soros Foundations Network.
<http://www.osgf.ge/>

The Washington Post Online
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/world/mideast/caucasus/georgia>

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The Europa World Year Book 2000. London: Europa, 2000.

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Sunny, R.G., *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

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