

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

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- **EU-Russia Dispute Over Gas Highlights Georgia's Critical Role as Transit Route**
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- **Economic Stimulus Plan Emphasizes Job Creation, Infrastructure**
- **Swiss Foreign Minister Visits Georgia to Sign Representation Agreement**



"Georgia is a very important partner of the United States, a valued partner. Our relationship rests of course on shared values," said US Secretary of State Rice shortly before signing the US-Georgia Charter on January 9. "This Charter underscores the principles and outlines the ways to advance our relationship and our cooperation in defense, trade, energy security, strengthening democratic institutions, people-to-people contacts, and cultural exchanges."

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

THE GUARDIAN: Eka Tkeshelashvili on "New Hope for Georgia"

WASHINGTON POST: Mr. Putin's Cold War

PROJECT SYNDICATE: Joschka Fischer on "The West cannot afford to ignore Russian challenge"

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Russia takes a hit in EU energy crisis

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Editorial-The Winter Gas War

FOREIGN POLICY: Georgia's FM on what his country needs from the US

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: It's shelter but not a home

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Putin plainly intends to use Europe's dependence on Russian energy to advance an imperialist and anti-Western geopolitical agenda. The only rational response is a dramatic acceleration of the EU's search for alternative energy sources—and greater support for countries Russia seeks to subjugate."

—Washington Post editorial (Jan. 8)

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Jan 20: EU External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner visits Georgia

Jan. 22-23: Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Yerevan

Jan. 24-25: Swedish Social Democratic Party Leader Mona Sahline visits Tbilisi

Jan. 26-27: Swedish International Cooperation Minister Gunilla Karlson visits Georgia

Feb.10-12: OSCE PA President visits Georgia

Feb. 15: UN monitoring mandate expires

Mar. 31: EU monitoring mandate expires

TOP STORIES

Georgia Signs New Strategic Partnership with US to Advance Euro-Atlantic Integration

The US and Georgia signed a landmark strategic partnership charter on Friday that aims to deepen Georgian democracy, accelerate its integration into Western institutions, and safeguard its sovereignty. The pact—which outlines cooperation in defense, trade, energy security, and culture—is broadly supported by both major US parties. Said President Saakashvili: “For the first time in its recent history, Georgia is starting to establish itself as part of the international system,” he said. “And Georgia is getting significantly closer to the Euro-Atlantic space.”

AP (Jan. 9): [US, Georgia outline deeper cooperation www.iht.com](http://www.iht.com)

CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 9): [Full text of United States-Georgia Charter www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

EU-Russia Dispute Over Gas Highlights Georgia’s Critical Role as Transit Route

With Russia continuing to anger its European counterparts by strangling the flow of natural gas through Ukraine, leading politicians and analysts are making the case for alternative energy supply routes. Wrote one editorialist: “Europe’s response to the dispute is important because it will guide future pipeline decisions that would have big repercussions for Gazprom and for Eastern Europe.” The current dispute should help breathe new life into the Nabucco pipeline, which would run through Georgia and Turkey. Said President Saakashvili: “As the Ukrainian case has demonstrated no one in Europe is secured from geopolitical risks.”

LOS ANGELES TIMES (Jan. 9): [Kremlin uses gas as a weapon www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)

CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 9): [Saakashvili on Russia-Ukraine gas dispute www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

Government Establishes Anti-Corruption Council in Renewed Bid to Fight Graft

Parliament has established an inter-agency anti-corruption council to reinforce an existing measure aimed at permanently eradicating corruption in Georgia. “The council will update the anti-corruption strategy, which now needs new momentum; the council will also implement recommendations delivered by both civil society and international organizations,” said one Georgian MP. According to Transparency International’s 2008 corruption index, Georgia progressed significantly, ranking 67 out of 180 countries.

CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 8): [Anti-Corruption Council set up www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

Stimulus Plan Emphasizes Job Creation, Infrastructure

The Government proposed a GEL 2.2 billion (€1 billion) economic stimulus package to generate critical economic growth and thwart a grave economic crisis. Finance Minister Gilauri told fellow cabinet members on Friday that job creation and infrastructure development are at the heart of the stimulus plan. Within a month, tenders for over GEL 1 billion in infrastructure projects will be announced. The projects, Gilauri said, would generate between 25,000 and 30,000 new jobs. Said President Saakashvili: “We should turn entire Georgia into a huge construction site, to avoid a large-scale economic crisis like those that have hit Ukraine, Latvia, Hungary, Turkey, Russia and many other countries.”

CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 9): [Saakashvili briefed on stimulus package www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

Swiss Foreign Minister Visits Georgia to Sign Representation Agreement

On a visit this week to Tbilisi, Swiss FM Calmy-Rey signed a formal agreement with FM Vashadze to represent Georgia’s diplomatic interests in Moscow. Russia and Georgia severed relations after Russia invaded last August. “Switzerland has major experience in dealing with such issues and Tbilisi is certain that Bern will be able to protect the interests of Georgian citizens in Russia,” Vashadze said. The Swiss have signed a similar accord to represent Russia in Tbilisi.

AP (Jan.12): [Switzerland to represent Georgia, Russia www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)

CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan.12): [Swiss Foreign Minister visits Georgia www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

Eteri Chkadua’s intense figurative paintings have led critics to invoke Brueghel and Hans Memling. But the Georgian native, who now lives in Brooklyn, shows a spectacular range that goes well beyond the realism of the Dutch masters. Chkadua’s more recent work—on show as of January 24 at the The Luna Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm—has been labeled magic realism and praised for its elaborate, elegant synthesis of old and new worlds.



Eteri Chkadua

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INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

THE GUARDIAN: Eka Tkeshelashvili on "New Hope for Georgia"

The strategic partnership pact signed last week with the US marks a major step in Georgia's progress towards integration with the entire transatlantic community, writes NSC Secretary Tkeshelashvili. The charter reinforces Georgia's responsibilities towards the EU and NATO, while serving as a statement of common principles and a blueprint for a partnership rooted in democratic values. The agreement also allows the two countries to work more effectively together to address common security problems, to help Georgia secure the physical diversification of European energy routes, and to further strengthen Georgian democracy.

www.guardian.co.uk

WASHINGTON POST: Mr. Putin's Cold War

Russia is again aggressively using its energy exports to divide Europe and undermine states it considers its rightful subjects. Like President Saakashvili, Ukrainian leader Yushchenko favors the entry of his country into NATO. Putin responded to Saakashvili with an invasion last August; now he has launched an offensive against Yushchenko. The real message of this cold week is the same that Europeans have repeatedly received—and largely ignored. Putin's regime plainly intends to use Europe's dependence on Russian energy to advance an imperialist and anti-Western geopolitical agenda. The only rational response is a dramatic acceleration of the EU's search for alternative energy sources—and greater support for countries Russia seeks to subjugate.

www.washingtonpost.com

PROJECT SYNDICATE: Joschka Fischer on "The West cannot afford to ignore Russian challenge"

"What role should post-Soviet Russia actually play globally and in the European order?" asks former German FM Fischer. He advocates forging a pragmatic strategic partnership with Russia while transforming NATO into a multi-faceted European security system. "Of course, this approach presupposes two things that don't exist at the moment: a common transatlantic approach to dealing with Russia, and a European Union that acts in much greater unison and is therefore stronger," he writes.

www.project-syndicate.org

AFP: Russia takes a hit in EU energy crisis say analysts

Russia's dispute with Ukraine undermines its position as Europe's dominant energy supplier and weakens Moscow's diplomatic standing. "Just as in Georgia, it certainly means Russia has to make concessions to agree with a certain international machinery and agenda," says Russian expert Yevgeny Volk. The need to bring in EU monitors to mediate—comparable to those brought in after Russia invaded Georgia—is evidence of Moscow's diminishing international influence in adjudicating disputes in its neighborhood.

www.abc.net.au

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Editorial-The Winter Gas War

The salient fact about the conflict between Russian and Ukraine over gas supplies: Russia's strongman is wielding the energy club to undermine the pro-Western government in Kiev and scare the EU into submission. The dispute is a strategic opportunity for Obama to assertively support Ukraine and Georgia's bid for entry into Western democratic alliances, a position he advocated while in the Senate and on the campaign trail. The best American response to the latest Russian provocations would be to restate that desire.

www.wsj.com

FOREIGN POLICY: Georgia's FM on what his country needs from the US

FM Vashadze says the US-Georgia charter advances the country's democratic ambitions, helps safeguard its territorial integrity, and propels Western integration efforts. "It's a very powerful signal to everybody that nobody—first of all the US—is going to tolerate something like the August war again." He also takes Russia to task as an occupying force: "We're not talking about ethnic conflict; we're talking about the cleaning of those territories of their core population to build up Russian military bases," he says. "So we have a very simple question: Can Russia use those occupied territories as an instrument of influence? As this charter shows, and as the world's attitude changed, we see that, no, Russia cannot do that anymore."

www.foreignpolicy.com

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: It's shelter but not a home

As it builds housing for 31,000 people displaced by Russia's invasion and ethnic cleansing campaign, the Government is trying to address immediate needs while advocating fiercely for the right of IDPs to return home. Georgia will permanently house the displaced by the August war by the end of this month and will provide housing for all refugees by 2011, including hundreds of thousands displaced in the 1990s. Each family will own outright a furnished three-room house for up to six people. Refugee Minister Kobe Subeliani underscores that all refugees will keep their political status of "internally displaced people" until they return to their native homes. Russia continues to deny refugees access to former homes and prohibits all international monitors from entering the separatist zones.

www.csmonitor.com

WEBSITES @ GEORGIA

Civil Georgia: Leading independent English-language news website on Georgia: <http://www.civil.ge>

Georgia Update: Official government information service: <http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge>

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies: Leading non-governmental organization that focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy: <http://www.qfsis.org>

Georgian Mission to NATO: <http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge>

Georgian Parliament: <http://www.parliament.ge/>

Government of Georgia: <http://www.government.gov.ge/eng/>

Local Government: Official website of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi: http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.ge>

National Investment Agency: <http://www.investgeorgia.org>

President Saakashvili's official website:

<http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=0>