

GEORGIA UPDATE

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- Council of Europe Calls on Russia to Give EU Monitors Full Access by Year's End
- Sculpture of Georgian Poet Shota Rustaveli to Join Pantheon of Literary Stars in Rome's Borghese Gardens



President Saakashvili addressed lawmakers Monday to lay out his vision for further liberalizing Georgia's economy in order to create jobs, attract foreign investment, and solidify the country's ranking as one of the world's best places to do business. His proposed “Liberty Act” would embed Georgia's economic freedom in the country's constitution. It caps state budgets at 30% of GDP, budget deficit at 3%, and government debt at 50%. It enshrines the free flow of capital and profits across Georgia's border, firms up the protection of private property, and bans the establishment of new bodies to regulate financial services, communications, and utilities.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

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BLOOMBERG: Russian Paratroopers Stage War Games Simulating NATO Attack

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“Only two countries have recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This means that the international community does not approve this decision and continues to support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The position of France and the European Union is unchanged and I am glad that Kazakhstan has the same position.”

—French President Sarkozy during a visit to Kazakhstan this week

“The report will not have any impact on the decisions already made in NATO.”

—NATO Secretary General Rasmussen during an Oct. 7 news conference, during which he confirmed that Georgia will one day join the Alliance

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Oct. 5-9: Georgian-NATO joint military training “NATO Days 2009”

Oct. 12- 14: Georgian FM Vashadze visits the UK

Oct.13-15: Minister of Euro-integration Baramidze attends NATO Parliamentary Seminar on Ukraine and Regional Security issues in Kiev

Oct. 16-18: State Minister Yakobashvili visits Sweden

Oct. 27: FM Vashadze visits Brussels

Oct. 27: CoE Georgia Cooperation Council meeting in France

Oct.: Vice Premier Baramidze visits France.

Nov. 11: Eighth-round of Geneva peace-talks

TOP STORIES

President Proposes Bold Reforms to Embed Economic Freedoms in Constitution; "Liberty Act" Caps Budget, Debt

In an address to Parliament on Monday, the President proposed a sweeping set of bold constitutional reforms to embed economic freedom in the Constitution. The Liberty Act caps state budgets at 30% of GDP, budget deficit at 3%, and government debt at 50%. It enshrines the free flow of capital and profits across Georgia's border, provides firmer guarantees for private property, and bans the establishment of new bodies to regulate financial services, communications, and utilities. Finally the Liberty Act requires that any tax increases be approved in a referendum. "Low and simple taxes are our greatest achievement that attracts investments to the country, creates new jobs and gives more money to people and business," the President said, adding: "The government should not be able to use the right of increasing a tax or introducing a new one without public consent," calling this proposal "the most important principle" of the package. He also linked Georgia's aspiration to more liberalism to Tbilisi's drive of "final liberation from Russia."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili Lays Out "Act on Economic Freedom"](#)

As EU Report on War Vindicates Georgia, Government Sets Sights on Winning the Peace

The highly anticipated war report released last week by the EU-funded fact-finding mission vindicated Georgia's claims of Russian provocation and ethnic cleansing crimes. "They said even more truth than I could ever imagine," said President Saakashvili. "It is a great diplomatic victory for Georgia." The war probe also found evidence of ethnic cleansing against Georgians, reaffirming the Georgian government's claims of Russia's mass human rights violations. Meanwhile, the Georgian Government said it is focused on winning the peace: "Sooner or later we will need to talk with Russia, with democratic and free Russia, which has a responsibility before international law, its neighbors, and the international community," said Georgian FM Vashadze.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU-funded report on August war](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Vashadze: Georgia will start talks with democratic Russia one day](#)

[WASHINGTON POST: Georgia sees vindication in war report](#)

NATO Chief Reaffirms That Georgia Will Join the Alliance

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen underscored yesterday that the findings of the EU-commissioned report on the Russian 2008 invasion would have no influence on Georgia's aspiration to join the alliance. "The report will not have any impact on the decisions already made in NATO," he said. Recalling the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit decision, Rasmussen told a news conference that Georgia and Ukraine would one day become alliance members, providing that they meet NATO standards. He also reiterated that NATO allies "insist on respect for the sovereignty of Georgia and Georgia's territorial integrity."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: NATO Chief on EU-Backed Report on War](#)

Russia Continues to Escalate Tensions in the Black Sea

Russia continues to escalate tensions in the Black Sea, announcing that it may dispatch its navy ships to protect commercial vessels bound for Georgia's Russian-occupied territory of Abkhazia. The aggressive move follows the Russian coast guard chief's warning last month that his forces deployed to Abkhazia will intercept Georgian ships if they make incursions into what the separatist province sees as its territorial waters.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: Russia to send navy to escort Abkhazia-bound ships](#)

Council of Europe Calls on Russia to Give EU Monitors Full Access By Year's End

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) called on Russia to give EU monitors complete access to Georgia's Russian-occupied territories by 2010, fulfilling the obligations of two previous resolutions. PACE demanded that Russia allow "unrestricted access" to EU monitors to both S. Ossetia and Abkhazia; grant freedom of movement for Georgian civilians across the administrative borders; recognize "formally and effectively" the right of return of all displaced persons from the August war to their original place of residence; and initiate "a credible investigation" into acts of alleged ethnic cleansing. The resolution passed with 80 votes in favor of placing more stringent demands on Moscow and 36 against.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: PACE calls Russia to fulfill obligations by 2009-end](#)

Sculpture of Georgian Poet Shota Rustaveli to Join Pantheon of Cultural Stars in Rome's Villa Borghese Gardens

A monument commemorating the famous 12th century Georgian poet, Shota Rustaveli, will be erected in the Villa Borghese Garden in Rome, Italy. Eighteen out of twenty members of Rome's mayoral commission voted in favor of adding the monument to a memorial honoring the world's famous cultural figures. "The Italian government's decision to include the famous Georgian poet's monument is a serious recognition and indication that Georgia has made an outstanding contribution to development of world culture," said Georgia's Culture Minister Rurua. A Georgian sculptor will make the bust of the beloved poet.

[RUSTAVI: Monument to famous Georgian poet to be erected in Rome](#)



The Georgian premier of the 19th-century ballet "From Siberia to Moscow," by Danish ballet master August Bournonville, will be held at Tbilisi's Opera and Ballet state theatre on October 22. The two-act ballet first premiered over 130 years ago at the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen and was based on Bournonville's month-long travels throughout Russia. The ballet's reconstruction was championed by Frank Anderson and will be orchestrated by Zurab Nadereishvili..

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WASHINGTON POST: Editorial—Verdict on a war

The EU-sponsored report on the origins of war in Georgia rejects Russia's main claims about the conflict, finds it guilty of sponsoring or tolerating human rights crimes, and asserts that any country that follows Moscow's lead in recognizing two provinces of Georgia as independent nations will itself be violating international law. Moscow's claim that Georgia committed "genocide" and thus justified its invasion, the report says, was false; moreover, "much of the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense." The mission also confirmed that "irregular armed groups on the South Ossetian side that would not or could not be adequately controlled by regular Russian armed forces" committed violations of human rights law and possibly war crimes, including the ethnic cleansing of Georgians.

www.washingtonpost.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Editorial-Georgia on their minds

The outbreak of fighting in the South Caucasus was the culmination of years of deliberate and repeated provocations by Russia following Georgia's 2003 "Rose Revolution," which overthrew a pro-Kremlin regime in favor of the pro-Western government of Saakashvili. Ms. Tagliavini's report takes note of this backdrop. Yet it shrinks from drawing the obvious conclusion, which is that this is a war the Kremlin wanted, schemed for, and got.

online.wsj.com

REUTERS: Georgia says war report pins blame on Russia

Georgia's government pinned the war blame on Russia after the EU-funded war inquiry group released its highly controversial report last week. "No democratic government can survive if, when foreign forces enter its territory, it fails to defend its citizens," a government statement said. "Georgia acted as any democratic nation would have done—a fact that is impossible for any reasonable observer to deny." Meanwhile, National Security Advisor Tkeshelashvili said: "The report says very clearly that Russia violated international law, that Russia had no legal justification for invading Georgia and continues to be in breach of international law by the occupation of Georgia's territories and recognizing regions of Georgia."

www.reuters.com

AL JAZEERA: Georgia points to Russia invasion

The EU report gives ample evidence of Russia's military buildup in the months before August 2008, and of its political provocations that violated Georgian sovereignty and international law. "The commission confirms that Russia invaded Georgia before Georgia took military action," a Georgian government statement said. Many ordinary people on the streets of Tbilisi, the capital, backed their government's position. "Russia is to blame; it has long been trying to take away Georgia's territories," said Lia Tevdoradze, an economist.

english.aljazeera.net

BLOOMBERG: Russia fails to meet terms of Georgian ceasefire, Kouchner says

Russia isn't fulfilling the terms of the French-brokered peace that ended a five-day war in Georgia last year, French FM Kouchner said. "No, no, no," said Kouchner when asked if Russia was sticking to the so-called Medvedev-Sarkozy plan, named after the French and Russian presidents. Kouchner played a key role in the shuttle diplomacy that led to an end of hostilities.

www.bloomberg.com

NEWSWEEK: The Coming Russia-Georgia Clash Over Abkhazia

All summer, Kremlin officials hinted that hostilities between Russia and Georgia could rise to a boil again. Now it looks as if Moscow has decided to turn up the heat. Moscow's hardliners seem determined to reassert their influence—one Russian parliamentarian warned that Georgia is "running around a barrel full of gasoline with a burning torch." It could be a hot winter.

blog.newsweek.com

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Maritime security deficit growing in the Black Sea

Russia has changed maritime borders practically at will in the eastern Black Sea at Georgia's expense and raises the prospect of doing so again in the Crimea at Ukraine's expense. Russia holds uncontested naval sway beyond its own maritime borders, in the waters around Ukraine's Crimea and off Georgia's Russian-controlled coastline, reaching to the vicinity of Poti (which Russian forces bombed and blockaded temporarily in August 2008). Alarming, NATO's Secretary-General Rasmussen's display of goodwill—through OAE cooperation exercises—seems to overlook the Russian fleet's challenges to maritime security and international law in the Black Sea, which have escalated in recent weeks.

www.sigurantaenergetica.ro

EURASIANET: Georgia's Abkhaz IDP schools keep dream of return to Abkhazia alive

Nearly 20 years after Georgia's war with Abkhaz separatists, Georgian children whose families fled the breakaway region still study in schools designed to keep the memory of Georgian-controlled Abkhazia alive. "Parents prefer to take their children to IDP schools because they know the teachers, the children know each other—they are from the same settlement," says Khomeriki, the Abkhaz minister of education and culture in exile. Meanwhile, Georgia's Cultural Minister Rurua said: "We still have the hope that we will definitely return."

www.eurasianet.org

RFE/RL: Mart Laar champions "Stand Up For Georgia" letter

Former Estonian PM Matt Laar urged Europe to stand up for Georgia, cautioning against forgetting former totalitarian rule in Europe and the construction of a new dividing line in Georgia. "It's important that Europe remembers these events and remembers how several areas and countries fell under the rule of totalitarianism. It's important to celebrate the fall of the Berlin wall, and the fall of Communism. Europe should keep this in mind as a lesson and should speed up the European integration with Georgia."

www.rferl.org

BLOOMBERG: Russian paratroopers stage war games simulating NATO attack

More than 1,000 paratroopers dropped down near St. Petersburg, as Russia wrapped up three weeks of war games simulating a NATO attack. Russia, together with ally Belarus, is conducting land, air, and sea maneuvers dubbed "West 2009" to test command coordination in the event of an invasion from Poland and the Baltic states. "The purpose of the exercises is to prepare the Belarusian and Russian armed forces for securing the strategic stability of the eastern European region," said the Russian Defense Ministry.

www.bloomberg.com

WEBSITES @ GEORGIA

Civil Georgia: Leading independent English-language news website on Georgia.

Georgia Update: Official government information service.

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies: Leading NGO focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy.

Georgian Mission to NATO

Georgian Parliament

Government of Georgia

Local Ministry of Foreign Affairs

National Investment Agency

City of Tbilisi: Official website of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi

Office of the President of Georgia