

INTRODUCTION

Outlining the Challenge

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Everyone knows that Russia lives in a troubled neighborhood. Weak and unstable states on its borders threaten to export their problems to it or to become conduits for the threats brewing in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and the Middle East. Yet other post-Soviet states face an even more daunting environment, and Russia occupies a large part of it. Scarcely any of these states, with the exception of the three Baltic states now nestled under Europe's protective wing, enjoy anything approaching a secure existence. On the contrary, many confront not only dangers on their borders, but fundamental sources of insecurity generated from within. All are suffering the uncertainties, setbacks, and miseries of inventing themselves from the ruins of the Soviet Union; many are beset by explosive internal conflicts and, in four cases, rebellious provinces that refuse to be a part of a common state.

If only a few post-Soviet countries were facing these perils, the outside world could look the other way. However, virtually no state in any of the subregions of the former Soviet Union—Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the “new lands in between” (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine)—is free from the threats posed by uncertain domestic transformations, potential civil strife, and regional violence.¹ Again, if one or all of these subregions (or for that matter the post-Soviet space as such) were located at the outer edges of the international system, other states, including major powers, could afford to ignore failures in meeting these challenges. But the post-Soviet space is the hinterland of the two most important strate-

¹ The notion of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova as the “new lands in between” is developed in Robert Legvold and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Swords and Sustainance: The Economics of National Security in Belarus and Ukraine* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

gic regions in the contemporary international system—East Asia and Europe—and of the cauldron where its gravest security threats boil—the Muslim south. In addition, each of the subregions within the post-Soviet space merges uneasily into some of the world’s most unstable areas.

Thus, the issue for the larger international community and its leading powers is not and never has been Russia alone, but rather Russia in geographical context. Yet even this does not do justice to the way this part of the world should be thought of and approached. Each of the subregions is capable of generating disorder menacing the stability or adding to the instability of neighboring regions. Each harbors trends toward domestic political illiberalism, spoiling the casual hopes many in the West had that the post-Soviet states would form the core of the next democratic wave. And each already serves as a corridor through which all manner of contaminant—drugs, arms, contraband, trafficked humans, and potentially supplies for weapons of mass destruction—make their way into the outside world.

No subregion better illustrates or incorporates more of these threats than the Caucasus, and no country is more afflicted with these hazards than Georgia. In addition, no country in any of the subregions is more central than Georgia in determining whether these threats will affect others. That is the first reason for this book.

For virtually all of Georgia’s existence as an independent state, the country’s peace and well-being have been under siege, undermined by violent separatist conflicts. The simmering problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia evoke national security in its most primal form—namely, as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state itself. Complicating this peril, Georgia’s original leaders faltered in guiding the country through the transition from its Soviet past to a more modern political and economic order, leaving the country weakened and poorly positioned to address the security challenges confronting it. Superimposed on the trouble that Georgia faces within its borders is the instability that prevails beyond them. To the south, the tension surrounding the unsettled issue of Nagorno-Karabakh leaves Armenia and Azerbaijan in a quasi-state of war. To the north, the ongoing insurgency in Chechnya makes Russia, already seen by Tbilisi as aggressive and ill-intentioned, still more on edge and overweening.

All of these factors create an immensely complex and intractable security challenge for Georgia’s new government. It has been more than a

year since the political opposition, following transparently manipulated elections, mobilized the streets and chased Eduard Shevardnadze's regime from power. The Rose Revolution of November 2003 and the presidential and parliamentary elections that followed installed leaders determined to break with past practices and face this challenge head on. At home, the new president, Mikheil Saakashvili, and his principal partners, the former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and parliamentary leader Nino Burjanadze, moved swiftly to reinvigorate the state, strengthen executive power, pare back corruption in government, disrupt criminalized networks, restore central authority in the often quarrelsome province of Ajara, create a trustworthy domestic police force, and collect taxes to sustain a revenue-starved government.

But the new government has accomplished these goals in what one of this book's authors calls a "prolonged revolutionary syndrome" and with tactics that by the first anniversary of the Rose Revolution had civil society advocates, many of whom were the new regime's original supporters, questioning just how pluralistic and open a society the new government would tolerate.² Moreover, in attempting to compel progress on the agonizing core issue of Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatism, the new leadership's impetuous initiatives during spring and summer 2004 reheated the embers of conflict, roiled relations with Russia, and brought admonitions from otherwise well-disposed Western governments. One year after the Rose Revolution, the central questions remained: As promising as the intentions and first steps of the new government were, could it surmount the profound challenges facing the country? Could it overcome the lethal sources of the country's insecurity?

If the deficiency of outsiders is their failure to assess judiciously their stake in Georgia's developments (as is true of the Russians) or to give adequate weight to their stake in them (as is true of the Europeans and the Americans), the weakness on the Georgian side is conceptual: the failure to think through the many dimensions of Georgia's security problem and their complex interconnections. Beyond a visceral sense of frustration and danger over the ethnically-charged regional conflicts, the inability of earlier governments to come to grips with the country's problems, and

² The quote is from Ghia Nodia and is cited in Jaba Devdariani, "Georgia's Rose Revolution Grapples with Dilemma: Do Ends Justify Means?" *Eurasia Insight*, October 26, 2004.

the Russian threat (each real enough), relatively little sophisticated conceptual thinking about Georgian national security had been done, at least not in official circles. In late 2000, the Shevardnadze government issued a formal document called, "Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future." It was an effort to articulate Georgia's approach to foreign and security challenges, but rather than grappling with the hard conceptual issues, it settled for a loose statement of basic principles and a wish-list of what it hoped to see happen, particularly in relations with Europe and the United States. The new Saakashvili government, as David Darchiashvili notes in his chapter, has given military reform a new impulse, and by spring 2005 it appeared ready to release a new national security concept for parliamentary and public discussion. Whether this document would at last capture the complexity of the threats facing the country and offer a systematic, realistic, and concrete response to them remained to be seen.

Thinking through the challenge to Georgian national security provides this book's second justification. The authors of this volume have tried to bring greater clarity to the task of identifying the key dangers facing Georgia and their complicated interaction. True, Georgia's security problem is often acknowledged to be multi-tiered, with the secessionist threat, the corrosion of state institutions, and Russian mischief-making treated as parts of a whole. And many have noted, although not spelled out, the linkage between insecurity within Georgia and instability within the region. But simply listing the different dimensions of the security problem without considering the synergy among them or without exploring the precise connection between trouble inside and outside the country makes it hard to devise a national security concept that does justice to the challenge. Second, and even more important when it comes to assessing the significance of Georgia and its security problems for the wider world, the failure to situate Georgia within a broader regional context leads policymakers in Washington, Brussels, and almost surely in Moscow as well to underestimate and distort their stake in the outcome of the challenges facing Georgia. That they care about Georgia because they have stakes in the region is not the same as recognizing the way that regional dynamics intersect. Nor is their genuine but general desire to see the new Saakashvili government advance toward democracy and draw closer to Europe any guarantee that they will muster policies suited to the intricate domestic and foreign environment in which Georgia operates.

We have, therefore, given ourselves three tasks in this book: First, to untangle the many different layers of the security challenge arising both within and outside Georgia and to explore the complicated ways they intersect and influence one another. Second, to explain why the challenge confronting this country matters to more than Georgia and its immediate neighbors—indeed, why it should be a problem taken seriously by major Western powers and their allied institutions, a problem requiring more than the material aid at the heart of current efforts. And third, to consider what the Georgians, their immediate neighbors, and the West ultimately can and should do in response. How, in short, might Georgians, Russians, Europeans, and Americans improve the situation in ways that enhance each party's national security while strengthening mutual security? And how might this be done within the realm of the politically feasible?

THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

For Russia and all other post-Soviet states, except arguably the Baltic states, security begins at home, because the turbulence and uncertainties surrounding their efforts to fashion new or at least viable political and economic systems after the collapse of the Soviet Union remain their single greatest preoccupation. In the case of Georgia, however, even before getting to the traumas of this task, its leaders confront the risk that the homeland they hope to reconstruct may not survive intact. Hence, security for them begins in the most tangible fashion—with preserving the territorial integrity of the country, and short of that, with restoring sovereign authority over broad swaths of territory where it has been lost.

Achieving this objective, however, is only the beginning of Georgia's security agenda. The anxieties of knowledgeable Georgians are not only prompted by the threat of separatism, but by the fear that neither the Georgian state nor Georgian society has the will or capacity to stand up to the threat. They worry that institutions, including those expressly designed to provide security, have so weakened, have been so corrupted, and have so become the preserve of families, clans, and special interests that they no longer have the strength to defend either the individual or the country from harm. Georgians even contemplate uneasily the possibility that they are the source of the problem: that what underpins Georgian identity ends up fracturing the larger community. These apprehensions explain why the Rose Revolution has become such a watershed—

because it represents Georgian hopes of at last breaking free of these shackles and reversing the downward descent.

Formidable as the internal sources of Georgian insecurity are, if the country enjoyed a benevolent or at least an unthreatening environment beyond its borders, the nature of the challenge would be more confined (albeit still not easy). On the contrary, Georgia's neighborhood offers trouble, not relief. Violence, either active or latent, surrounds the country. If intrastate conflict poisons Georgia's domestic life, regional conflict defines international relations in Georgia's immediate neighborhood. The absence of dialogue—often even of practical or economic intercourse, let alone the rudiments of community—in the South Caucasus leaves Georgia without support from its neighbors or, more important, the opportunity to concentrate on its own problems. It also creates the risk of conflicts in one area bleeding into another or generating tensions among neighbors forced to choose among contending parties. In particular, the uncertainty and violence in the Northern Caucasus, especially in Chechnya, make Russia a more aggressive and impatient neighbor. This, in turn, compounds a basic problem: even if Chechnya were at peace and the rest of the Northern Caucasus securely a part of the Russian Federation, Russia would still cast a large shadow over Georgia, given Moscow's slow and painful adaptation to its loss of control over a region that has been a strategic salient for two centuries.

These are the immediate, practical sources of Georgian insecurity. On a deeper level, history and geography conspire to create more permanent, structural impediments to Georgia's security. Georgia is part of the Black Sea region, which through the millennia, dating back to the Greeks and Scythians, has been dominated by the rise and fall of empires—Roman, Byzantine, Persian, and Ottoman—or by the interplay of dueling empires, such as the Persian and Ottoman from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries and the Russian and Ottoman in the nineteenth century. Over time, smaller societies were simply absorbed into these imperial domains or, as in the case of the Caucasus, turned into buffer zones (between Roman and Parthian, Byzantine and Arab, and Persian and Russian empires).³ For only a single century—the “Golden Age” of the Bagratid monarchy beginning with the liberation of Tbilisi from the

³ For an elegant recent retelling of this history, see Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Seljuks in 1122 and ending with the Mongol invasion in 1220—was Georgia master of its own fate. For nearly all of the last two hundred years, it remained a dominion of the Russian and then Soviet empire. During interludes of relative freedom, Georgia's choices ranged narrowly from seeking protection at the expense of autonomy (as with Erekle II's approach to the Russians at the end of the eighteenth century) to watching the country fracture (as under Alexander I's sons in the fifteenth century) or be partitioned (as under the Turks in the sixteenth century).

Now that Georgia is again independent, it faces the small power's predicament of existing alongside a large and less than beneficent neighbor, particularly when, as Jaba Devdariani stresses in his chapter, historical memory sets the two countries at odds. Georgia enters this new era without natural allies or a history of reliable alliances. As Thomas de Waal notes in his chapter, rarely has Georgia, when buffeted among competing great powers, been able to fall back on a united front with its Caucasian neighbors. The fissures and tensions that keep the Caucasus in disarray are not new; they have long-standing historical antecedents. As a result, Georgia is, to use de Waal's expression, "without a secure regional security environment."

Pronounced as these historical patterns are, nothing says that they must prevail or cannot be escaped. Choices matter: the choices Georgia's leaders make in facing domestic challenges, in dealing with the breakaway territories, in helping to fashion greater cooperation in the region, and in responding to the policies of external actors—in short, in playing the hand they are dealt. Alas, the choices made by Georgian leaders and their counterparts in the decade and half of independence have fallen considerably short of optimal. As a consequence, until recently the inertia of historical patterns and the force of contemporary trends were reinforcing rather than distinct. The unanswered question is whether the Saakashvili regime can divorce them.

Georgia's security challenge is large, dramatic, and complex. Its essence, however, can be thought of as two-part: At its core, Georgian security is about statehood; beyond this core, it reflects the unhappy reality that an insecure Georgia exists within a region of insecure states. The insecurity of statehood and the insecurity of neighborhood combine to produce the kind of security dilemma endured by only the most endangered countries.

To say that security for Georgia is about statehood contains, but does not convey, the underlying nature and full scope of the issue. What strikes the outsider with particular force (as it presumably will strike many read-

ers of this book) is how much the question of Georgia's very existence dominates Georgian thinking about security. It is not that Georgian policymakers and political analysts are oblivious to the dangers of violence within the region they inhabit; or are incapable of imagining how conflict between states might escalate to war; or are inattentive to the importance of a conventional defense policy addressed to conventional military needs; or are unmindful of the perils inherent in a badly managed relationship with Russia. It is simply that all these considerations pale alongside anxieties over Georgia's future and particularly its incapacity to find some means by which to draw the lost territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia back into the national fold.

Most countries, including the United States, Russia, and the European states, approach the question of national security by first laying out the character and range of threats they face. Georgia, however, in sharp contrast, begins not with the topic of threats, but with that of security—that is, by defining security itself. In the “National Security Concept for Georgia” proposed by the Strategic Research Center (Tbilisi) in November 1998, the authors place the uncertainties surrounding Georgian statehood squarely at the center of their formulation.⁴ They start from the premise that Georgia is in peril because state institutions are enfeebled, because society has lost its sense of common purpose, and because the nation has failed to create a locus around which to rally different ethnic communities. While not all official and unofficial voices are as explicit as the Strategic Research Center, most implicitly share a similar perspective.

According to the security concept developed by this group, security depends less on Georgia's ability to fashion a security strategy than to create a development strategy. Security will be the product of conscious and effective efforts to give the country a focus inspiring loyalty and a constitutive direction appropriate to Georgia's cultural identity, yet suited

⁴ *National Security Concept of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Strategic Research Center, November 1998), http://www.src.ge/policy_papers/national_security.html. Although the authors of the report are not identified, the founders of the center are David Iakobidze, former minister of finance; Irakli Menagarishvili, former minister of foreign affairs; Niko Melikadze, the executive director of the center; and Natela Sakhokia, the center's director. I cite this report not because of its political impact—my impression is that it had little if any influence on policy—but as representative in the spectrum of Georgian thinking.

to the changing imperatives of a globalizing international environment. This, however, requires a sovereign Georgia—that is, a Georgia able to make choices for itself, free of interference from outside forces. Hence, in this argument, the chain goes from a “national development strategy” to statehood to sovereignty to security. It is true that there is a circularity to this argument, because security *qua* sovereignty must underpin a strategy for domestic transformation, but the relationship between statehood and security is clear: statehood precedes security.

Ghia Nodia’s chapter in this book argues along similar lines. Security, he maintains, is the freedom of a people to pursue the “idea of what they want to be.” He calls it the “national project,” and anything that threatens to undermine or divert it constitutes a security challenge. In order for the national project to work, Nodia insists that it must respect “some kind of unique national identity,” whether based on language, culture, or “spirituality,” but it must also aspire to something more. In Georgia’s case, the “more,” he says, is the desire to emulate the liberal democratic model of European states. Yet as Nodia acknowledges, how can one be sure of what the national project is and who subscribes to it? If there are competing national projects, which has legitimacy? These questions push the problem to a deeper level and reverse the relationship between security and statehood.

The roadblocks to the national project in Georgia are considerable. According to Nodia, they include: “ethnic exclusivity” among the Georgians themselves; a Soviet institutional legacy aiding fragmentation; powerful “alternative national projects;” and an array of potential sources of tension, from Armenian and Azerbaijani irredentism to unintegrated ethnic groups. These obstacles are the internal dimension of the national security challenge; they are the threat to the national project, the threat to statehood. But they, by his light, do not alone constitute the problem. The deeper dimension resides in the faltering of political institutions, which accentuates the roadblocks to the Georgian national project, not the other way around. It is not that these obstacles explain the failure of institutions, but rather that the troubled condition of institutions account for the magnitude of these obstacles.

Hence, in Nodia’s view, to penetrate to the heart of Georgia’s security problem, one must explain the reasons for the weak state. His explanation takes him back to an essential duality in Georgian popular values: fancying, on the one hand, the liberal democratic model, but prejudicing

it, on the other hand, with an antipathy to the state and a readiness to hijack it for private purpose. Dig a bit deeper, and the problem appears to stem from the nature of the Georgian public's stake in the Western model: it accepts the democratic model, because it wants to be Western, and it wants to be Western to affirm its independence from Russia. In this chain, however, a commitment to the liberal Western model is for security's sake, not because of a strong attachment to the model's intrinsic worth.⁵ Add to this the Georgian public's instinctive mistrust of the state—any state, democratic or otherwise—because of what the state came to represent in Soviet times, and the prospect of overcoming state weakness by promising democracy dims, particularly when for many Georgians, democratic values compete with other values embedded in Georgian society and at times fostered by the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Other knowledgeable Georgians argue from the same basic point of departure. David Darchiashvili, another author in this book, elsewhere suggests that the future of Georgia's Rose Revolution depends "on its ability to mobilize around a national idea," something that cannot be done by simply assuming civil society will carry the day.⁶ Rather, the "project" requires "emotion, even romanticism." Hence, he argues, in order to succeed, Georgia's "democratic forces," must "draw on [Georgian] nationalism to strengthen their project," provided—and here is the rub—that it can be cleansed of "its dangerously ethnic flavor." In effect, Georgian nationalism must be rescued from its unholy alliance with corrupt officialdom and the criminal element, and deployed by democrats to legitimate a state capable of capturing the support of the alienated citizen.

So Darchiashvili is among the commentators who believe that Georgia's security problem starts from the frailty of statehood and that its most dangerous manifestation is the inefficacy of state institutions. In his explanation, however, the hollowing of institutions is due to rampant

⁵ This is my interpolation. Nodia insists that among most Georgians the commitment to liberal values and the democratic model is genuine, not instrumental, indeed, more so than in most other post-Soviet states.

⁶ David Darchiashvili, "Georgian Security Problems and Policies," in Dov Lynch, ed., *The South Caucasus, A Challenge for the EU*, Chaillot Papers no. 65 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, European Union, December 2003), p. 126, <http://www.iss-eu.org/public/content/chaile.html>.

corruption, which has led to three effects: first, “the privatization of security”—that is, state agencies responsible for national and public safety have become the preserve of corrupted state officials who subordinate them to private interests; second, the re-empowering of armed groups that only a few years earlier were thought to have been contained; and third, the entwining of “politics, crime, and clans.”⁷ Georgian officials at all levels “are deeply involved in dubious commercial deals that involve the open or hidden privatization of state assets,” all of which fosters in the public a sense that criminality is a normal and acceptable ethos.

The links among corruption, including its worst manifestation, the criminalized state, the enervation of institutions, and the erosion of national security all figure widely in most analyses of Georgia. Darchiashvili, however, makes them the core of his story. He is not alone. Pavel Baev goes further, contending that “Georgia’s troubles,” whatever the mischievous actions of outsiders have been, derive principally from “the anomalies and distortions of its own society, political institutions, and elites,” and that these stem less from “ethnic grievances, or past injustices, or communist legacies [than from] the all-penetrating shadow economy and corruption.”⁸ Indeed, he traces the rise of paramilitaries such as the National Guard and the Mkhedrioni at the outset of independence, the civil war in the early 1990s, and even the eruption of war over Abkhazia to “clan-based corruption,” whose roots had grown thick and sturdy during the Soviet period. What the Soviet era had wrought, the economic devastation following its collapse, the end of normal economic activity, and the rise of the shadow economy unleashed in still more virulent form.

In this volume, Darchiashvili looks specifically at the destructive interplay among the enfeebled state, corruption, and the military. Unlike a number of other former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, Georgia could not simply nationalize standing Soviet forces deployed on its territory and use them as the basis for a new Georgian military. Instead, during the rule of Georgia’s first post-independence

⁷ Darchiashvili, “Georgian Security Problems and Policies,” p. 113.

⁸ Pavel K. Baev, “Civil Wars in Georgia: Corruption Breeds Violence,” in Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher, eds., *Potentials of Disorder* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 128. (Baev recognizes that corruption and the shadow economy also formed part of the communist legacy.)

president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the void was filled by a variety of paramilitary groups, only some of which were loyal to him and all of which owed their first allegiance to the often criminal figures who commanded them. The first challenge for Gamsakhurdia's successor, Eduard Shevardnadze, therefore, was to bring these semi-renegade military elements to heel and achieve some degree of state control over their actions. Shevardnadze, Darchiashvili contends, went about the task by adopting a strategy of "divide and rule," picking off key paramilitary figures one by one. By its nature, however, this strategy stood in the way of rationalizing a new Georgian military, because it worked against a clear-cut centralization of military authority.

Darchiashvili explores in detail the painful, desultory stages by which Gamsakhurdia and then Shevardnadze sought to discipline the criminalized, ragtag, freewheeling military groupings used to fight Georgia's initial battles and to turn them into a proper military responsive to national leadership, under civilian authority, and subject to democratic overview. Until the end of the Shevardnadze era, notwithstanding numerous commissions, dozens of "reforms," and considerable input from the United States and other NATO countries, Georgia had not gotten very far in its military reform efforts. Darchiashvili lays the blame on Georgia's leadership, particularly on Shevardnadze's "divide and rule" strategy for dealing with the military and security forces he mistrusted and his willingness to ignore corruption among elements whose support he sought. To complete the vicious circle, Shevardnadze's inability or unwillingness to do what was necessary to create a reformed, well-institutionalized military was compounded by the failure to settle on a larger strategic concept to guide the effort. But this failure also traced back to the regime's incoherent, narrowly opportunistic approach to the military needs of the country.

Whatever the contrasts in emphasis, nearly all Georgian analysts understand the core of the country's security problem to be the compromised condition of statehood. What makes the issue so difficult, however, is that everything is a piece of a larger puzzle. Analyses that seek to locate the precise source of Georgia's security problem generally end up being circular, such as that of the Strategic Research Center mentioned earlier. It is a chicken-and-egg problem *par excellence*: what comes first, institutions capable of securing public loyalty and overcoming noxious forms of nationalism, or the transformation of nationalism permitting the emergence of institutions capable of commanding general support? Restoring

the state in order to attack corruption or attacking corruption in order to restore the state? Devising the “national project” or a “national development strategy” to consolidate statehood as a foundation for sovereignty *qua* independence, or battling for sovereignty to permit the pursuit of the national project?

Then there are the internal contradictions: Georgians, particularly Western-oriented foreign policy intellectuals and policymakers, commonly insist that however one gets there, the goal should be to create a liberal democratic system, but one that protects Georgians’ unique cultural, social, and historical identity. Yet liberal democratic systems require that conflicting identities be reconciled, if necessary by affording less protection to the predominant nationality. In addition, the equally frequent exhortation to predicate statehood on the reconciliation of warring national identities has no answer if a group refuses to be conciliated.

It is here that the outside world enters the Georgian situation. Its entry is often for ill, and when for good, usually more a promise than a fact. If the essence of Georgia’s security problem is statehood, its agonizing form is truncated sovereignty—that is, the absence of national authority over whole provinces, and, as Darchiashvili stresses, even the territory adjacent to these breakaway territories.⁹ The reality that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are *de facto* mini-states within Georgia’s borders, that Georgian writ has no standing in areas seen as integral to the Georgian state, and that the national government remains powerless to change the situation appears to focus the question of national security as nothing else can.

Because Russia is universally perceived as originally a party to Abkhazian separatism, subsequently as an obstacle to a Georgian–Abkhazian settlement, and ultimately as manipulating the Russian–Abkhazian relationship to pressure Tbilisi, the internal dimension of Georgian security automatically becomes international and highly inflammatory. Russia, viewed from the Georgian perspective, constitutes the single most dangerous factor in Georgia’s international environment. The reasons are many: Russia is seen as having stalled on the removal of its remaining military bases in Georgia in order to intimidate Georgia’s leaders or at least to prevent these facilities from falling into U.S. or NATO hands; it is viewed as bullying and willing to violate Georgian sovereignty if it thinks

⁹ Darchiashvili, “Georgian Security Problems and Policies,” p. 109.

its war in Chechnya warrants it; it is assumed to be behind past attempts to assassinate former President Shevardnadze; and it is suspected of doing everything from interrupting gas services to conniving with the regime's opponents in order to dictate Georgia's choices. But what consolidates these impressions and gives them special resonance is Russia's assumed readiness to abet Abkhazian and Ossetian separatism or, at a minimum, to exploit these conflicts with the aim of weakening or pressuring Georgia's national leadership.

REGIONAL CONFLICT AND GEORGIAN NATIONAL SECURITY

It is not that Georgian observers ignore the nuances that make the Russian threat less clear-cut. They are aware that at times Russian troublemaking may have been more the work of freebooters than by the design of those in power in Moscow. They accept that the tension and ill-will may not have been generated only on the Russian side.¹⁰ And they realize that while an issue like global terrorism may be used prejudicially against the Georgians by the Russians, Russia's stake in this issue is genuine, not merely instrumental, and consequently has the support of others, such as the United States, whose goodwill is important to Georgia.

This more subtle appreciation of the factors burdening the Georgian–Russian relationship is evident in Jaba Devdariani's chapter in this volume.¹¹ He sees the Russian dimension of Georgia's national security challenge as complex and rooted in the deepest levels of Georgia's national psychology. The clash of what he calls "national myths" gives a far greater resonance to contemporary frictions than they might otherwise have, particularly at a time when both countries are struggling to fashion new national identities. The fact that Georgians find inspiration—and the Russians offence—in the notion that Georgia has long been defiled and oppressed by Russian imperialism, however, does not distinguish Georgia from several other former Soviet republics. The difference between, for example, Georgia and Ukraine would appear to be in how

¹⁰ See the interview with Tedo Japaridze, "Georgia's Interim Foreign Minister: Russian Security Depends on Georgian Stabilization," by Giga Chikhladze, *Eurasianet*, January 6, 2004, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010604.shtml>.

¹¹ See also Jaba Devdariani, "Georgia on a Fault Line," *Perspective*, vol. 13, no. 3 (January–February 2003), pp. 1, 6–8.

uniformly this sentiment is shared throughout the population.¹² Segments of the Ukrainian population, particularly in the western half of the country, think as the Georgians do on this issue, but people in other parts of the country, particularly the eastern half, do not. As a result, attitudes toward Russia, rather than being a unifying backdrop to policy, become a divisive factor in domestic Ukrainian politics.

Dueling national myths, however, shape the context within which Georgia and Russia deal with the tensions that divide them; they do not create the tensions. These arise out of concrete circumstances—out of disputes over the liquidation of military bases or the imposition of visa regimes; out of activities seen as ill-intentioned or subversive; and out of frustration over conflicts, such as Abkhazia and Chechnya, where the other side is perceived as unhelpful or, worse, malevolent. Devdariani does not blame Moscow alone for all that has gone wrong in Georgian–Russian relations. Even when the Russians have, in his view, behaved aggressively, a part of the blame belongs to Georgia. He argues that when Georgia is focused, firm, and willing to assert itself in measured ways, the Russians act with restraint. A prime example of this was the Ajaran crisis in April 2004, when the Saakashvili government drove from power a local political boss who, with Russian complicity, had long defied the central government. Thus, Devdariani too is brought back to the problem of Georgian statehood. He too sees Georgian security—in his case, the Russian dimension—diminished by weakness on the Georgian side: by unsteady foreign policies, by leaders who use Russian actions to obscure their own failings, and by the corruption and infirmity of government itself, which encourages the Russians to treat these as exploitable vulnerabilities.

In the end, however, Devdariani and most Georgians do worry that Russia remains less than fully reconciled to its imperial demise and is determined to preserve as much control in Georgia and the Caucasus as possible. No part of Georgia's security agenda raises this concern more acutely than the problem of the separatist territories, particularly Abkhazia. Georgians know that the roots of Abkhazian and South Ossetian defiance reach deep into ethnic, cultural, historical, and political differ-

¹² Here I speak of the dominant ethnic group. Several minority groups in Georgia do not share the Georgian view of Russia, if one accepts Devdariani's representation of it.

ences. They know equally well that these differences were exacerbated by policies adopted by Georgian leaders, particularly in the 1990–91 period under Gamsakhurdia. True, as both Nodia and Christoph Zürcher discuss in their chapters, the spiral leading to the open break between the central government and these regions was the work of both sides. Whether the moves of Abkhazian leaders in 1988 to detach their region from the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic or the menacing measures adopted by the Georgian side in 1989 started the escalation to violence cannot be easily settled. Whatever the starting point, however, the rapid and convulsive interaction between Tbilisi on the one hand and Sukhumi and Tskhinvali on the other spun out of control in a matter of months (these developments are traced in detail by Zürcher in his chapter). The Georgian leadership’s neuralgic fear of Abkhazian and Ossetian “disloyalty” was more than matched by the Abkhazian and Ossetian fears of Georgian repression and, in the case of Abkhazian and Ossetian elites, fear of losing the privileged positions they held within their locales. But for the threshold of bloodshed to be breached—at least in the Abkhazian case—Zürcher maintains that yet another pathology was required: Georgia’s tragedy stemmed from military and paramilitary elements that, unrestrained by a debilitated state, triggered the violence in order to protect lucrative criminal activity. He calls these groups “entrepreneurs of violence.”

Once this threshold was crossed, Russia became a crucial factor. Georgians almost universally believe that the Russians abetted the Abkhazian side in the 1992–93 war, help that many Georgians still think was decisive in turning the tide against them. Their only uncertainty is whether the Russian role was orchestrated from Moscow or at the initiative of Russian military commanders and units in Abkhazia. In her chapter, Oksana Antonenko relates a far more complex story, one—and this is symptomatic of the deep emotions that flow at the base of this problem—that few Georgians, including most of those who contributed to this book, would buy. Indeed, the Russian military was involved, but in her view, its involvement was split. Parts of the military did supply or sell arms to the Abkhazian rebels, and Georgian troops were attacked by aircraft belonging to the Russian Air Force. At the same time, the command of the Transcaucasus Military District (inherited by Russia from the Soviet era) had transferred large stocks of arms to the Georgian military, including a sizable quantity of tanks on the eve of the August 1992 Georgian attacks on Abkhazia. And in the initial phases of combat, Georgian

forces were backed by Russian naval units in the Black Sea. Symptomatically, Antonenko argues, the political lineup back in Moscow was equally divided between segments of the elite (including the president, foreign minister, and minister of defense) who supported a “stronger unified Georgia” and others (such as parts of the military and security forces, regional leaders, and activists in the North Caucasus) who wanted a “pro-Moscow Abkhazia.”

In the longer run, by Antonenko’s account, Russia complicates the Abkhazia issue less because of malicious intent than because of the way it goes about its mediating role. In carrying out a Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping mission in Abkhazia, Moscow’s primary concern has been to prevent renewed violence, which from the Georgian perspective has had the perverse effect of securing Abkhazia’s border and solidifying its autonomy. It is true that Russia’s second war in Chechnya has given a darker cast to Russia’s role in Georgia since 1999. The Russians, beginning with President Vladimir Putin, see the Georgians as too sympathetic to the Chechen cause and, at a minimum, as uncooperative in helping to cut off outside support for the insurgents. They have retaliated by sharply criticizing Georgian leaders, threatening to act preemptively to quash an alleged Chechen threat from the Georgian side of the border, and, on occasion, apparently allowing Russian military aircraft to strike targets inside Georgia. Russia also began to enhance ties with Abkhazia after 1999—opening their common border, lifting a blockade that had been (loosely) in place since 1992, and extending citizenship to the Abkhazian population while imposing visa restrictions on the Georgian population, although it is difficult to know whether these actions were meant to pressure Tbilisi or were the lowest-common-denominator outcome of domestic political conflicts within Russia. In any event, they left the Georgians still more convinced that Russia could not or would not play the role of honest broker in the secessionist conflicts rending the country. Nor did Moscow do much to soften this image by tenaciously resisting a larger peacekeeping or peacemaking role for others, including international organizations.

Yet to push Antonenko’s argument further, the challenge Russia poses for Georgia is far more subtle and intricate than Georgians generally appreciate. It starts not so much from a tendency on Russia’s part to pursue openly aggressive aims as from a policy intended to have one’s cake and eat it too. That is, in the Abkhazian case, Russia is not out to

favor one side over the other but rather to preserve its influence with both. It is formally (and probably genuinely) committed to preserving the territorial integrity of Georgia, but it also does all that it can to foster ties with Abkhazia. It almost certainly wants a stable Georgia within a stable South Caucasus, but it also is jealous of its own power in the region and resents the idea of others such as the United States, Turkey, NATO, or even the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) intruding in what it views as its security sphere. Moreover, as Antonenko shows, specific Russian actions that on the surface appear malign or spiteful, such as imposing visa requirements on Georgian citizens, granting Russian citizenship and waving visa requirements for Abkhazian and South Ossetian residents, opening rail links to Abkhazia, and doing little to promote constructive international initiatives directed at a Georgian–Abkhazian settlement turn out to have a much more complicated basis. For these reasons, therefore, dealing with Russia requires a more astute and nuanced policy than Georgian leaders have devised to this point.

Both Antonenko and Devdariani, however, detect signs that Russians and Georgians at the outset of Saakashvili's tenure were ready to explore the possibility of putting some of the past behind them. Devdariani points to solid pragmatic (principally economic) reasons for the two parties to dampen tensions and seek a more stable relationship. Antonenko agrees and identifies what at the time seemed like a series of potential areas of economic cooperation. She also senses that based on Russian actions during flare-ups over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in late spring 2004, Moscow had grown less resistant to greater cooperation between Russia and NATO in the Caucasus and between the CIS peacekeeping force and the UN monitoring group in Georgia. Still, notwithstanding these initial hopeful signs, the bedrock of mistrust and frustration between the two leaderships remained, and, if anything, further hardened in the months that followed. By early 2005, Saakashvili, in a scarcely veiled reference, spoke of Georgia facing "the strongest and most aggressive—perhaps not the strongest but certainly the most aggressive—forces in the world."¹³ And, as one source close to Putin's entourage noted at

¹³ Saakashvili said this in his annual state-of-the-nation report to the Georgian Parliament, February 10, 2005, <http://www.kvali.com/kvali/index.asp?obiectivi=show&n=126>.

about the same time, Saakashvili stirs in Putin roughly the same animus that “Fidel Castro does for U.S. politicians.”¹⁴

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT: VORTEXES AND CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Nonetheless, in the end, barring an improbable geographical miracle moving Georgia to another place on the globe, Georgians know that they must find a way to live with their large northern neighbor. They also hope, as Georgia’s former Foreign Minister Tedo Japaridze expressed it, that Russians also know—or will come to know—that their security “depends on Georgian stabilization.”¹⁵ The difficult circumstances between these two countries, however, create a dilemma. Can Georgian–Russian relations be normalized bilaterally, or considering the hurdles, will progress depend on finding a broader framework? Devdariani argues the latter and suggests the possibility of a constructive triangle drawing in the United States, a more active role for the European Union (EU), or the invigoration of alignments such as GUUAM—the loose association of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and before Spring 2005 Uzbekistan. None of these alternatives, however, as he realizes, appears to be a very bright prospect. Herein lies the dilemma: It may be that the Georgian–Russian relationship resembles other relationships, such as the Israeli–Palestinian, North Korean–South Korean, and, until lately, the Indo–Pakistani, where the two parties alone are incapable of finding a way out. Yet “multi-tiered” solutions, to use Devdariani’s phrase, face their own structural obstacles, making them scarcely more accessible.

Imagining a three-way conversation among the Americans, Russians, and Georgians to ease the Georgian–Russian bilateral relationship out of a dead end is fine in the abstract, but it soon confronts the reality that the U.S.–Russian strategic interaction in the Caucasus over the last decade has been far more competitive than cooperative.¹⁶ Thus, Georgia, rather than benefiting from the dynamic of U.S.–Russian relations in this part of

¹⁴ Interview in Moscow, March 24, 2005.

¹⁵ Chikhladze, “Georgia’s Interim Foreign Minister: Russian Security Depends on Georgian Stabilization.”

¹⁶ The continuing Russian apprehension over the United States’ military role in the post-Soviet space is evident in Svetlana Babaeva, Ekaterina Grigoreva, and Nikolai Khorunzhii, “Oni uzhe nikogda ne uydut ottuda,” *Izvestiya*, January 25, 2004.

the world, has tended to be its victim. It is true that at important points—such as after Russian military incursions into Georgia, Putin’s September 2002 arrogation of the right of preemption, and Russian foot-dragging on withdrawing from its military bases in Georgia—Washington has urged Moscow’s restraint. Both the nature and the effect of U.S. intervention, however, more closely corresponded with a competitive than a cooperative model. It hardly led Russian authorities to rethink the underlying relationship with Georgia. If anything, it induced those Russians who see U.S. encroachment in the Caucasus as a direct threat to argue their case even more adamantly.

In truth, Georgia is dragged in the wake of U.S.–Russian relations and cannot realistically expect to appropriate them for its own purposes. This unfortunate fact is only the first of several dimensions complicating Georgia’s strategic position. Two metaphors capture the heart of the problem. They also begin to suggest why the stakes are considerable for more than Georgia alone. The two metaphors are a vortex and a series of concentric circles.

To begin with the first of these, conflict cleaves the Caucasus, north-south and east-west, creating a large obstacle to more constructive forms of cooperation within the region. As Bruno Coppieters argues elsewhere, until the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian conflicts are resolved, regional integration cannot go forward.¹⁷ Moreover, unlike other regions of the former Soviet Union, conflict does more than create political divisions and generate tensions; it dominates every aspect of the region’s international relations. Others have accurately described just how amorphous, fractured, and malign relations are in the South Caucasus. In Dov Lynch’s retelling, the South Caucasus is about as politically impoverished as a region can be.¹⁸ Disputed borders, economic blockades, disrupted rail and road links, and punitive visa regimes not only obstruct the moderating effects of commerce and contact, they serve as both the source and the amplification of widespread tension. To say the region

¹⁷ Bruno Coppieters, *EU Policy on the Southern Caucasus*, Policy Paper for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, and Defense Policy of the European Parliament (January 20, 2004), p.7, <http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/committees/afet/20040120/wider%20europe%20caucasus.pdf>.

¹⁸ Dov Lynch, “A Regional Insecurity Dynamic,” in Lynch, *The South Caucasus*, pp. 9–21.

lacks the institutions present in other areas, from Southeast Asia to Western Europe, is a risible understatement of how absent any form of community—institutionalized or not—is among Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In addition, each of the three states in the region, like other post-Soviet states, is struggling to recast itself as a political, economic, and national entity—indeed, to do all three things simultaneously. These three countries, more than others, however, suffer from the feebleness and corruption of political institutions critical to this effort. Uniformly weak states in an amorphous, conflict-ridden setting obviously would pose a security challenge to Georgia even were its own internal picture healthy. Because the picture is not, trouble outside the country's borders risks mixing with trouble on the inside, making both more serious threats.

De Waal, however, stresses not only the politically fractured nature of the Caucasus, but Georgians' delinquency in doing much about it. Indeed, as de Waal writes, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are so remote from one another, so unengaged economically that they scarcely constitute a region. As he says, on most counts "the three Caucasian countries are painfully estranged from one another." Economically, they remain divided, not least because of "strong criminalized vested interests" that obstruct any kind of a "Caucasian common market." Yet over time the Georgians have done little to alter this circumstance. Under Gamsakhurdia, Georgia pursued what de Waal calls a "messianic image of Georgia as a special European country," largely divorced from the tortured life of the region and bent on distancing itself as much as possible from Russia. Shevardnadze, Gamsakhurdia's successor, devoted himself to forging closer ties with the United States, and, in de Waal's words, "showed almost no interest in enhancing political or economic integration with Georgia's neighbors." Thus, rather than mediating between its neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia scarcely lifted a finger, leaving that role to the OSCE and the Russian government.

At the center of a region so charged with tension, Georgia, rather than emerging as a hub of stability, the metaphor that should be its natural lot, risks—in part of its own making—turning into a vortex of instability. If progress stalls and disorder follows, a Georgia in crisis could well pull neighbors in, if only to defend co-ethnics, protect material stakes, or prevent spillover effects from infecting their own domestic strife. On the other hand, it is not only the failings within Georgia that create the dan-

ger of the country's fission; unrest along Georgia's borders could easily seep across, and in the case of its northern border with Russia, already does. Thus, the danger remains that Georgia, rather than being a steady influence within the region or an engine of regional integration, could yet turn into the opposite. In addition, if developments elsewhere in the Caucasus, including to the north, explode, Georgia has a much better chance of getting itself into trouble at home.

None of these danger points had dissipated a year and a half into Saakashvili's tenure. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh wavered uncertainly between, on the one hand, glints of hope that the Armenians and Azerbaijanis were making progress in their bilateral talks, perhaps enough to merit a new initiative from the OSCE Minsk Group, and, on the other, signs that Baku really was considering military action to force the issue. In Chechnya, the war dragged on, with all the attendant uncertainty of where its collateral effects might erupt next and what the Russians might do in response. And in Georgia, after the ill-considered effort of the new leadership to achieve a breakthrough on the South Ossetia stalemate in summer 2004, frustration continued to simmer when Saakashvili presented a new, and by most lights generous, peace plan to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2005, only to see it utterly thwarted by a recalcitrant South Ossetian leadership backed by Moscow.

The images of the Caucasus as swept with instability and of Georgia as potentially a vortex rather than a hub of stability capture a crucial part of the picture, but not all of it. They convey the essential character of fragmentation and instability in the region's international relations. Yet there is a great deal more to the political geography of the area, for the Caucasus is not an enclave, but an arena where other powers are also active, which brings us to the second metaphor: Georgia at the heart of a series of concentric circles. Historically, of course, the Caucasus has been the fought-over outer wedge of empire. The empires (Persian, Ottoman, and Russian) are gone, but their rump successor states—Iran, Turkey, and Russia—once more jostle against one another in this space, sometimes directly, more often indirectly. Russia remains more resistant to Iranian and Turkish intrusion into the area than Iran and Turkey are toward Russia's dominant role, but Tehran and Ankara generally view Russia's actions in the Caucasus warily, particularly when it comes to energy politics and often welcome the chance to curtail Moscow's influence.

Turkey and Iran's real impact in the Caucasus is more direct and, while both positive and negative, arguably more the latter than the former. They do create opportunities for some of the Caucasian states: Turkey provides aid to Azerbaijan and economic options for Georgia, while Iran helps to reduce Armenia's political and physical isolation. That said, however, Iran and Turkey's more powerful effect on the international relations of the Caucasus stems more from the challenge they pose to other states. Iran constitutes, after Russia and Armenia, a third major security concern for Azerbaijan. The sources of potential tension, as Arif Yunusov has noted, are multiple: the stirrings of the large Azerbaijani population in Iran, disputed access to the Caspian gas fields, and Iran's policies toward the Shia of Azerbaijan, the country's dominant religious group.¹⁹ Iran, it is true, has not attempted to exploit trouble in the region, including Nagorno-Karabakh, and for a fleeting moment in the early 1990s even sought to help mediate the Azerbaijani–Armenian conflict.²⁰ Yet Iranian restraint in this one sphere is quickly lost among Azerbaijanis amid the other sources of disquiet.

For Armenia, Turkey represents the preoccupation. Rather than a shadowy influence on the periphery of the Karabakh conflict, Turkey occupies a central place, allied to Azerbaijan, a critical link in the blockade of Armenia, and insistent on a resolution of the Karabakh issue before any real progress toward a normalization of Turkish–Armenian relations will be entertained. Notwithstanding halting steps to move beyond the past (including the 1915 massacres of Armenians) during the first years of Armenian independence, Armenian resentment over Turkey's position on Karabakh reinforces the long-held popular conviction that the Turks dream of restoring dominion over the Caucasus and would happily see the annihilation of Armenia as a means to that end.²¹

To add to the tangle, these bilateral enmities feed seamlessly, albeit at some remove, into a larger architecture of competition and conflict in the Caucasus. Not only do Azerbaijan's close ties with Turkey aggravate its

¹⁹ Arif Yunusov, "Azerbaijan's Security Problems and Policies," in Lynch, *The South Caucasus*, p. 146.

²⁰ For a brief account of the one ill-fated Iranian attempt to bring the two sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict together in May 1992, see Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 180.

²¹ De Waal makes the point and then illustrates it in *Black Garden*, pp. 274–75.

relationship with Iran, given the frictions between Iran and Turkey. And not only do Armenia's dealings with Iran have much the same effect on Turkey. They also extend alignments generated in the equally unstable regions to the south and west: The link between Azerbaijan and Turkey reaches to Israel; the link between Iran and Armenia extends to Greece. This dynamic draws the international politics of the Caucasus into the next concentric circle of international relations and carries the potential of bringing the politics of the Near East and the Balkans into the Caucasus. Consequently, weakness and instability in the Caucasus mixes with weakness and instability in adjacent regions.

The outer and last concentric circle is political rather than geographical. It is the level at which the major powers enter the Caucasus. Both the United States and the Europeans, including the European Union, also see their interests implicated in the region. The oil and gas in and around the Caspian Sea constitute the most obvious stake, and devising the means for getting it to European markets creates both foreign policy and commercial challenges. Because the politics of Caspian oil and gas is more about transport than production, no countries care more about influencing outcomes than the United States and Russia, which adds to the competition between the two countries. The U.S. determination, tracing back to the middle years of Bill Clinton's presidency, to ensure that the oil and gas flow east to Turkey—not south, lest it strengthen the Iranian regime; and not only north, lest it leave Moscow with too much leverage over the energy-producing states in the region—has stimulated a response in kind from the Russians. As a result, the new pipeline from Baku through Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, long championed by the U.S. government, has been more a bone of contention between Washington and Moscow than a basis for cooperation.

The international politics of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea region cannot be explored here—beyond the account provided in Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia's chapter—other than to point out that the field of play is broad, involving Central Asia as well as the Caucasus; populated with important third-party players, such as the Europeans, Iranians, Turks, Chinese, and the oil majors; and governed by cooperative as well as competitive rules. Even the often politically contentious issue of pipelines has a positive side to it, and at times, as in the case of the Caspian Pipeline System (CPS), the United States and Russia have worked together. This, however, has not been true for the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline,

the major pipeline crossing Georgia. The BTC Pipeline has from the beginning stirred Russian discontent, particularly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, casting another shadow over the Georgian–Russian relationship.

The U.S. agenda in the Caucasus, of course, involves more than oil, and, indeed, has evolved markedly in recent years. As Brenda Shaffer and others have noted, since September 11, Georgia and Azerbaijan (especially Azerbaijan) have taken on a special importance in Washington’s war on terrorism.²² In a way that oil considerations did not, the new American preoccupation with global terrorism emboldened the Bush administration to override Congressional restrictions on aid to Azerbaijan and has prompted the Pentagon in particular to pay attention to ways these countries can be useful pieces in the mosaic of its strategic planning. Here too, however, while the United States and Russia share a common concern about global terrorism and cooperate in many respects in the fight against it, in the Caucasus their notions of the threat and how to respond are less in tandem. Thus, even on a question where the United States and Russia generally see eye to eye, their competing views of the conflicts in the Caucasus and where terrorism fits in make it hard for Georgia to mobilize a relationship with one of these countries in order to avoid yielding to the other. As a result, for Georgia, the war on terrorism affords neither a firm basis for building ties with the United States nor a very helpful context in which to deal with Russia.

Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia all tend to see Russia and the United States as the decisive actors in the region. Given the region’s impasses, bloody-mindedness, and disarray, the natural instinct is to assume that help and conceivably solutions must come from the outside. Because Moscow and Washington, however, are not viewed as equally benevolent, Tbilisi, Baku, and Yerevan feel forced to choose between them and then to labor to ingratiate themselves with the one they have chosen. But, because a thoroughgoing alliance with the United States is unavailable and such an alliance with Russia is unwanted (even by Armenia), each country in the South Caucasus must protect its options with both of the major powers. Again, realities are harsh, requiring a delicate balancing act.

²² Brenda Shaffer, “U.S. Policy,” in Lynch, *The South Caucasus*, pp. 58–59.

Thus, a remarkably formidable array of interlaced problems stands behind the stark notion of the twin security challenge facing Georgia: the “insecurity of statehood” within an “insecure neighborhood.” Seeing how interconnected and tangled the many sides of the statehood problem are, it is disconcerting, although perhaps understandable, that Georgia has done so little to collect its thoughts and articulate a strategic doctrine to address the challenges facing it. In his chapter, Darchiashvili rehearses the various false starts in this direction—the diverse attempts to outline something that might serve as a defense agenda. None, beginning with the so-called military doctrine adopted by the Georgian Parliament in 1997 and ending with one last abortive effort by the government in 2003, ever made it off the shelf. All of these efforts, including the military’s own 2002 White Paper and the official 2000 “Vision and Strategy for the Future,” were either not vetted sufficiently within the political establishment to gain general acceptance or, worse, not sufficiently refined and attuned to the hard realities facing Georgia to be useful.

The 2000 “Vision and Strategy for the Future” well illustrated the problem. It spoke in sweeping terms of strengthening Georgian citizens’ “feelings of loyalty to the Constitution and a sense of common citizenship” and of the “need to consolidate the unity of the state by building a stronger sense of nationhood among its people and regions.”²³ It also acknowledged the need for a “long-term national program,” but this only served to recognize a problem, not to conceptualize it; to highlight a challenge, not to break it down into its constituent parts. General principles—such as respecting territorial integrity, protecting human rights, abjuring blockades, and preserving the environment—are fine, but they are at best a lodestar, not the starting point for disaggregating threats and devising a strategy by which to respond.

As Darchiashvili reports in his chapter, President Saakashvili and his colleagues have set in motion an effort to create a national security concept more directly relevant to the concrete challenges facing Georgia, and by spring 2005 it was about to appear. How close the new leaders would come to accomplishing this goal, and how easily they would overcome the lethargy and bureaucratic indifference of the past stood as a major test of their ability to transcend the limitations of their predecessors.

²³ “Georgia and the World: A Vision and a Strategy for the Future,” October 10, 2000.

Without a fundamental guide of this sort, as Darchiashvili stresses, it is difficult to devise a working military strategy, determine the necessary size of forces, and assign missions. The 2000 “Vision and Strategy for the Future” did contain a section devoted to defense strategy that effects a somewhat closer connection between need and response. Georgia, it says, must be able to defend the pipelines crossing its territory, defeat “attacks by modest size forces,” prevent “smaller-scale infiltration of border areas,” and “deal with potential unrest or disruption along the borders that might result from violence in neighboring regions.” Although it also casually demands a military capable of “defeating any type of armed forces that might seek to divide Georgia or to change, by force of arms, its political system or form of government,” elsewhere the document speaks more realistically of an ability to “counter threats until assisted by the international community.”²⁴ Still, as Darchiashvili notes, the task of spelling out a practical, well-defined defense posture entails much more.

THE OUTSIDE WORLD

If Georgian efforts to think hard about the elaborate and intricate nature of the security challenge facing their country have fallen short, how well have the major outside powers done in identifying their stakes in Georgia and the best way of securing them? As Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia argue in their chapter, until recently, not very well. Not only have the Europeans and the Americans for much of the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union failed to treat the challenge of Georgia and the region in its full interlocking complexity, they, unlike the Georgians, had long underestimated the stakes involved.

In fairness to the Americans and Europeans, it was easy to underestimate the stakes. Were it not for the oil, it well might be thought that those on the outside would be wise simply to wall themselves off from the chaos, tension, and backwardness of the region—in effect, creating a (political) “sarcophagus” around it much like that for the Chernobyl reactor. The Iranians and Turks, even though they border the Caucasus, have good reason to want to concentrate on their primary foreign policy fronts, which lie elsewhere. The Europeans have their hands full closer to home and, indeed, within their home. The United States scarcely needs

²⁴ “Georgia and the World.”

yet another corner of the globe to police or remake. Even the Russians might be better off if they could distance themselves from the uncertainties in the Caucasus, and focus on countries and regions—such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Central Asia—that are economically, strategically, and politically more critical to them.

None of these states, of course, will do anything of the kind. They cannot and will not in the first instance because of the inertia of past behavior—because of the assumptions, prejudices, aspirations, fears, and actions that have gotten them to this point. So for the foreseeable future, most of the players, including Russia, are likely to do more or less what they have been doing in the Caucasus, unless the course of events within the region changes fundamentally or, in the case of Russia, the summer and fall 2004 surge of terrorism tied to the war in Chechnya provokes the Putin administration into a suddenly more assertive policy. Putin's renewed talk of attacking wherever necessary beyond Russian borders against terrorists—Chechen and otherwise—and careless rumbblings within the Russian political elite about securing Russia's position in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by extending recognition to these territories are straws in the wind. Still, for the moment, the safer bet is that none of the outside countries, including Russia, is likely to assert itself dramatically in the Caucasus. At the same time, however, neither in all likelihood will any of them walk away from the region. Thus, on the one hand, they are unlikely to invest heavily in recasting relationships, forcing change, or, alas, facilitating peace. On the other hand, they are equally unlikely to run great risks to exploit instability, displace rivals, or build strategic outposts.

The second reason that these outside countries cannot—or best not—forget Georgia and the Caucasus is the one normally offered by policymakers and analysts when exhorting their governments to pay attention. Wherever the region ranks in the grand scheme of things, it has the capacity to produce things good and bad on a scale justifying Brussels, Berlin, London, Paris, Washington, and others' interest. The usual list begins with oil and gas—gas being more important to the Europeans, oil to the Americans, while both are important to the Iranians, Turks, and Russians.²⁵ Then comes the trouble—the flow of drugs, arms, and the

²⁵ The point is often made that the United States actually has a very low stake even in oil from this region, because it represents such a small a percentage of U.S. imports. This ignores the very real interest the United States has in getting as much oil as possible to the world market.

like, particularly in and around the breakaway territories; the risk that unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will reignite; and the prospect of terrorists gaining a foothold. The Iranians, Turks, and Russians all have reason to contemplate how instability anywhere in the region could spill across their shared borders, and, with the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU in 2007, the Europeans will also become immediate neighbors to the Caucasus. As Helly and Gogia underscore, Europe will never be entirely secure if the Caucasus is left out of Europe's security purview.

The Americans, since September 11, have a different concern: they see the region, particularly a state like Azerbaijan, as a battleground in their new war with global terrorism. Allied states with Muslim-majority populations are few and far between, and Washington values them not just for the facilities they may lend, but also for the examples they provide. Russia, it scarcely needs saying, views the region as an organic extension of its domestic agenda, beginning with the war in Chechnya and including the basing needs of its military, as well as a field of opportunity for Russian state monopolies and quasi-public corporations in communications, electricity, and the like.

According to Helly and Gogia, despite a range of initiatives and a fair volume of assistance, for most of the last decade neither the Europeans nor the Americans framed the challenge posed by Georgia quite as it merited. The United States and Europe, it is true, were more generous to Georgia on a per capita aid basis than to almost any other post-Soviet state, but they were slow to use this aid in a brutally direct way to induce institutional change and a serious struggle with corruption. They showed sympathy for Georgia's position on the breakaway territories, but they were unwilling to take the lead in forming an international monitoring group that would relieve Georgia of its dependence on the Russians. They had at various points, including the 2004 rise in tensions, sought to keep the lid on in South Ossetia, but they had been reluctant to back a more assertive role for the OSCE in the conflict. The EU had toyed with developing a "strategy for the South Caucasus," but then left it largely in abeyance. The United States had sided with Georgia at moments of heightened tension between Tbilisi and Moscow, but had done very little to mediate a long-term normalization of relations between the two countries.

Since the Rose Revolution, the engagement of the United States, the EU, and NATO has palpably grown. The "donor fatigue" of Shevard-

nadze's last years has disappeared, replaced by a new surge in economic assistance, including \$1 billion pledged by the international community at the June 2004 Brussels donors conference. In addition both NATO and the EU have clearly energized their approach to the country. Each has quickly moved to map out steps by which Georgia can bring itself more in line with the needs and practices of their organizations. President Bush's visit to Georgia in May 2005, the first by a U.S. president, graphically underscored Washington's eagerness to give the new regime its seal of approval and, in the process, to signal its stepped up concern over Moscow's churlish behavior toward Tbilisi.

The task ahead, however, is formidable, and, if Europe and the United States truly mean to make a difference, they will have to go beyond the measures they have already undertaken. State-building and the arduous process of fashioning institutions capable of addressing corruption and restoring public confidence should be the priority of Western aid, but progress must also be achieved in thawing Georgia's frozen conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Helly and Gogia credit the West with understanding that the outside world can contribute here only if the effort is genuinely multilateral, allowing the resources and influence of all parties, including Russia, to be brought to bear. Alas, they say, Russia has done little to foster a multilateral approach, and the West has not done enough to make what multilateralism there is effective. Matters were not helped in January 2005, when the Georgian leadership laid out an unusually generous peace plan for South Ossetia to the applause of Americans and Europeans, only to receive a stony dismissal from the South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoiti, then on a visit to Moscow—and his Russian hosts made no effort to contradict him.

This still leaves an important vulnerability in Georgia's relations with the West, one noted by many of the authors in this book: the gap in expectations between Georgia's hopes for integration into the West and, unsurprisingly, the West's hesitancy to provide firm assurances that it will happen. Georgia's new Western-oriented leadership not only desires Georgia's membership in NATO and the EU, but believes membership in one or both is within reach. Washington and Brussels do not want to discourage Georgia or remove an incentive to domestic reform, but they are still not ready to embrace the prospect. The resulting ambiguity built into even positive steps such as Georgia's action plan with NATO and the EU's new European Neighborhood Policy reflect genuine ambiguity on

the West's part, but this uncertainty carries the risk of, at some point, casting Georgia into the negative limbo that long characterized Ukraine's relationships with NATO and the EU and that has only begun to dissipate in the wake of the Orange Revolution.

Important as these considerations are, they underestimate the stakes the outside world, including the United States and Europe, has in Georgia's fate and the fate of its neighborhood. To appreciate these stakes at this other level, developments across the post-Soviet area must be factored in. True, what once was the Soviet Union no longer hangs together; it is a disintegrating space, with countries immersed in their subregions, and the subregions slipping away from the Russian core and fusing with often troubled neighboring areas. Yet, notwithstanding this fragmentation, trends within the post-Soviet space are similar, do interact, and have their greatest significance for the larger international setting as a composite. Viewed from this perspective, Georgia and its neighbors matter far more than most outsiders recognize in three respects.

First, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, many on the outside, particularly in Europe and the United States, casually assumed that the bulk of the new states would soon be part of the "third wave of democratization," that is, would want to create open, democratic political orders buttressed by market-oriented economies. Over the intervening years, the scales fell from the eyes of these outsiders as the post-Soviet countries struggled and stumbled. But none of the major powers, including those closest to the post-Soviet space, had faced up to the danger that the bulk of these states at the outset of the new century were not in transition to some form of genuine democracy, however imperfect, but settling for an illiberal, counterfeit version. Not many policymakers in Washington, Brussels, or Tokyo (and unsurprisingly, in Beijing or Moscow) gave much thought to what the failure of most post-Soviet states to make it to democracy would mean for their own countries.

Until the Rose Revolution, the Orange Revolution, and the turmoil in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, the pattern was scarcely encouraging. The politically unreconstructed countries—Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—remained so, but rather than forming a doomed circle of increasingly isolated remnants of the past, they were joined by a steadily increasing number of states ready to imitate them, at least in part. Virtually the whole of Central Asia—including Kyrgyzstan, whose leader's democratic aspirations were genuine at the start—had slowly slid from

the path of open political competition, meaningful political parties, transparent decision-making, and relative freedom of expression. Ukraine drifted further from, not toward, democracy in the initial rounds of the 2004 presidential election, until the regime overreached and provoked a public reaction much like the one in Georgia in 2003, only with still more dramatic consequences. In Russia's case, few were able to explain how the Russians could turn an oxymoron like "managed democracy" into anything resembling a liberal democratic order. And in the Caucasus—in Armenia and Azerbaijan, not just in Georgia—the 2003 parliamentary and presidential elections veered powerfully in the wrong direction.

It may be that the revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan represent a historic countertrend capable of stemming and perhaps reversing the general tide away from democratic reform. But for that to be so, those who led them must prove that they have reopened the door to democratic progress while simultaneously demonstrating that they have the ability to mitigate, if not solve, their countries' problems. While it remains to be seen whether the Saakashvili government can prevail against the enormous obstacles facing it—or even whether in the process it can preserve its commitment to a more pluralistic and open political order and a more transparent and competitive economic order—the mere fact that leaders have come to power who believe these goals should be their guide breaks the discouraging general trend among post-Soviet states.

It would be naïve to take what happened in Georgia, Ukraine, let alone Kyrgyzstan as certain to inspire publics elsewhere while cowering their high-handed leaders, particularly since the events in these countries have yet to prove self-sustaining.²⁶ Yet if orderly, progressive change within the post-Soviet space is important to stability there and beyond, every wisp of hope—every fragment of a positive model—deserves strong outside support. Moreover, as the post-Soviet space loses cohesion, the

²⁶ Indeed, if anything, leaderships in a number of states, including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Russia were treating the Georgian case as a negative object lesson and taking steps to ensure that opposition groups were not able to mobilize street demonstrations around varied, but mounting grievances. Matters were not helped by chaos and political self-seeking among Kyrgyz politicians in the immediate weeks after the March 2005 upheaval in Bishkek.

effect of one state on another shrinks to its own immediate vicinity. Change is likely to be subregional, and each subregion will likely require its own constructive example of a state that has halted the slide toward illiberalism and resumed progress toward democracy. In an ideal world, the most influential candidate in Central Asia would be Kazakhstan (not Kyrgyzstan); in the west, Ukraine; and in the Caucasus, Georgia. That is not the way strategists in any of the world's major capitals yet think.

Second, there is a critical factor checking the centrifugal forces within the post-Soviet space: Russia. Russia continues to be the single most powerful external influence on the political and economic life of every post-Soviet state, with the exception of the Baltic states. While weak in comparison to its former Soviet self, not to mention in comparison to other major powers, Russia has more economic, political, and military capacity to help or hinder its new neighbors than any other power. It also continues to see its stakes in these countries as greater than any other power does. Thus, to the extent that China, India, Pakistan, and the United States have interests in Central Asia, as they surely do; or Iran, Turkey, the EU, and the United States do in the Caucasus; or the United States and the EU do in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, effective policy must cope with the Russian factor. No interested party can simply ignore the Russian dimension or assume that it will take care of itself.

The obverse is still more important: From the beginning, despite the original neglect, it has been apparent that the direction and character of Russian policy in the newly independent states would play a large role in defining the overall condition of Russian foreign policy. Invariably, therefore, it was certain to matter in Russia's relations with other major powers. In the global contest that was the cold war, the axes of Soviet interaction with the United States, Europe, China, and Japan were direct—at the Elbe, in the Middle East, and across the nuclear divide. They have been replaced, in the murkier and more remote circumstances of the post-cold war world, by indirect encounters, as Russia maneuvers to preserve its influence among its new independent neighbors and the West goes about its own separate agenda in these states. Thus, if the United States, Europe, China, or Japan wants to put relations with Russia on a different footing or to enhance cooperation and manage discord, it will have to take account of the chemistry with Russia in these new intermediate regions. The same holds true for Russia in its relations with the other major powers.

In the 1990s, the chemistry between the West, particularly the United States, and Russia had grown progressively less promising. Gradually, the dynamic within the post-Soviet space had begun to take on the quality of strategic rivalry—over pipelines, NATO Partnership for Peace exercises, key bilateral relationships, and the overall direction of NATO policy. After September 11 and the equanimity with which Putin initially accepted the deployment of U.S. and other forces in Central Asia and U.S. Special Forces in Georgia, the trend toward rivalry appeared to dissipate. It now seems that this trend is anything but over. Although less openly and stridently, Putin and his people have made it plain over the last two years that they have no intention of ceding a dominant voice to the United States or any other combination of powers in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the former western republics. Sometimes with military resources or assertive diplomacy, but more often with economic clout, Moscow has underscored its determination to compete with any outside player, especially the United States, which is seen to be attacking Russia's presence and influence.

Thus, if the United States and Europe hope to see the historically vexed issue of Russia's relationship with the West resolved and Russia integrated into its universe, and if Russia wants something similar, the two sides will have to find ways of making the post-Soviet space an area of constructive, rather than destructive, interaction. No part of the post-Soviet space poses this challenge more sharply than the Caucasus and no country presents it in more neuralgic form than Georgia. Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan may all be bigger prizes, but in none of them, with the obvious exception of Ukraine, does perceived U.S. involvement arouse Moscow's instant and emotional jealousy as intensely as in Georgia. And in Washington, no region raises more suspicion of Russia's ill intentions than the Caucasus and no country seems more the object of Russia's impatience and heavy-handedness than Georgia. Figuring out how the United States and Russia can work together rather than at cross purposes in Georgia, therefore, is not only crucial in addressing the security challenge facing Georgia, but vital to the kind of mutual relationship Moscow and Washington can build between themselves. Although Russia's relationship with the EU is richer and more ramified, it too faces something of the same challenge.

Third, the future of much of the post-Soviet space remains a question mark. At this point, there is no way of knowing whether most, or even

any, of these new states will fashion stable political and economic orders; whether they will be able to manage the animosities that bubble up from within and threaten from without; whether they can overcome the maladies, including the corruption of values and institutions, that have taken root during the formative period of their independence; and whether they can escape the deformed politics that have kept other regions of the world in turmoil and ruin. Some states, of course, have a better chance of surviving these threats than others, and it is crucial to the entire post-Soviet region that Russia appears to be one of them, although its progress is likely to be uneven. If, however, there is a part of the post-Soviet space that represents the question mark in darkest outline, it is the Caucasus. It is the hard case.

Thus, if the major powers—not just the United States and the Europeans, but China, Japan, and for these purposes Russia as well—recognize the importance of seeing the uncertainty that hangs over the post-Soviet space resolved in a way that adds to the vitality and stability of the world outside, they need to give coherence and depth to their currently disparate, scattered, and incomplete engagements in this part of the world.²⁷ If they come to see, as they should, the wisdom of laboring seriously to begin untangling the sources of tension and conflict widely prevalent throughout the post-Soviet space, the Caucasus is as good a place to start as any. More than any other region, it combines everything that can go wrong: war-torn societies and war-divided states; ethnic divisions; corrupted political societies; embattled reforms; economic failure; the scourge of drugs, illegal arms, and terrorists; as well as natural resources that others covet and that the haves are too ready to use against the have-nots.

If achieving progress on the hard case is the best way to create and temper a capacity for dealing with a generic problem, then the outside world has a reason to focus on Georgia and the Caucasus, one that again transcends the intrinsic significance of the region. I would not make the

²⁷ It is, of course, characteristic of European, Chinese, and Japanese policy that none of these countries has seen its stakes as extending to all parts of the post-Soviet Space. For China and Japan, this has left the Caucasus largely beyond their purview. In a companion volume to this book, I have made an argument why this is shortsighted. See Robert Legvold, ed., *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), especially the introduction.

indefensible argument that ameliorating Georgia's security problems and, in particular, its separatist challenges is more important for the peace and stability of the Caucasus than finding a way out of the Nagorno-Karabakh impasse. Both problems, in fact, constitute the nucleus of the mutual insecurity problem in the region. The international politics of the area will not change fundamentally until both are resolved; although, as one untangles a dense knot by picking at one strand and then another, the same method might be applied in the Caucasus. No method, however, is likely to produce much, unless it is underpinned by an appreciation of how complex and ramified the security environment is for Georgia and its neighbors.

For that, we invite the reader to turn to the contributions of our co-authors. Ghia Nodia begins the book by probing the most profound "inner" dimension of the problem: the interplay between the burden of the past and the challenges as well as failures on the path to state-building and reform, and how all of this has shaped the way national security has been addressed under successive regimes. His core concept is the "national project," by which he means the normative ideal that defines the sources of state sovereignty and the desired political order. He locates the main "sources of Georgian insecurity" in the failure to integrate competing national projects, a criminalized economy, and ineffective constitutional and institutional reform.

In the second chapter, Christoph Zürcher turns to the failure of the Georgian state to prevent violent mobilizations during its transition to independence, most particularly in the loss of South Ossetia in 1991 and of Abkhazia in 1993. David Darchiashvili then analyzes the various stages in the development of a Georgian defense posture. He deals directly with the military dimension of national security, including the construction of the armed forces, the devising of strategic doctrine, the management of civil-military relations, and the taming of renegade military actors. In chapter four, Jaba Devdariani looks at the Russian dimension of Georgian security, and in the following chapter, Oksana Antonenko zeroes in on the Russian role in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

In the sixth chapter, Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia consider U.S. and European policies toward Georgia as part of their approach to security in the Caucasus, including support for state-building and economic development. Tom de Waal, in the seventh chapter, turns to what might be thought of as the indirect regional factors complicating Georgian national

security: the energy and the security stakes of various players in the oil and gas pipelines in Georgia; second, the impact of regional conflicts in which Georgia may not be directly involved but suffers the effects nonetheless (Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia–Turkey, and Azerbaijan–Iran), and finally, regional organizations that bear on security, such as the unsteady collaboration among Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM).²⁸ Finally, in the conclusion to this volume, my co-editor, Bruno Coppieters, reframes the security challenge facing Georgia by placing it in a spatial context that features the varied dynamics in center–periphery relations and then offers thoughts on what the future holds.

²⁸ GUUAM has once again become GUAM, since Uzbekistan no longer finds Georgia and Ukraine after their revolutions to be attractive partners.

