

## Georgia Conflict Assessment

---

*Submitted to:*

Cate Johnson  
USAID/Tbilisi

**USAID**  
The US Agency for International Development



*Submitted by:*

ARD, Inc.  
159 Bank Street, Ste. 300  
Burlington, Vermont 05401  
*telephone: (802) 658-3890*  
*fax: (802) 658-4247*  
*e-mail: ard@ardinc.com*



Work Conducted under Task Order No. 808  
USAID Contract No. AEP-I-00-99-00041-00  
General Democracy and Governance Analytical Support and  
Implementation Services Indefinite Quantity Contract

CTO for the basic contract:  
Joshua Kaufman  
Center for Democracy and Governance, G/DG  
Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-3100

**23 January 2002**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

---

This report was prepared by Lawrence Robertson, EE/PCS (Team Leader); Ann Phillips, PPC/PDC; Bruce Kay, DCHA/DG; and William B. Farrell, ARD, Inc. The views expressed in the following assessment are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Overview	1
B. Historical Background	2
C. Current Political Context	3
<b>II. USAID Framework for Conflict Analysis</b>	<b>4</b>
A. Conflict Definitions	4
B. Conflict Analysis Framework	5
C. Conflict Correlates and Georgia	6
D. Applying the Framework to Georgia	8
<b>III. Analysis: Potential for Conflict and Prevention/Mitigation/Reconciliation</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Root Causes: Grievances and Opportunities	10
B. Organizations and Actors	13
1. Internal Actors	13
2. External Actors	16
C. State Capacity	18
<b>IV. Scenarios and Case Studies: Potential for Further Violence</b>	<b>23</b>
Scenario 1: Violent Change in Government	24
Post-Shevardnadze Succession	24
Use of Violence as Electoral Strategy	26
Military Coup	28
Militia Violence	29
Scenario 2: Resumption of “Frozen” Separatist Conflicts	31
Abkhazia	31
South Ossetia	34



Scenario 3: New Separatist Conflicts	38
Javakheti	39
Samegrelo	46
Adjara	48
Kvemo-Kartli	49
Scenario 4: Communal Conflict	51
Scenario 5: Civil Unrest	53
<b>V. Recommendations for Development Assistance</b>	<b>60</b>
A. Programmatic Recommendations	60
B. Organizational Recommendations	64
C. General Recommendations	65
<b>Selected Bibliography</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Annexes:</b>	
Annex 1: USAID/Caucasus/Conflict Assessment Scope of Work	
Annex 2: Interview List	
Annex 3: Suggested Guidelines for Survey Questions	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

The USAID/Caucuses Mission in Tbilisi sought a conflict assessment to improve the integration of conflict prevention and mitigation in its portfolio. Georgia has thus been one of the first cases to employ a framework on conflict assessment being developed for the Agency in USAID/Washington. For the November 2001 assessment, the team applied the analytic framework to Georgia, evaluated potential conflict scenarios, and recommended some changes to the Mission portfolio to help reduce the risk of future violent conflict. For its analysis, the team relied on primary and secondary written sources and interviews with USAID Mission officials and partners, Georgian officials from all levels of government, members of civil society, and representatives of international organizations. Half the team visited Samtskhe-Javakheti and half traveled to Kvemo-Kartli and South Ossetia.<sup>1</sup> Security restrictions on travel prevented the team from plans to conduct a detailed evaluation of Samegrelo in western Georgia.

### Findings

Structural problems common to other former Soviet republics are more acute in Georgia, due to separatist conflicts and civil war that marred its early post-independence years and greater deterioration of economic and social conditions. Within Georgia, the situation varies regionally from dire conditions in remote areas long neglected by the central government to slightly better off areas on trade routes from Turkey and Russia. Ethnic and religious differences have been sharpened and manipulated by political leaders in the past and continue to be a resource for mobilization by political leaders. Weak, ineffective, and corrupt state institutions have led to a lack of confidence in the political system, cynicism about the rule of law, and a tendency to resolve conflict in extralegal ways. Attitudes toward politics and political engagement have changed dramatically over a decade of independence, from activism, mass demonstrations, and popular support for leaders in the early 1990s to little popular participation, apathy, and disgust towards politicians today. The dysfunctional system maintains oligarchic clan control.

Factors that inhibit conflict in Georgia include the tumultuous experiences of the 1990s that have created a fear of instability that restrains elite and mass behavior. Civil society weakness may actually inhibit conflict, since Georgians have responded to many of the difficulties they face primarily with self-help rather than collective action. While nationalism has divided Georgians from minorities in the country, there is a shared sense of identity that provides some degree of national cohesion among ethnic Georgians. Georgia's role as a trade and transit country would ordinarily render it less vulnerable to conflict; however, the poorly regulated and often illicit trade and transit through Georgia may undermine any stabilizing effects.

### Scenarios

Based on the Framework that underpins the assessment, other analytic work on Georgia, and information collected during this assessment, the team developed five general scenarios for conflict in Georgia: (1) violent change in government, (2) resumption of frozen conflicts, (3) new separatist conflicts, (4) communal conflict, and (5) civil unrest. These types are not mutually exclusive and

---

<sup>1</sup> While the name "South Ossetia" has not been officially accepted as a designation for the part of the Shida Kartli region under the de facto control of Tskhinvali, it is widely used.

there is spillover from one type of conflict to another. Scenarios identify the root causes, mobilization factors that increase or reduce conflict risk, state capacity issues, as well as external forces that may play a role in conflict and windows of vulnerability or possible events that might trigger an outbreak of future conflict.

---

### **Scenario 1: Violent Change in Government**

---

Removal of the government from power by extra-constitutional means with violence is driven by the competition by elites for power with little mass participation.

- *Post-Shevardnadze Succession Conflict* has a high level of risk, but is decreasing over the next five years. The sudden death or resignation of the Head of State may provoke conflict among political elites over succession. Experts repeatedly raised this instability scenario. Although regarded as an impediment to reform, Shevardnadze is still considered a stabilizing factor.
- The *Use of Violence as Electoral Strategy* has a low level of risk, but increasing risk over the next five years. Violence has been associated with recent elections in the country and may be employed by politicians as part of their election campaign and on the day of the polls.
- *Military Coup* risk is low, with no anticipated change in status during the next five years. While a number of interviewees suggested that an armed force of a few hundred troops could potentially seize control of the state. The 1991 coup d'état was initiated and performed basically by the governmental Georgian armed force named National Guard. It was not a regular army per se, but officially it was subjected to the government, and its commanders (including the leader of the coup, Kitovani) were appointed by President Gamsakhurdia. Jaba Ioseliani's Mkhedrioni militia joined Kitovani's troops after the latter had released Ioseliani from jail. Second, Georgian military forces lack the will, the coordination, institutional cohesion, and capability to carry out a coup and to rule in the aftermath. Third, the disparate armed forces of the Georgian state check and balance each other, making a successful coup by one element unlikely.
- *Militia Violence* has a low level of risk and a decreasing risk status over the next five years. Paramilitary groups, developed in the last years of the Soviet era from pro-independence force, have weakened since the end of the Abkhaz war. Militias were discredited by their poor performance in the two separatist conflicts and after the 1995 assassination attempt on Shevardnadze, members of some paramilitary groups were arrested en masse. While this round-up of leaders and supporters significantly quelled militia activity, some new groups remain active, particularly in Samegrelo and Abkhazia.

---

### **Scenario 2: Resumption of “Frozen” Separatist Conflicts**

---

Since 1990, Georgia has suffered violent conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both are *de facto* independent, while *de jure* part of Georgia. Neither conflict has been formally resolved.

- *Abkhazia* has a high level of risk and an increasing risk status. The “frozen” status of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is unstable. However, the fighting between Chechen forces, local residents, and Abkhaz troops in the Kodori gorge in September and October, bombing by Russian planes, and the stationing of Georgian military forces in the gorge – all prospective “triggering” events for a resumption of the conflict – did not lead to a wider conflict. Georgian sentiment about the importance of regaining control over the region and incentives for political figures to

mobilize support by raising the issue suggest conflict could resume over the next few years. International mediation through the United Nations has not come close to reaching an agreement between the two sides.

- *South Ossetia* has a low level of risk, but an increasing risk status, at least during this current period of transition following the November and December “Presidential” elections in the region. Strong shared economic incentives link elites in Tskhinvali and Georgia, and have led to implicit agreements sharing the profits generated by smuggling. International mediation through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has reportedly come close to an agreement on a framework to resolve the conflict.

---

### **Scenario 3: New Separatist Conflicts**

---

This category envisions organized, armed conflicts directed against the national government by ethnic, regional, or religious groups for territorial autonomy, independence or some other special status for the region vis-à-vis the state. Separatist conflicts may be through legislation, mass demonstrations, guerrilla warfare against state security forces, or escalate into full-scale war.

- *Javakheti* has a medium but increasing risk of conflict during the next five years. The international community has frequently cited Javakheti as the next potential secessionist region of Georgia. The weak economy, closure of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki, concentration of ethnic Armenians, isolation from Georgian language and culture, the possible repatriation of Meskhetian Turks, and rumors of weapons in the population could encourage conflict. While Javakheti is currently stable, many external actors have tremendous influence. The risk increases as the date for closure of the military base or repatriation of Meskhetian Turks approaches.
- *Samegrelo* has a low and stable risk of conflict during the next five years. The distinct regional culture and dialect of the Mingrelians, large numbers of displaced persons from Abkhazia, active militia groups fighting in the adjacent Gali rayon of Abkhazia, widespread dissatisfaction with Shevardnadze, and natural resource base and smuggling warrant an examination of the region. And access to the port of Poti provides its own source of transit income. However, the incentives to expand local autonomy and struggles over control of resources between the Tbilisi authorities and the region remain. Samegrelo has the potential to develop separatist aspirations, although these aspirations are not evident at present. Conflict within and between communities seems more probable, and will be considered as communal conflict. Since the analysis of region is less robust and more uncertain than in the rest of the report because security concerns by the Embassy prevented a visit to Samegrelo, the team urges the Mission to conduct a follow-up analysis.
- *Adjara* is considered to be a low-risk region with stable prospects for the next five years. The status quo of regional autonomy benefits the Adjar leadership and appears stable. While other political elites in Georgia, jealous of the benefits that flow to Abashidze’s clan, could create tensions, little evidence suggested violence.
- *Kvemo-Kartli* has a low risk of separatist conflict and is expected to be stable during the next five years. Many of its 300-odd villages, particularly those located closest to the border with Azerbaijan, are enclaves populated by Azeris who speak Azeri and Russian, not Georgian. Although a minority may still hold out the hope of unification with a greater Azerbaijan, the vast majority seem to be much more concerned about economic and social conditions and with intra-regional conflicts and inter-group relations than relations with the Georgian state.

---

#### **Scenario 4: Communal Conflict**

---

This scenario considers the possibility of violence between or among ethnic, religious, or regional groups where other groups rather than the state or government are the targets of violence. Such conflicts vary in their degree of organization, scale, and intensity and cause at least several fatalities. Georgia is at high risk of communal conflict, although this risk during the next five years is about the same as the previous five. Some cities and villages are multi-ethnic, and strife between communal groups could become violent. Other areas have mono-ethnic villages situated next to villages of other ethnic groups that might employ violence over access to scarce resources. While the risk of these types of conflicts is high, it is probable that they will remain localized. In addition to the direct costs of any communal conflict, struggles within and between communities might spark other conflict scenarios.

---

#### **Scenario 5: Civil Unrest**

---

Civil unrest – broad-based violence directed against the government or key public institutions to change policies or the government – is rare, although public dissatisfaction with governments is often high. Triggering events such as government repression of elections or political leadership appear necessary to spark conflict. Civil unrest may take many forms including labor strikes, riots, and violent demonstrations. The potential for civil unrest in Georgia is medium but increasing. On the one hand, the tolerance of the population for suffering has been high, Georgians are atomized and not politically active, and many people are integrated into informal corrupt structures that underpin the existing system. As a result, the public sees little alternative to the current situation and little advantage in struggling for change. On the other hand, recent evidence suggests public tolerance of official misuse of power is waning, and the many potential triggers and organizations with incentives to use civil unrest for their purposes warrants concern.

## I. INTRODUCTION

---

### A. Overview

Violent conflict has devastating consequences for societies as well as for development assistance efforts. To help countries resolve disputes through constructive, peaceful means, USAID has in recent years tried to develop a more effective system of conflict analysis – one that combines a sharper understanding of the social, economic, and political forces driving conflict with programmatic tools designed to help prevent conflict. The USAID/Caucases Mission in Tbilisi sought a conflict assessment to improve the integration of conflict prevention and mitigation in its portfolio. Georgia has thus been one of the first cases to employ a framework on conflict assessment being developed for the Agency in USAID/Washington.

Georgia presents multiple challenges for development assistance policy and programming since several scenarios for conflict are plausible. This suggests a need for a flexible analytic framework as well as a multifaceted approach to programming aimed at different stages and forms of potential conflict. The dual risk of potential communal and/or separatist conflicts calls for strategies in conflict prevention through efforts that would help ameliorate underlying grievances, support peace-building organizations, and remedy institutional weaknesses. Unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia require engagement in both conflict resolution and prevention since these “frozen” conflicts could flare up again. Moreover, the unstable Caucasus region poses additional challenges for Georgia. The conflict between Russia and Chechnya in the north has already generated instability in the Panski gorge in Georgia. And the unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh in the south has engaged some of the Armenian population in Georgia. Georgia has suffered one of the greatest economic and social declines of all the constituent parts of the former Soviet Union since independence, and the Georgian state, even compared to the other Soviet successor states, is chronically weak. As a result, the government has few resources to prevent, mitigate, or resolve conflict.

To assess Georgia’s vulnerability to renewed or new conflict, the team (1) divided the elements of violent conflict into analytic components specified in the USAID Framework for Conflict Analysis, (2) examined these components in Georgia, (3) evaluated potential conflict scenarios, and (4) considered roles for development assistance in minimizing the risks of future violent conflict. The team prepared for this assessment by reading secondary literature on Georgia and by conducting interviews with experts in Washington, DC. The team also developed a survey instrument based on the Framework for use in the field to increase the consistency and comparability of information from a range of interlocutors.

In Georgia, the team relied on a variety of sources to gather information for its assessment, from USAID Mission officials and implementing partners, to Georgian officials at all levels of government, to representatives of international organizations. With assistance from the Mission, the team drew additional, valuable information from seven roundtables organized in different parts of the country. These roundtables brought together academic and policy experts, journalists, students, NGO representatives, business people, farmers, students, and teachers. The team also interviewed other experts and academics and had conversations with citizens.

Significant time and attention was devoted to the capital, the most important and populous city, and the team traveled outside Tbilisi for regional perspectives on conflict. Half the team visited the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti – Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Aspindza, and Gorlovka-Karsakhi.

The other half traveled to Kvemo-Kartli and South Ossetia, visiting Rustavi, Gardabani, the villages of Tsereteli and Kusiani, and Tskhinvali. Plans to visit Samegrelo were cancelled due to security restrictions on travel to western Georgia. When the security situation permits, the Mission should consider using the framework to directly assess its conflict potential.

## **B. Historical Background**

Georgia's transition from Soviet Republic to independent state has been violent. The nationalist movement during perestroika led to mass demonstrations, including one that was repressed by the Soviet military, who massacred demonstrators in April 1989. Public revulsion against Soviet power led to the election of nationalist leaders in Tbilisi and the Georgian declaration of independence in April 1991. During this chaotic period, assets and authority were transferred from Soviet to Georgian structures under the control of nationalists. The extreme nationalism of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who advocated "Georgia for the Georgians," generated concerns among many minority groups about their future in the country.

Consistent with Soviet nationalities' policy, ethnic enclaves had been granted their own sub-state institutions within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Minorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia used the transition period to increase their autonomy, which led to conflicts with the state-building efforts of the Gamsakhurdia government, eventually leading to violence between Georgian militias and Ossetian forces. The failure of the Gamsakhurdia government to defeat Ossetian nationalists and the capricious, confrontational leadership of Gamsakhurdia spurred Georgian militias to overthrow the regime by force on New Years Eve 1991. The militia leaders that seized power were internally divided and unable to govern effectively. In an effort to rescue the country from disintegration and secure international backing, they invited former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to return to Georgia, where he had served as First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. Shevardnadze was unable to quell further conflict, as Georgian forces were routed by Abkhaz militias in a bloodier war in which Abkhaz authorities expelled the ethnic Georgian population and declared an independent state.

In addition to these three conflicts, weakening central authority led to broader disintegrative processes throughout Georgia. The third formally autonomous component of Georgia, the Adjara Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Adjara), expanded its control during this turbulent period. The weak central government in Tbilisi had few resources or institutions to influence Adjara or other regions. This political fragmentation, combined with the massive economic dislocations from the almost complete collapse of trade and industrial linkages with the former Soviet Union, led to extreme fragmentation of Georgian society.

The complex neighborhood of the Caucasus has complicated Georgia's post-Soviet transition. The country borders Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey – all of which have constituencies and interests in Georgia. Historically, the region's geopolitics has been dominated by two triangles: Russia, Armenia, and Iran versus Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Turkey and Russia have struggled over dominance in the Caucasus for centuries. The Ottoman Empire controlled Georgia, the Circassian coast, and the north shore of the Black Sea for extended periods until driven back by an ascending Russian Empire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These triangles have re-emerged in the wake of Soviet collapse and contribute to the fragility of Georgia. Russia supported the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a means of weakening Georgia and reasserting its influence. Chechnya lies just over the northern border and the Chechen conflict has spilled over into the Kordori and Pankisi valleys in Georgia. The Armenian minority in Georgia looks to both Russia and Armenia

as natural historic and cultural allies, and to Turkey for security. Questions of separatism and the potential for conflict between Georgians and ethnic Armenian and Azeri minorities remain. Azerbaijan relies on Georgia as an important East-West trade route for oil and gas exports and a crucial alternative to Russian pipelines. The Soviet collapse and subsequent independence of the Caucasus Republics gave Turkey the opportunity to restore its historic economic and political links to the region. Many Georgians see Turkey both as a counterpoint to Russian influence and as a link to the West.

### **C. Current Political Context**

The assessment was conducted during a tense political crisis in November 2001. Popular dissatisfaction with the authorities over socioeconomic conditions had been rising. Then political infighting over the summer led to the fragmentation of the ruling party, the Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG), as reformist factions in parliament and government broke with the President. Finally, a Security Ministry raid on the nationwide independent TV channel, Rustavi-2, which had broadcast reports linking the Ministry of Internal Affairs with corruption and drug trafficking, sparked demonstrations of 2,000 to 5,000 people outside Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Led by student activists, the demonstrators demanded the resignation of the power ministers (Internal Affairs, Security, and the General Prosecutor) and were supported by prominent reformist politicians.

Protests following the Rustavi-2 incident were non-violent. Yet citizens and politicians were apprehensive about the potential for instability and fears of provocations that could escalate tensions and spur violence in Tbilisi. Shevardnadze responded by dismissing the entire government, which dissipated the immediate crisis but fueled uncertainty over Shevardnadze's political future. Contributing to the uncertainty was Zurab Zhvania's resignation as Chair of the Parliament, which left Shevardnadze temporarily with no constitutional successor. Moderate Nino Burdzhanadze was elected as the first woman head of Parliament by mid-November, and Shevardnadze nominated most of the ministers from the last government to the new government. While many Georgians believed the failure to change ministers would generate additional discontent, no unrest followed the new ministerial nominations – which included Targamadze's former deputy as Minister of Interior – or the return of previous ministers. However, the ongoing reconfiguration of political parties and forces in Parliament and discussions about constitutional changes to introduce the office of Prime Minister and form another new government are likely to keep political tension high in the coming months.

---

<sup>2</sup> Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze was reportedly complicit in the July 2001 murder of Rustavi-2 news anchor George Sania, who had broadcast reports linking the power ministries with drug trafficking.

## II. USAID FRAMEWORK FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS

---

USAID has been developing a method for anticipating violent conflicts and analyzing the dynamics of conflict. This assessment uses a draft Framework for Conflict Analysis developed for USAID that synthesizes much of the empirical research on violent conflict to analyze the potential for conflict in any country.<sup>3</sup> This section spells out the operational definitions used in the assessment, summarizes key elements of the Framework, considers the correlates of violent conflict from empirical work on other countries, and lays out the format of the assessment.

### A. Conflict Definitions

Violent conflict is defined as disputes that involve the use of force that lead to significant loss of life and property.<sup>4</sup> Violent conflicts vary in scale, duration, intensity, and lethality. They can also be distinguished by the actors involved, the degree of organization, and the extent of mass mobilization and participation. Moreover, groups may perpetrate conflicts against the state or against other societal groups. These parameters allow for considerable variation. Operational definitions for conflict are:

*Internal war* refers to organized violence in which an armed opposition attempts to challenge state authority and/or topple a state (guerrilla or separatist war).<sup>5</sup> We make a distinction between the two types of internal war that are both salient and likely in the Georgian context:

1. *Frozen Conflicts* are armed conflicts directed against a state that have passed through a high-intensity stage (i.e., a war) but have yet to reach a consolidated peace. In such cases, violence has subsided and a fragile stability has been achieved (interrupted intermittently by hostilities) yet prospects for a definitive conflict resolution are uncertain. Conditions yielding “frozen” conflicts may deteriorate, provoking flare-ups or a resumption of full-scale war.
2. *Separatist Conflicts*: Organized armed conflicts directed against the national government and perpetrated by regional ethnic and/or religious groups aimed at gaining autonomy, independence, or some other special status for the region vis-à-vis the state. Such conflicts are localized and may take the form of guerrilla warfare or escalate into full-scale war.

*Civil Unrest* refers to violence directed against a government to effect a change in policy or government. This includes labor strikes, riots, violent demonstrations, and protests. Although its root causes are complex, civil unrest tends to be provoked or exacerbated by specific, proximal events or actions (acts of repression, elections, etc.). This form of conflict lacks the organization of a war, but involves at least several hundred participants and employs violence as a tactic.

*Violent Change in Government* refers to attempts by insurgent elites to remove a regime from power by extra-constitutional means accompanied by resorts to physical violence. This can include militia violence and *coups* and other relatively covert actions that ignore or bypass regular channels or “rules of the game” concerning succession. Elite groups without overt mass participation perpetrate such conflicts; they may not always involve a military seizure of power.

---

<sup>3</sup> Draft Framework for Conflict Analysis. USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict Prevention and Humanitarian Assistance, Office of Democracy and Governance.

<sup>4</sup> The definition is not intended to include domestic violence and spousal abuse.

<sup>5</sup> In internal war, three conditions must be present: the opposition tries to seize power or gain autonomy for a portion of national territory, violence targets the state, and the opposition mobilizes popular support.

Finally, *Communal Conflict* refers to violence between or among ethnic, religious, racial, or other communal groups, perpetrated by one group against another group or groups.

## **B. USAID Conflict Analysis Framework**

The Framework focuses on conflict at various levels of analysis and stages in the evolution of violence. First, root causes of conflict are understood as foundations of discontent – the societal grievances and incentives that induce people to resort to violence as opposed to peaceful forms of expression. These are of long duration and create tensions and violence within society, either among groups or between groups and the state. Such factors include competition among ethnic, religious, and other groups; economic deterioration; imbalances in wealth and land; as well as economic changes with deleterious social effects such as inflation or economic adjustment.

The Framework also takes into account illicit economic activity (smuggling or production of illegal commodities). Research increasingly links illicit activity with the actions and strength of “conflict entrepreneurs” – organizations that profit from illegal goods or illicit markets and use the proceeds to boost their capacity for violence. Resource scarcity and competition heightened by environmental degradation and migration also contribute to conflict. While there is no direct link from environmental deterioration to conflict, there does appear to be an indirect relationship where environmental issues are mediated by the ability of institutions to address scarcity issues that make group competition salient and conflictive.

The Framework places emphasis on migration, especially the rapid movement of populations either across borders, within the national territory, or from rural to urban areas. Sudden inflows of refugees or IDPs to areas that lack the absorptive capacity often put tremendous pressure on land, water, and other resources and foster divisions between migrants and host communities. Refugees fleeing war zones in other countries may cause “spillovers” as conflict “follows” refugees to new areas. Out-migration can reduce tensions by reducing competition over access or resources. The repatriation of deported populations may also escalate interethnic tensions that would otherwise remain dormant.

Second, the Framework focuses on *mobilization*, the capacity of organizations with specific, multiple or overlapping grievances to recruit money, manpower, weapons, and other resources to advance their interests. Behind the logic of this stage is the recognition that grievances themselves are common while outbreaks of hostilities are rare. There is no straight line, for example, from poverty to violence. The capacity of groups to translate their grievances into collective action depends on their ability to harness resources to group objectives. Here, “resources” is understood broadly – as human, financial, and other assets as well as less tangible but also important elements that contribute to strong organizations. This stage of the analysis therefore includes a society-wide inventory of potential conflict resources, from ethnic enclaves and diasporas to natural resources, human recruits, and arms.

Third, the Framework considers *state capacity*, the ability of institutions to address root causes of conflict, manage pressures that might generate conflict, or mediate among potential parties to conflict. Civil conflict is substantially driven by opportunities for conflict, which are shaped most strongly by whether states have the capacity to deter or defeat violent opposition.<sup>6</sup> Aggrieved groups with access to resources may, of course, choose to channel their grievances peacefully and constructively within the political system in order to achieve a political objective. Whether that occurs depends in large measure on the state’s ability to control or demobilize conflict.

---

<sup>6</sup> Most recently and forcefully argued by Fearon and Latin (2001).

A state's capacity depends on the ability to raise revenue as well as maintain infrastructure, provide services to the population, and enforce compliance with the laws. Capable states are neutral arbiters of competing interests; they tend to exercise a restraining influence on the behavior of elites and are powerful enough to repress or co-opt groups that would employ violence as a tactic. Weak states, by contrast, are unable to manage and may exacerbate conflict by enabling aggrieved groups to mobilize.

Fourth, potential *external causes* of conflict are evaluated. The risk of conflict is elevated by unrest in neighboring states. Other external factors such as trans-border refugee or ethnic population movements, criminal networks, arms and contraband smuggling, as well as sovereignty issues (e.g., border control of neighboring states) and globalization issues (international organizations with leverage over domestic political institutions), also have direct impact on reducing or inflaming conflict susceptibility.

Finally, the Framework turns to specific *windows of vulnerability*. These are discrete events that serve as "triggers" to the outbreak of conflict. They include acts of government repression, rights violations, economic shocks, shifts in elite politics (e.g., ministerial reshuffles), flawed or fraudulent elections, and natural disasters. They might also include other forms of conflict or smaller-scale conflicts, such as a riot, tit-for-tat attacks of one group against another, or rebel incursions.

### **C. Conflict Correlates and Georgia**

Empirical research on conflict over the last decade reveals "conflict correlates" that are associated with conflict in other countries. These include drivers of conflict and inhibitors, countervailing factors that reduce societal tensions that could escalate into violence, bolster state capacity, or provide alternative mechanisms to prevent or manage conflict. The main findings from research of a diverse array of sources and approaches, theories, and methods are summarized below.

- Recent violent conflict (within the last five years) doubles the risk of a resumption of conflict. The greatest risk of renewed conflict occurs during the first year after cessation of hostilities. After 10 years of peace, the risk of renewed conflict declines by about half.
- Ethnic and religious cleavages are particularly salient to conflict if they correspond to sharp disparities in wealth or access to opportunities. The risk of conflict is higher where one ethnic group dominates the ruling elite, regardless of whether that group is a minority or majority in the population. Geographic concentrations of discrete groups are more conducive to conflict than widely dispersed groups.
- Economic decline, increasing poverty, and the lack of economic growth are highly correlated with the emergence of conflict. Economic decline or slow growth affects states that cannot raise sufficient revenue to function adequately. Related to and closely correlated with the effect of economic decline are the following factors:
  - High levels of unemployment coupled with eroding incomes and low economic growth lead to large numbers of poorly educated young men with limited employment prospects that are easily recruited and mobilized for conflict.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> This finding aggregates two key findings of two main conflict studies: one pertaining to the effect of the demographic "bulge" in the size of the youth population; the other related to the issue of discontent generated by high levels of youth unemployment.

- Primary commodity dependency leaves resources that can be exploited as easily by rebel forces as by government authorities to fund conflict.
- A proxy for quality of life, *infant mortality* is strongly correlated with economic performance, education, social welfare, environmental quality, and democratic institutions. Levels of infant mortality above the global median level triple the risk of conflict.
- A poorly educated population is related to slow economic growth and elevated risk of conflict.
- Demographic Issues: Population Distribution, Change, and Movement:
  - Dispersed population and mountainous terrain tend to increase the risk of conflict since these characteristics make it difficult for a government to establish and maintain effective control.
  - Rapid population change due to migration also increases the potential for conflict by reducing economic opportunities and increasing inter-group pressure upon and competition over scarce resources.
  - HIV/AIDS epidemic is regarded as a major security threat.
- Strength/Weakness of State Capacity and Political Institutions:
  - Partial democracies (or transitional regimes) are at twice the risk of conflict than either consolidated democracies or consolidated authoritarian systems. This finding suggests higher conflict vulnerability following a political transition in either direction, toward or away from democracy.
  - Environmental degradation and natural resource mismanagement are strong indicators conflict vulnerability. Most common are deforestation, land degradation, and low availability of potable water. The presence of these factors is related to state capacity.

Two additional factors have been consistently identified with a lower risk of violent conflict. Both factors may be considered proxy measures of state capacity:

- High state revenues and government spending on a per capita basis.<sup>8</sup>
- High public sector wages (absolutely and relative to the private sector).<sup>9</sup>
- External Factors:
  - Openness to trade is a mixed indicator of vulnerability to conflict. Openness relates to integration into regional/international markets, which in turn may be related not only to improved economic well being but also to support for the rule of law and stable property

---

<sup>8</sup> Evidence Based Research (June 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

relationships. But openness to the international market can finance conflict if rebels have access to commodities, such as diamonds, timber, etc., that find a ready foreign market.

- “Bad Neighborhood Effect.” The risk of violent conflict increases fourfold if there is a violent conflict ongoing in a neighboring country. (Esty et al., 1998; Hegre 1995)

Most of these risk factors are present in Georgia, which suggests *prima facie* that the country is at high risk of conflict. The state is financially weak and does not control its territory and borders. Georgia has experienced recent conflict, has distinct ethnic and religious minorities concentrated in enclaves, and economic and social conditions have deteriorated dramatically leaving unemployment and under-employment high. Regional differences and mountainous terrain advantage potential separatists. Georgia is in the process of political transition, classified by Freedom House as “partly free.” Environmental degradation is evident as polluted water endangers health, illegal cutting of trees for heat erodes the soil, and pesticide misuse contributes to land and water degradation. Dependency on primary commodities appears to have increased with the de-industrialization of the Georgian economy. Primary exports of metal and agricultural products provide some revenues, as does access to opportunities for corruption, which covers most economic activity beyond subsistence agriculture.

Neighboring countries and spillovers from the conflicts in Chechnya and Karabagh raise tensions in Georgia and could feed into domestic conflict dynamics. National elections and electricity shortages may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and trigger conflict.

At the same time, a number of the factors that promote conflict are not present in Georgia. The concentration of population in the capital eases the maintenance of order. Georgian citizens are well-educated thanks to the Soviet system. Studies show a strong link between a poorly educated population and conflict. While infant mortality levels have risen, they remain relatively low. Despite the collapse of the health system, HIV/AIDs has not reached epidemic proportions.

#### **D. Applying the Framework to Georgia**

The team divided its analysis into the categories spelled out in the Framework. First, we consider the grievances that might lead to conflict and opportunities for conflict resolution, mitigation and prevention. Second, we consider the organizations and actors that could engage in violence or in mediation and conflict resolution. Third, the analysis focuses on state capacity and how institutions may fail to adjudicate among interests and lead to violent conflict or successfully mediate interests and prevent them from becoming violent. Fourth, we evaluate potential triggers of conflict or events that might facilitate conflict resolution. The analysis considers the events that have been flashpoints of violence in Georgia or the region in the past, and events on the horizon that may trigger new conflicts. In using this approach, we draw on the USAID Framework and a model proposed by Mary Anderson (1999) that emphasizes *connectors* and local capacities for peace that make it possible for aid organizations to first “do no harm” and then contribute to the avoidance, settlement, and mitigation of violent conflict. This model emphasizes the potential for conflict resolution and mitigation as well as *dividers*, tensions, and capacities for conflict that make violence possible.

Finally, the analysis explores conflict scenarios deemed plausible by experts interviewed by the team. Our scenarios are derived as much from expert opinion as from theory. Each scenario sets out a complex dynamic that depends on multiple local, national, and external variables: structural variables such as underlying economic and social conditions that can become grievances or provide opportunities to reduce the potential for violence; actors and organizations that would be the parties

that engage in any violent conflict or support peace-building (individual leaders who can galvanize grievances and mobilize groups, and thus deserve particular attention); and institutions that provide arenas either for the peaceful interaction of interests or exacerbate conflicts between interests by failing to mediate and promote conflict.

In summary, the USAID Framework for Conflict Analysis is applied throughout this assessment, but particularly in Sections III and IV. Section III explores grievances and opportunities, organizations and actors, and institutions in Georgia relevant to generating or preventing conflict. Section IV details various conflict scenarios and assesses their risk over the next five years. The concluding section summarizes our findings and recommendations for programmatic changes to USAID/Caucasus that could support conflict prevention in Georgia.



### III. ANALYSIS: POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT AND PREVENTION/ MITIGATION/RECONCILIATION

---

This section examines the general situation in Georgia using the Framework. We consider not only conflict risks or threats, but also countervailing capacities, “connectors,” and opportunities that may help manage conflict. We apply and loosely map the Framework’s main categories to the specific facts of the Georgian case and indicate where we depart from its strict application and our reasons for the departure.

#### A. Root Causes: Grievances and Opportunities

Almost 70 years of Soviet socialism has left a mixed legacy of substantial economic and social modernization coupled with structural problems and grievances across the former USSR. These problems are particularly acute in Georgia due to conflicts and civil war that marred its early years of independence and severe deterioration of the economy and social conditions. While many attitudes, actions, and interests of individuals are conflict promoting, other factors serve to inhibit conflict. The first six attributes below are grievances that make conflict more likely; the next five provide opportunities that, on balance, may reduce the prospect of conflict.

#### Ethnicity and Religion

Soviet nationality policies reinforced the homelands of ethnic groups and provided specific benefits to members of concentrated groups. Policies helped build ethnic identities through education in native languages and support for ethnic group elites. National territories were granted various levels of autonomy, with particular rights for minority groups in politics, culture, and the economy. Being a member of the ethnic group for which a region was named (e.g., an Abkhaz in Abkhazia, Georgian in Georgia) provided additional opportunities for socioeconomic advancement within their region through preferential access to positions in the communist party, state bureaucracy, academic community, and economy. This policy helped build political and economic machines based on ethnicity and territory that have persisted a decade after independence and continue to shape the attitudes of minority peoples and Georgians.

Georgia is a mosaic of ethnic and religious communities whose differences have been and can be manipulated by political leaders. Ethnic and religious cleavages are created and malleable rather than primordial and unchangeable. But ethnic groups provide a framework for the organization and aggregation of common interests and have been the public face of two separatist conflicts in Georgia.

#### Economic Deterioration

A devastating decline in the Georgian economy has accompanied independence. Between 1990 and 1995, economic output fell by more than 70 percent.<sup>10</sup> Once a semblance of order was restored, some reforms undertaken, and a *modus vivendi* with separatist regions and neighboring countries established, the economy began to grow by 1996-1997. The Russian economic crisis in late 1998, however, interrupted that nascent trend, and a drought in 2000 reduced economic growth to 1.4 percent. Industrial production in 2000 is less than one-tenth of the 1990 level, indicating the de-industrialization of Georgia since independence.<sup>11</sup> Huge abandoned industrial facilities now dot the

---

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank Group, Georgia: Portfolio of Operations, June 2001:1.

<sup>11</sup> “Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program in Georgia,” Tbilisi, August 2001:13.

landscape. Areas that were prosperous industrial bastions in Soviet times like Kvemo-Kartli, are still reeling from the factory closures that left most of the local population out of work.

Agriculture presents a similarly dismal picture. Georgian meat and dairy products as well as fruits and vegetables were once prized throughout the Soviet Union and brought a steadily improving standard of living. Collective farm buildings now stand empty and agricultural production has plunged from one of the most productive and leading employers in Soviet times to largely subsistence levels today. Crumbling roads, bridges, and housing stock, particularly acute in the regions, have accompanied economic decline and in turn reinforce it.

### **Deteriorating Social Conditions**

As a consequence of economic decline, the overwhelming majority of the population has suffered a disastrous deterioration in economic and social conditions since the implosion of the Soviet Union. High unemployment and underemployment have eroded the standard of living for the vast majority of the population. This has precipitated a massive migration of youths in search of opportunities elsewhere in and outside Georgia.<sup>12</sup> Hallmarks of socialism – full employment, universal access to education and health care, nominal prices for basic necessities – have given way to rationing based on ability to pay. Heat and electricity are unreliable throughout most of the long winter for all but the wealthy and/or well connected. Parents complain about the deteriorating quality of education for those dependent upon public schools. The same situation applies to health care at a time when environmental degradation severely limits the supply of clean water. Citizen awareness of ecology problems is high. Inadequate sewage treatment facilities and misuse of pesticides have polluted much of Georgia's water, threatening public health as well as agriculture. Illegal harvesting of trees for firewood and for export contributes to soil erosion further damaging productivity of the land.

Pervasive suffering from a tangible deterioration in the standard of living would appear to be a unifying and galvanizing force, pitting the majority of the population against the few who have done well in post-Soviet Georgia. The picture is more complex, however. The disadvantaged are co-opted into an all-encompassing web of grand and petty corruption in order to survive. They identify no institutions or organizations that are interested in or can redress their grievances. Confidence in government, law enforcement, political parties, and leaders is abysmally low. The paucity of reliable information and the profusion of misinformation are debilitating for the few interested in mobilization for constructive change. Economic activity is inextricably linked to political arrangements, thereby effectively excluding that avenue of activity for those who wish to succeed but lack such connections.

### **Political Disaffection**

Attitudes towards politics and political engagement have changed dramatically over a decade of independence. While Georgia struggled for independence, political activism and participation was high. The failure of this period to transform the lives of many citizens bred disgust with the politics of the past decade that has now led to a deep disengagement of the citizenry with politics. A centralized political structure integrates many regional and local authorities in a system lubricated by corruption. Informal relations trump formal structures in order of importance. The system has become increasingly dysfunctional, if measured by market democratization criteria. It is effective, however, in maintaining oligarch or clan control, and therefore is difficult to derail.

---

<sup>12</sup> At least one member of 120,000 households is working abroad, according to a December 3 article in the Georgian newspaper *Rezonansi*.

Much of the population currently lives in poverty, while a wealthy elite dominates the country. As some state-owned industry was “privatized,” beginning in 1992, choice assets were sold to elites, including the president’s family and clan, who used their position to reestablish monopolies under the new system. Many Georgians believe that the small group that holds most of the political and economic power in the country has effectively blocked further reform. Central to the debilitating impact of this new elite is that it is not creating or adding value. Rather it has concentrated on extracting wealth through corruption, breaking up and selling off resources, or smuggling goods with a ready internal or external market.

### **Lack of Confidence in Institutions**

Georgia inherited the shells of Soviet institutions, though little substance actually remains within these shells. Most pervasive is the lack of a rule of law. The population is keenly aware that legislation has little relationship with the way laws are enforced. Corruption, bribes, and reliance on informal clan structures are the keys to daily life. Without the rule of law, every institution in Georgia is adversely affected by the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* which leaves the population with little trust in government, political parties, law enforcement, or the military.

### **Corruption**

Corruption is a common grievance among Georgians, though most Georgians are also involved in one way or another in rent-seeking opportunities that supplement their meager salaries. Public perception of the state as an entity to be duped and taken advantage of rather than supported is one legacy of the Soviet period. The magnitude of corruption in the country is a significant impediment to institutional development. Transparency International’s 1999 Ranking of corruption ranked Georgia 84 of 99 countries examined, comparable to Uganda, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia. A World Bank study determined that bribes to public officials exceed eight percent of the revenues of companies doing business in Georgia. Nearly 80 percent of surveyed firms doing business in Georgia describe the legal system as corrupt and dishonest.<sup>13</sup> Shevardnadze established an anti-corruption commission in July 2000 to develop a national anti-corruption strategy, which has not been implemented.

While these six sources of grievances provide fertile ground for violent conflict, other factors may *inhibit* this potential to some degree.

### **History**

Georgians have little history of violent reaction to social and economic hardship. Tolerance for dismal living conditions can serve as a conflict inhibitor. The substantial progress that the Soviet Union brought in terms of economic development, upward mobility and social modernization was accompanied by broad compliance with authority on the surface. Georgians prospered through individual and clan activities that subverted the authorities through the vigorous informal economy. This pattern of behavior has continued with the transition to a market economy and sharp deterioration in living standards over the last decade. And social conditions have been improving somewhat since 1995.

---

<sup>13</sup> Businesses reported paying 8 percent of revenues in bribes in Georgia compared to 6 percent in Uzbekistan and 7 percent in Azerbaijan, also considered extraordinarily corrupt regimes.

## **Fear of Instability**

Many Georgians suggested that the tumultuous experiences of the 1990s created a fear of instability that restrains elite and mass behavior. Civil war in Tbilisi and the disastrous South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts remain fresh memories. Shevardnadze has played on this feeling to great effect and continually reminds the public of his own importance as the guarantor of Georgian stability. While there are groups and elites that would like to foment instability and to advance particular economic or political goals, they appear to have little popular support. And these groups did not take advantage of the political turmoil in November to attempt provocations.

## **Weakness of Civil Society**

The weakness of civil society in Georgia may inhibit conflict by making mobilization of discontent difficult. A robust civil society and weak government institutions can be disastrous as in Weimar Germany and Rwanda. Georgia's state is undeniably weak, but Georgians have not been disposed to push their political and economic demands in a collective, confrontational manner. Instead, they tackle difficulties primarily with self-help responses rather than collective action. The dominant public response to the electricity crisis is to use kerosene lanterns, and individuals have reacted to natural gas shortages by equipping apartments with wood-burning stoves to provide heat instead of organizing collective responses.

## **Georgian Nationalism**

While nationalism has been divisive for ethnic minorities, there is a shared sense of Georgian identity that provides some degree of national cohesion among ethnic Georgians. This sense of identity is weaker in some regions and may be nonexistent in others, particularly minority regions in which the state maintains a low profile and Georgian is not the language of most of the inhabitants. (e.g., Javakheti).

## **Trade Networks**

Countries that rely on trade and maintain open commercial ties with other states tend to be less conflict-prone. Georgia is a transit country, trade with neighboring countries is much of the economic activity in the country, and much of state revenue comes from customs duties. A hefty share of Georgia's trade activity, however, is based on the illicit or unregulated traffic of goods. Profits from control of transit routes lead to battles for control over rail and road routes, and rent-seeking which reduces the resources available to the state. But corrupt elites share a strong interest in maintaining some level of economic stability and trade relations for smuggling.

## **B. Organizations and Actors**

This section describes organizations and actors that could be involved in either the perpetration or prevention of violent conflict in Georgia.

### **1. Internal Actors**

#### **Clans**

Clan networks appear to be the lynchpin of Georgian political, economic and social life. Their informal relations are much more important than formal political institutions and laws. In contrast to the traditional notion of clans, they are not limited to familial connections. Clans are based on geographic origin, personal relationships, and economic interests. While ethnic group members may

maintain interests specific to their group, clan relations extend across ethnic and regional boundaries. Schoolmates can form a clan as easily as kin. Clan affiliation influences one's status in society and one's access to economic and political opportunities, in both legitimate and illegitimate business practices. Like Mafia structures in Italy, they are closely intertwined with official political and economic positions. Their networks operate at many levels within Georgia.

Individual politicians in Tbilisi are closely tied to the clan system. President Shevardnadze's network and influence are pervasive across the country. His network of appointees to official positions (i.e., Rtsmunebuli and *Gamebeli*) maintains his personal political and economic control over the regions of Georgia. His ability to co-opt political opponents, garner international support, and form alliances has been instrumental in stabilizing Georgia following the turbulent Gamsakhurdia period. Gratitude for the return of stability is balanced by deep popular dissatisfaction with the economic domination of the President's clan and family over the few large enterprises and trade in some of the most important commodities in the country (i.e., gasoline, cigarettes, alcohol). Elite relations in Tbilisi are fluid, reflecting fusion and dissolution of clan interests rather than philosophical or programmatic issues.

Influential regional leaders head their own clans. Adjara's strongman, Aslan Abashidze, extracts sizable rents by controlling the port of Batumi and the overland trade between Turkey and Georgia. His regional influence stems from his prodigious skill at local politics, a populist-style distribution of the proceeds of local economic activity to the region's population, and his control over the regional armed forces. Abashidze heads Revival, one of the largest factions in Parliament. Shevardnadze's appointment of Abashidze as special representative for the conflict in Abkhazia boosts his national profile and influence. Vladislav Ardzinba, the leader of Abkhazia, likewise commands economic resources, popular support, and armed units. Ludwig Chibirov,<sup>14</sup> the long-time leader of South Ossetia, maintained his position through the 1990s by operating in similar fashion.<sup>15</sup> Effective control of the two breakaway regions means their leaders' actions and decisions affect not only their regions but also Georgia as a whole. Other clans may be led by elites in the diaspora. While their connections to other clans are unclear, ties to Russian interests and vast wealth make Diaspora businessmen like Vakhtang Chkuaseli and Sasha Chachia potential regional or national leaders, and potent allies for other clans.

Clans play an important but ambivalent role in Georgia. They may be a source of conflict as clans battle over economic turf. At the same time these fluid groups cut across the societal cleavages. As such they can function as a stabilizing, conflict inhibiting factor.

### **Political Parties**

Political parties formally dominate the political process. Although there are over 100 parties in Georgia, the main players are the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), The Union of Democrat Revival, Socialist Party of Georgia, Popular Party, Party of Georgia Unity and Independence "Didgori," Nationalist Party, and Business Block. These parties have passed the 7 percent threshold required for representation in the parliament. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see these parties as major actors that shape the political process. They are largely instruments of leading political personalities rather than organizations formed around a defined ideology or governing program. Thus, their cohesion and durability is tenuous, as shown by the recent fragmentation of the CUG, once the

---

<sup>14</sup> The December 2001 elections in South Ossetia resulted in new leadership. See discussion under Frozen Conflicts, below.

<sup>15</sup> However, Chibirov was unseated in the December 2001 Presidential elections by Eduard Kokoyev, a young businessman with strong ties to Russia. The power shifts behind his unexpected defeat are not yet clear.

broadest and most institutionalized Georgian political party. Moreover, political parties inspire little public trust, which sharply limits their ability to aggregate and articulate citizen interests – primary functions of political parties in democracies.

### **Religious Groups**

The Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys a great deal of moral authority among Georgians and may serve as a mediator between communities. The Church has signed agreements with the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Catholic Church, and the All-Caucasus Religious Board to cooperate in furthering democratization, peace, and stability in Georgia and the South Caucasus. Interviewees suggested examples where the Church had supported peace-building: for example, in Akhalkalaki, the Armenian pastor said that he has developed good relations with Catholic and Orthodox religious leaders who are working together to help the community meet basic needs.

The positive picture is not uniform. Their image suffered as the Church failed to adequately condemn an excommunicated priest who physically attacks members of other denominations, in particular Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>16</sup> Some suggested that greater engagement by the Church could have prevented the violence. Muslim groups appear to lag behind Armenian and Georgian populations in religious revival. Mosque construction in some ethnic Azeri villages has been controversial, including within Azeri villages, due to claims about "Wahhabi" funding which resulted in the stopping of several projects by local and central authorities.

### **Civil Society**

Civil society remains nascent in Georgia. While many NGOs have been developed in the years of independence, they remain largely oriented toward and financed by Western donors. The dearth of domestic resources and the absence of tax law that allows deductions for contributions to the NGO sector make sustainability illusory for the time being. Professional associations of journalists, lawyers, etc., and a few successful think tanks seem to be the positive exception to the general picture. They are concentrated, however, in the capital with little connection to society outside Tbilisi. As a whole, therefore, civil society remains on the periphery of Georgian political life.

### **Ethnic Groups**

As in other former Soviet republics, Georgia contains ethnic groups that are concentrated in particular regions (named in parentheses). Most notable are the Abkhaz (Abkhazia), Ossetians (South Ossetia), Armenians (Samtskhe-Javakheti), and Azeris (Kvemo-Kartli). Mingrelians (Samegrelo), while considered ethnic Georgians, have their own distinct dialect and traditions, as do the far less numerous Svans (Svaneti), which helps to create a separate identity. While ethnic groups are not actors, elite members of these groups have mobilized constituencies within these groups to support the idea of greater rights for members of the group.

In the last decade, these ethnic groups have had significantly less contact with Tbilisi and have developed a growing reliance on resources in their enclave communities. The Abkhaz and the Ossetians fought violent conflicts with Georgians, which created physical separation delineated by the zones of conflict. These enclaves remain physically separate from Georgian society. Meanwhile, the use of Russian, Abkhaz, Ossetian, Azeri, and Armenian languages further strengthens the sense of

---

<sup>16</sup> Followers of the priest, Father Basil, have repeatedly attacked Jehovah's Witnesses - and tried to intimidate the editorial office of the newspaper *Rezonansi* that published an article critical of these actions.

separate group identity. Meskhet Turks, deported in 1944 by Stalin, have grown to some 300,000 people, many of whom seek to return to Georgia.

### **Internally Displaced Persons**

The Abkhaz government-in-exile, affiliated paramilitary groups and the approximately 300,000 people that have been displaced by the conflict in Abkhazia are influential in Georgia. They have guaranteed representation in Parliament, a set of shared grievances, and are clustered in “temporary” squalid conditions that facilitate their mobilization. At the same time, many IDPs appear disaffected with their purported leaders and focus instead on individual and family welfare. Nonetheless, IDPs share common interests, forged by the conflict over Abkhazia. IDPs in Western Georgia travel across the demarcation line to work and sometimes return to their homes in the Gali region of Abkhazia. Others reportedly have taken up arms with militia groups or are engaged in smuggling with the region. The far less numerous IDPs from Tskhinvali have little ability to influence the situation in Georgia.

## **2. External Actors**

### **Neighboring States**

A small state with few resources, Georgia depends heavily on relations with its neighbors. While technically at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the mountainous terrain of the Caucasus and underdeveloped transportation network makes physical interactions difficult. The particular and disparate interests of foreign actors vis-à-vis Georgia must, however, be noted.

Russia’s historical relationship with Georgia and physical proximity ensure that it plays a significant role in the country’s politics and economics. Not only was Georgia a constituent part of the Soviet Union with the political and economic integration that that implies, but Russia remains the country’s most important trading partner after Turkey. Certainly revitalization of the Georgian economy will depend a great deal on reestablishing the economic links attenuated by the break up of the Soviet Union. The continuing presence of Russian military bases in Batumi and Akhalkalaki, as well as CIS peacekeeping forces (under Russian command) in the Abkhaz and Ossetian zones of conflict are a source of irritation for the vast majority of Georgians. A host of Russia actors (secret service, military, oligarchs, foreign ministry) remain the ever-present bogeyman of Georgian conspiracy theories. The separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia rely on Russia for trade routes as well as direct political and indirect military support. Ethnic Ossetians from the Republic of North Ossetia, a part of the Russian Federation, maintain particularly close ties with South Ossetia, and are linked by one of the two highways between Georgia and Russia. Russian economic interests also reportedly support the Abkhaz economy. Under Boris Yeltsin and subsequently Vladimir Putin, elements of the Russian military appeared to pursue a harder-line foreign policy towards Georgia. Provocative acts in Georgia included the recent bombing of the Kodori and Pankisi gorges.

Russia would like to reestablish its influence in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Moscow’s support for breakaway regions can be seen in this context. On the other hand, Russia’s leadership does not want to be seen as responsible for the disintegration of Georgia and the demise of its President, Eduard Shevardnadze, who remains popular in the West, if not at home. Nor would Russia want to assume the burden of rescuing Georgia’s devastated economy. Both serve as brakes on Moscow’s mischief.

Armenia also figures prominently among the external actors important for Georgia's future. The opportunities and incentives for Armenian involvement in Georgian affairs are multiple. Armenia is part of the historic triangle mentioned at the outset that allies the country with Russia and Iran in opposition to Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. As such, Armenia may support Russian efforts to reestablish its hegemony in Georgia. Armenians on both sides of the border regard Russia as a natural ally against their age-old enemy, Turkey. The failure of Turkey to even acknowledge, let alone pay reparations for the Armenian genocide weighs heavily. Moreover, the large Armenian population concentrated in Georgia's border region of Javakheti may look to Armenia for support in its grievances against the Georgian State. Support flows in the other direction as well. Armenians from Georgia fought with Armenia in the unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh. They reportedly returned with their weapons and are the backbone of armed cells, called Dashnakhs. This group might encourage conflict in the region to expose the inadequate level of nationalism of the current Armenian government. Not surprisingly then, Armenia is often cited as a potential source of unrest in Georgia.

Countervailing interests are also present, however. Azerbaijan and Turkey, both unfriendly neighbors to the east and west, hem in Armenia, respectively. Georgia provides the main land routes for Armenian trade (especially in energy). This created an Armenian interest in stable relations with Georgia. If this interest trumps those, which would weaken Georgia, then Armenia may actually serve to dampen potential conflict in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Shevardnadze has tried, with mixed success, to maintain good relations with his counterparts in the country and exploits these ties when he needs ethnic Armenian support to win elections in Georgia.<sup>17</sup>

Turkey and Georgian elites share common geo-political interests forged in no small part by their historic animosity toward Russia. Turkey is today Georgia's largest trading partner and potential partner in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. This does not sit well with the Armenians throughout the region, but especially in Samtskhe-Javakheti who fear that Turkey may expand its control over southern Georgia. Pan-Turkic concepts and the country's substantial presence and close relationship with Azerbaijan increase these concerns for ethnic Armenians. Turkish-Armenian enmity is a salient source of tension in the southern part of Georgia.

Azerbaijan depends on Georgia for its trade route to Turkey and its main export route for crude oil to the West. This again provides an incentive to good relations with Georgia. For the time being, the autocratic politics of the Heydar Aliev regime allow for few other interests to be developed or represented. State oil interests support continued good relations with Georgia. As with Armenia, Shevardnadze uses his ties to Aliev to ensure ethnic Azeri support when needed in elections. And ethnic Azeris successfully turn to Shevardnadze to address issues of elite representation.<sup>18</sup>

### **International Organizations**

The most important international organizations are engaged in the country. The OSCE and the UN have offices in Georgia. They are in charge of observing and mediating solutions to the Ossetia and Abkhaz conflicts. The World Bank has provided infusions of cash and credit that sustain the government of Georgia during these lean years of sharply reduced economic performance and weak

---

<sup>17</sup> The right touch failed him recently, however, when a new head of the police was appointed in Ninotsminda. Clashes in the Armenian town erupted when a Georgian from Tiles was appointed to replace the former head, a local Armenian. To compound the situation the two individuals reportedly belong to different clans.

<sup>18</sup> The failed effort to replace an ethnic Azeri next in line for a Parliamentary seat on the Citizen's Union party list with an ethnic Georgian is the most recent example where appeals to the President achieve results.

tax collection. The World Bank alone has committed \$647.1 million since 1992. A substantial portion of these funds is used to finance Georgia's chronic current account deficit and foreign debt. The Bank also engages in projects such as road reconstruction, health, judicial reform, and agricultural development. Moreover, the Bank and the Fund attach conditionality to loans and credits that theoretically can directly influence domestic policies. The leverage stems not only from the funds that they can provide but also from the stamp of approval that IFI support signals to potential foreign investors. To date, however, the office Director of the World Bank felt that western assistance had served primarily to sustain an essentially dysfunctional system.

## **Foreign Donors**

The Europeans, either bilaterally or through the European Union, are also engaged in development assistance through a whole range of projects from civil service reform to language training. Like USAID they seek to assist indigenous efforts for reform. But the donors appear to have little ability to bring about change in the host country without the presence of domestic constituencies that are organized and advocate change. The donor community has adopted conflict mitigation as one component of its objectives in the country, and has begun to consider shifting interventions away from the capital to some of the more conflict-prone regions (Javakheti).

## **C. State Capacity**

### **The State**

By any recognized standard, the Georgian state is weak. It does not exercise effective control over its own territory or control its own borders. Ineffective and incompetent institutions are mired in a chronic inability to raise revenues, weak local governance structures, and deeply rooted corruption. The state's weakness is both a source of grievance and potential conflict and an impediment to its ability to serve as an arena for the impartial mediation and/or resolution of conflict.

Public administration is, in fact, so saturated by venality in Georgia that it cannot respond to direction. Even the lauded efforts of reformist parliamentarians are wholly subverted in execution, with the result that many laws are passed by the legislature but seldom implemented or enforced. Corruption on this scale, as other analysts have noted, paralyzes all development efforts and undermines public order and the rule of law. It also takes a heavy fiscal toll; with a financially strapped treasury, many mandates are not funded, while spending for services that might maintain government support or enhance order remains low. The state cannot pay its armed forces a living wage; indeed, the Georgian military rank-and-file operates under extreme hardship, which, in turn, erodes public order, regime stability, and the capacity of state to protect and preserve its borders.

Public confidence in the state is nonexistent, as noted earlier, due to the perception that the state bureaucracy, from the lowliest functionaries to the ministers, is riddled with corruption. It is common knowledge that bureaucrats in Tbilisi skim off generous commissions on government contracts that are now simply factored into the cost of doing business. Tax collectors routinely take bribes in exchange for low assessments. Customs officers demand payment for clearing goods into the country. Police officers have been reduced to uniformed bandits, extorting small payments from motorists and other victims. Educational qualifications, entrance to universities, and, in some cases, even diplomas are sold on the open market.

Such phenomena are by no means uncommon among the Soviet successor states, but the repercussions are more severe in Georgia because of weak economic growth, a multiethnic society, festering separatist conflicts, and the centrifugal tendency of the regions. Because the lion's share of

public functions is, in effect, “privatized” through informal networks, the state is incapable of paying normal, regular wages to its civil servants. Poorly paid state employees must freelance rather than perform their official duties, or charge “fees” for simply doing what they are supposed to do. The result is a state bureaucracy that is opaque, administratively weak, and dysfunctional.

As a result, high-profile efforts to tackle corruption and state reform have been greeted with skepticism. Even Shevardnadze’s recent ministerial firings provoked more cynicism than enthusiasm. The team did, however, hear of committed reformers within a few ministries who have attempted to steer their bureaucracies toward greater transparency and accountability, with some successes. These exceptions include the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture, the head of the Central Bank, and the Minister of Defense. To date, powerful actors within and outside the government have thwarted their efforts.

### **Power Ministries**

Nowhere is corruption more corrosive to the goal of preventing conflict than in the so-called “power” ministries, a critical force in Georgian politics that serves to maintain public order. The power ministries, notably the Interior Ministry, until recently led by the notoriously corrupt Kakha Targamadze, reinforced the centralizing tendencies by doling out patronage and favors to loyal clients in and out of government. Executive branch power is, however, partially counterbalanced by a legislature that may be the strongest of the non-Baltic former Soviet states. Under the current rules, the President cannot dissolve the Parliament. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has some 70,000 poorly paid policemen who are granted licenses to shake down the public for payments, and in turn have to pay higher-ups in their organization for lucrative posts.

The Georgian military lacks resources and cohesion. It is beset by corruption, discipline, and morale problems and divided by the kind of personal loyalties that hinder other institutions. Efforts to unify the command structure, professionalize the military, and strengthen civilian control have not been successful. The coordination issues that have undercut the institution still linger.<sup>19</sup> Military experts ridicule the idea that the Georgian military could be entrusted with the defense of Georgia’s territorial integrity, and are skeptical that the MOD could be used to put down an internal rebellion. Civilian protesters have prevented the Georgian military from conducting maneuvers or establishing any kind of presence in Javakheti where Russia retains a military base. Few think the military would have either the capacity or will to stage a successful coup. Current forces under the Ministry of Defense are supposed to be around 27,000 servicemen, including ground, air force, anti-aircraft, and naval units. These numbers are assumed to be inflated since those interested in avoiding call-ups may do so by bribing military commanders and units overstate their numbers to increase any transfers for salaries and provisions.

### **Central Government: Executive, Legislative, Judicial Branches**

The tendency over the last decade has been greater centralization of power and economic resources in the executive branch, particularly in the chancellery and power ministries (i.e., Interior, Security, Procuracy, and Defense) at the expense of other ministries and local and regional governments. The intertwining of political and economic power is at the root of the corrupt system. The corruption and centralization led interviewees to characterize Georgia as a “patrimonial regime” with the President

---

<sup>19</sup> Nowhere was this clearer than in the May 2001 rebellion at the Mukhrovani base, when 400 National Guardsmen mutinied to protest unpaid salaries and poor conditions – a rebellion that was viewed by some as a clumsy, abortive attempt to stage a coup.

effectively the leader of the largest clan network. Ministry development has been erratic. Shevardnadze has eliminated or changed the cabinet several times, creating a sense of impermanence about the ministries.<sup>20</sup>

Georgia's unicameral Parliament has real oversight and legislative authority and is regarded as the force behind the country's reform process. It approved the 1995 constitution, widely considered a model to be emulated elsewhere. The main problem with the legislative branch seems not to be in the realm of legislation; Georgia has an abundance of fine laws that are simply not implemented or are weakly enforced. This does little to enhance the credibility of the Parliament as a force for change.

The distance between Parliament and the public seems vast. Even in Tbilisi, the relationship between parliamentary representatives and their constituents is weak or nonexistent, and these ties are no doubt more tenuous in the regions. Most representatives are elected by party lists and only a few selected from individual districts. Citizens turn to executive-appointed regional authorities to air their issues since they are in a better position to deliver goods and services to the population. Individual parliamentarians are generally in weaker positions to provide constituency services, although some may be able to extract personal favors from the authorities in Tbilisi. The legislature's effectiveness is further weakened by a fragile party system. The once-formidable Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG), which held a plurality of seats after the 1995 and a majority in the 1999 elections, has disintegrated into pro and anti-Shevardnadze factions and is now defunct as a party.

Of all branches of government, the justice system is the least developed. Judges lack professionalism and independence. Interviewees suggested were often corrupt and incompetent. Courts are manipulated by the procurator and other executive ministries that retain too much influence on branch. A Council of Justice was created in 1998 to test and then certify candidates for judgeships, on the theory the process would reduce corruption, but it has not been in place long enough to have had much impact. The team also heard reports that the testing and certification process could be bypassed by bribery.

Georgia's dysfunctional justice system has consequences for conflict vulnerability. Courts are not seen as honest arbiters of property and other disputes that could be resolved easily and peacefully. Hence, minor controversies can inflame existing social, ethnic, or religious tensions. In Kvemo-Kartli, for example, when Greeks working seasonal jobs abroad returned to find their homes occupied by IDPs, there was simply no credible authority in the region, judicial or otherwise, that could be trusted to mediate the dispute. The result was violence between returnees and the IDPs that left two persons dead.

### **Regional and Local Governments**

The President appoints regional Governors (*Rtsmunebuli*) who, in turn, delegate tasks to the heads of districts, also appointed by the President, known as *Gamgebeli*. Elected Councils (*Sakrebulo*s) at the regional or village level in theory have the legal authority to approve or reject laws issued by *Gamgebeli*, but in practice the central government often ignores the *Sakrebulo*'s decisions, or pressures its members through *Gamgebeli* to keep them in line. Regional governors are thus not accountable or responsible to the population of their regions, but instead report to the President and Chancellery. In Samtskhe-Javakheti, however, the *Gamgebeli* expressed the same frustrations as those voiced by members of the *Sakrebulo*. They complained of a lack of authority and resources to

---

<sup>20</sup> For example, the team learned of a proposal to abolish the Ministry of Revenue and consolidate it with the Ministry of Public Property Management.

address the local problems. Citizens line up to petition both the *Gamgebeli* and members of the elected councils. The obvious inability of local and district officials, whether elected or appointed, to bring about improvements of the most basic kind has de-legitimized these bodies and increased popular dissatisfaction with politics in general. How much credibility one should attach to the protestations of the *Gamgebeli* or how much conditions at the local level would improve if the center devolved more resources and authority is far from clear.

How well regions are governed depends on personalities and their relations with the central government. Local governments thus have little credibility, though the principles of local government get plenty of lip service at the national level. Corruption among *Gamgebeli* is common knowledge, but citizens are powerless to do anything to remove them from office, except by appealing directly to Shevardnadze. Only in rare cases has Shevardnadze removed a *Gamgebeli* who otherwise enjoy secure tenure in office.<sup>21</sup> The *Rtsmunebuli* and *Gamgebeli* serve at the whim of the President and with full attention focused on their self-interests. These officials reportedly buy their positions, and thus need to extract large rents through corruption over many years to get a profitable return on their investment.

### **Georgian Orthodox Church**

The Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys social prestige and moral authority. Some have likened its position to that of the Catholic Church in Poland. It plays an important part in the social and spiritual life of many Georgians and is viewed as a potential and impartial mediator of conflict. There are examples of individuals approaching clergy to act as ombudsmen or advocates in resolving problems with local officials. This suggests that the church and perhaps local faith-based organizations could play a role in community building and encouraging local authorities to fulfill their responsibility to the public. The Georgian Orthodox Church, however, has been less evenhanded in dealing with other religions. An ongoing dispute about property seized by the state and given to the Orthodox Church in Soviet times casts a shadow over relations between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. Likewise, the Orthodox Church has not been capable of mediating in recent disputes when Muslims have attempted to build mosques.

### **International Organizations**

Most Georgians view international institutions as legitimate participants in the effort to address conflicts in the country. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is an intermediary body between the Georgian and South Ossetian authorities. Its supervision of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) has been instrumental in establishing a framework for negotiations on military, economic, refugee, and political issues. In Abkhazia, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) chairs the Group of Friends, the body responsible for the formal peace process. Both the Georgians and the Abkhaz view UNOMIG as a reliable institution for furthering negotiations. OSCE and UNOMIG presence contributes a sense of security to both parties to the conflict. As such they are valued as a stabilizing element of the contemporary landscape.

### **Organized Crime**

In the absence of functioning political institutions and effective central and local government authorities, Georgians have increasingly turned to informal conflict mediation mechanisms, which only reinforce the weakness of formal institutions. The team heard evidence that leaders from

---

<sup>21</sup> Interviews with representatives of Internews and Rustavi-2 confirm a single case in which a regional *Gamgebeli* was removed by the President following an exposure of corruption.

organized crime groups play a role in dispute mediation. One expert estimated that not less than half of commercial disputes are resolved in this manner. Appeals to resolve issues outside the courts may also come to *Gamgebeli* or local police chiefs, who differ little from respected criminal bosses.

#### IV. SCENARIOS AND CASE STUDIES: POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE

This section examines five general conflict scenarios, with particular conflicts within each category. The scenarios are based on the theory and framework that underpin the assessment, other analytic work on Georgia, and information and interviews conducted during this assessment. The five general scenarios are (1) violent change in government, (2) resumption of frozen conflicts, (3) new separatist conflicts, (4) communal conflict, and (5) civil unrest. These types of conflict are not mutually exclusive, with some overlap and spillover from one type of conflict to another. The scenarios identify the root causes, mobilization factors that increase or reduce conflict risk, state capacity issues, as well as external forces that may play a role in conflict and windows of vulnerability or possible events that might trigger an outbreak of future conflict.

The balance between negative and positive factors in the framework provides the basis for evaluating the net potential for the outbreak of various types of conflict, their likely scope, and how the prospect of each scenario is changing. Thus grievances and opportunities, organizations and actors, institutions, and triggers are discussed in each scenario. Georgian experience with conflict or conflict avoidance/management over the past decade is an important backdrop for our assessment of the relative gravity of each scenario.

In order to capture the likelihood of each potential conflict type, a risk level (low, medium, high) as well as a risk status (increasing, stable, decreasing) is assigned to each scenario that weighs the balance between a host of aggravating and mitigating factors (see Table 1). “Level” refers to the absolute risk based on an analysis of conflict drivers and countervailing factors in the Georgian context; “status,” to a change in risk from the last five years to the next five years.

**Table 1: Conflict Scenarios, Risk Levels and 5-Year Projection**

RISK PROJECTION: 2001-2006	<b><u>RISK LEVEL 2001</u></b>		
	<b><u>LOW</u></b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b><u>DECREASING</u></b> <u>β</u>	Militia Violence		Post-Shevardnadze Succession
<b><u>STABLE</u></b> <u>Ū</u>	Military Coup Separatist: Adjara Separatist: Kvemo-Kartli Separatist: Samegrelo		Communal Conflict
<b><u>INCREASING</u></b> <u>Ÿ</u>	Violent electoral strategy South Ossetia Re-ignites	Civil Unrest Separatist: Javakheti	Abkhazia Re-ignites

---

## SCENARIO 1: VIOLENT CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT

---

We characterize the first set of scenarios as “violent change in government.” While these conflicts share with our other scenarios a resort to force, they mainly involve elites, with only limited, if any, overt mass participation. These conflicts are primarily driven by a competition for power among groups that perceive an impending threat to their interests and seek to bypass succession rules and seize power to protect their interests. Examples include the use of violence as an election strategy, coups, and militia violence. Each scenario was raised during the team’s interviews and focus group discussions. They were deemed to be at least plausible in the Georgian context.

### Post-Shevardnadze Succession

---

Risk Level: High

Risk Status: Decreasing

Different models of succession seem to be developing in regions of the former Soviet Union. Some leaders try to groom heirs in the hope of developing political dynasties. In a second group of states, attention centers on the development of a political process that should produce a democratic succession. A third group pays little attention to succession, either by the designation of an heir apparent or through institutionalized political processes. The approaches in the first and third groups of states are the most destabilizing and hence the most vulnerable to conflict. Georgia may be more likely than other countries in the Caucasus to follow a democratic succession process, yet few experts felt that there were any guarantees this would be the case. Indeed, recent indications are that Georgia is leaning toward adopting, *de facto*, the first model of succession.

Much like other countries in the region, Georgia has a formal process for succession, but it is an open question whether constitutional provisions will be followed, or whether interested leaders will try to circumvent them to advance an heir apparent using violent means. Georgia has yet to experience an orderly transition from one head of state to another. Shevardnadze himself, who has faced three assassination attempts, won re-election in a contest considered by many, less than free and fair. It is, therefore, premature to conclude that procedures for the peaceful alternation in power are working in Georgia. Prudence recommends that succession be considered a potential flashpoint for conflict.

### Grievances and Opportunities

Among the main reasons for uncertainty surrounding succession is Shevardnadze himself, who western leaders view as the leading democrat of the Caucasus and most Georgians see as the boss of a corrupt political machine. The President is at least rhetorically committed to the idea that Georgia should become a democratic country. He is, in fact, the only ruler in the region to encourage a new generation of political elites. Prominent among them is the former parliamentary speaker Zurab Zhvania, who has presidential aspirations and public support.

However, it is common knowledge that the politico-economic interests (“clans”) closest to Shevardnadze, including his own family members, have clearly benefited more from his rule than have others. It is often observed that Shevardnadze’s clan wields substantial economic and political power in ways that limit reform but, paradoxically, maintain a degree of stability. Clan members fear a succession that does not result in an heir who will protect their vested interests. The clan may have an incentive to seize the presidency as a preemptive action against an aspirant who threatens their spoils and supporters. Since competition is likely to be fierce if the groundwork is not prepared ahead of time, Shevardnadze is under pressure to choose a successor acceptable to the economic groups that have benefited from his patronage. Whoever emerges as the heir apparent will likely have to assure

political and economic elites that their interests will be protected. In other words, a designated succession may maintain stability while continuing to thwart institutional reform in Georgia.

### **Organizations and Actors**

A key actor driving this scenario is Shevardnadze himself. The President is a commanding figure on the Georgian political scene and regarded in the West as a democratic leader, a reformer, and a guarantor of stability. In Georgia, however, Shevardnadze has become an unpopular figure who has failed to fulfill promises to enact reforms and fight corruption. All analysts agree, however, that Shevardnadze is a skilled operator, adept at negotiating with and co-opting political opponents to gain short-term political advantage. The next few years will test the President's abilities to navigate the murky political waters and pave the way for an orderly, peaceful succession.

In November 2001, Zurab Zhvania resigned as head of Parliament and, in so doing, forfeited his number 1 slot in the line of succession to Shevardnadze. Zhvania now appears to be ready to pursue his own, independent path to the presidency. Nino Burzhanadze, the current Speaker of Parliament, who would formally succeed the President in the event of his departure, was reportedly not backed by Shevardnadze and his supporters for the position. Although she represented an acceptable compromise to a divided Parliament, she is not currently in a strong position to win the next election if indeed she becomes a candidate.

An expedited process to hold early presidential elections might raise tensions and incentives to employ violence. Candidates might try to improve their prospects of winning an election by intimidating rivals or increasing their popular support through popular measures such as attempting to retake Abkhazia. An absence of a clear successor or transparent succession process could be destabilizing. The longer-term process of positioning by politicians over succession keeps political tensions high.

### **Institutions**

Georgia's weak institutions combined with the enormous politico-economic power of the presidency continues to render the succession issue a high stakes game among elites, and increases the risk of a post-Shevardnadze succession conflict. While Georgia's constitution specifically addresses the issue of succession,<sup>22</sup> it has never once been applied in the transfer of power. The constitution provides that the Speaker of Parliament act as President until elections are held three months later, but analysts

---

<sup>22</sup> Succession rules are enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia (adopted 25 August 1995). Chap 4, Article 75: "Parliament has the right to relieve the President of his duties according to the procedures of Article 63 of the Constitution and according to procedures determined by organic law, for violation of the Constitution, or high treason or other capital crimes: a) For violation of the Constitution if this is confirmed by the Constitutional Court; b) For high treason or other capital crimes if confirmed by the decision of the Supreme Court." Also, Article 76 specifies succession rules for the following cases:

1. Where the President is unable to perform his duties or in the case of pre-term expiration, the powers of the President are delegated to the Chair of Parliament.
2. A person holding the position of President in these cases cannot use the rights set forth in Article 73 clauses "c" [removes ministers;], "i" [issues decrees and orders, on the basis of the Constitution and the law;], and the rights envisaged in Article 74 clause one [1. By the request of not less than 200,000 electors or on his own initiative, the President fixes a referendum within 30 days following receipt of such a request on the issues determined by the Constitution and law].
3. Elections for the President are held within 45 days after the expiration of the President's duties and its holding is the responsibility of the Parliament.

are skeptical this would occur. Georgia has yet to have a single peaceful transfer of power from one head of state to another.

A viable party system could reduce conflict risk, but that goal has so far eluded Georgia and, in fact, seems more remote now than even five years ago. The Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG), at one time populated by energetic, thirty-something reformers and technocrats, became the preeminent political force in Georgia following the 1999 parliamentary elections. A mere two years later, the ruling party has fragmented and is effectively defunct. When the CUG was still viable, several charismatic members (such as Zurab Zhvania and former Justice Minister Mikhail Saakashvili) seemed well positioned to assume the mantle of party leadership and succeed the President. Now that these leaders have defected to other groups or otherwise disassociated themselves with the CUG, there is a risk that succession will be chaotic.

### **Triggers**

Like other incumbents, Shevardnadze will inevitably pass from the political scene. Analysts suggest that a sudden, unexpected succession could spark open conflict among elites. The uncertainty about who would be the next President and hold the vast potential power of the office creates strong incentives for contenders to use force as part of their efforts. If Shevardnadze is not successful in tapping a successor who is acceptable to other power brokers, tensions will rise as 2005 approaches or his health deteriorates.

### **Balance**

In summary, the succession conflict scenario is plausible, but a hard one to predict. On the one hand, as time goes on, the likelihood that Shevardnadze will designate a successor reduces uncertainty and conflict risk. Leaders are reluctant to designate a successor too early, for fear that the designated heir might move against the leader prematurely or might not have the staying power to remain the heir apparent. On the other hand, economic interests opposed to a reformist successor (one seen as threatening to vested interests) will have time to join forces to take preemptive action. In any event, Georgia is more vulnerable with no designated successor in place. Like Yeltsin who named Putin as his heir apparent, Shevardnadze has incentives to ensure his close circle will remain under the wing of the new president.

## **The Use of Violence as Electoral Strategy**

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Increasing

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

Since political positions guarantee economic power, financial security, and political strength to clans, the stakes for the control of even the weak Georgian state are substantial. Access to opportunities is so closely related to political power, there are great incentives for candidates for public office to pursue positions by any means necessary, fair or foul, especially in elections already perceived as unfair.

### **Organizations and Actors**

Politicians running for office may use extra-legal measures to ensure electoral success. Veterans of Mkhedrioni and Zviadist militias reportedly exerted influence during the last parliamentary by-elections in Tbilisi, stealing ballot boxes and intimidating voters. These rumors raise the specter of potential problems in upcoming elections. The President currently appoints regional *Gamgebeli* and

the *Rtsmunebuli*. Any shift towards electing these positions would likely result in heavy competition. The main concern, however, stems from their link to local power structures that rely on certain politicians for support. Any threat to a particular *Gamgebeli* or *Rtsmunebuli*'s hold on power may be a direct threat to the financial stability of the chief of police or the head of the local security office.

### **Institutions**

A transparent electoral process, broadly understood, remains the key institutional barrier to an election-conflict scenario, as well as the guarantor of representative government – the best long-term safeguard against conflict. On this score, the Georgian record is decidedly mixed. While the 1999 parliamentary elections reached a high water mark for elections in Georgia, the presidential contest in 2000 was marred by procedural irregularities and fraud. As long as elected office provides so many non-political benefits, incentives to run and win at all costs remain high.

On the other hand, there are some institutional bright spots that could reduce election-conflict risk. The recent passage of the election code may be an indication that political elites are interested in providing a stronger institutional basis for clean elections. This could be further strengthened by a comprehensive monitoring effort of the entire electoral process from the campaign to the counting of votes. Even though international observers have been present in recent elections, criticism of the process has been muted. Pressure to adhere to international election standards in Georgia's upcoming national elections will be critical to reducing vulnerability to the election conflict scenario.

### **Triggers**

Parliamentary, presidential, or even local elections trigger violence. The increasing level of irregularities and fraud from the parliamentary elections to the presidential contest, and incidents of violence in the two parliamentary by-elections in October, suggest that the threat of violence as part of winning elections is increasing. Any elections for *Gamgebeli* or *Rtsmunebuli* would also provide strong incentives to win at all costs, since these are key positions in the system.

Local council elections are not likely to create tensions that lead to intra-regional, religious, or ethnic conflict, since the *Sakrebulo*s have insufficient political authority to create the kind of high stakes competition that makes group identities salient and inter-group relations unstable. By the same token, decentralization reforms that promise to devolve more power to local councils could have the unintended consequence of raising the stakes of local competition, increasing the role of so-called "conflict entrepreneurs" (those who exploit group differences in order to mobilize electoral support) in local electoral contests. An aggressive push for rapid implementation of local governance in Georgia could thus aggravate tensions that could lead to violence in the multiethnic and conflict-prone regions like Samegrelo and Kvemo-Kartli.

### **Balance**

Given the lack of historical examples of election-related violence, the team assesses the possibility of this scenario as low. If resources and opportunities in Georgia continue to be scarce, desperation to obtain positions of political power for rent-seeking purposes may grow, increasing conflict potential. An international monitoring effort combined with pressure on major contenders to forswear violence and abide by the outcome of elections may be critical to ensuring a peaceful, valid outcome of elections in Georgia.

## **Military Coup**

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Stable

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

Georgian military, internal affairs, security, and border forces have a host of grievances: low pay and morale, poor conditions for troops and officers, inadequate equipment, and rampant draft dodging. But the force, leaders, and ministers are deeply involved in corrupt activities, which divert their energies and attention. The Soviet legacy of political control of the military has carried over in independent Georgia. Internal affairs forces (MVD) have a similar heritage; the security ministry is a weak reflection of its KGB predecessor.

### **Organizations and Actors**

Reforms over the last 10 years have had little success in institutionalizing the armed forces. While the pace of reform has picked up over the past couple of years, most soldiers remain loyal not to the military as an institution but to their immediate commanders. Divisions within and among the various branches of the Georgian armed forces deter military action in the political sphere, as the May 2001 National Guard rebellion at the Mukhrovani base made clear. The 400-odd National Guard servicemen who participated in the mutiny were opposed to the efforts of General Qarqarashvili, Tengiz Kitovani's successor as head of the Guard, to subordinate the guardsmen to the Ministry of Defense (MOD). For the Guard, this was simply the last straw in an effort to downgrade its status and eliminate the privileges it enjoyed in the 1990s, when they were the pillar of the security establishment. Other defense actors appear to have grudgingly accommodated the push to consolidate the armed forces into a unified command under civilian authority, although progress has been slow and is difficult to gauge. The President has his own well-paid and well-trained security force, which is widely regarded as loyal. It seems to operate outside the MOD and would presumably defend the President in the event of any military move against him.

### **Institutions**

The Ministry of Defense has structures that bring together the heads of their forces. The President has a security council in the Chancellery that brings together leaders from all the force structures. Recent changes may augur well for more institutional cohesion and a stronger capacity to manage conflict within the military. The MOD recently implemented an open, program budget process, making the defense budget an easier sell to the Parliament and public. The result has been an inclination to boost the budget and fund existing mandates, including salary arrears for discharged personnel.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the National Guard was provided a budget earmark of \$100,000 to address the causes of the May 2001 rebellion. In an effort to preempt a major source of corruption, namely, the bribing of commanders to avoid conscription, the MOD will launch a policy whereby draftees can pay 250 Lari to avoid a call-up and 2,500 Lari to evade the entire 18-month draft. Those revenues would be received by the state. Despite these steps, the military has yet to forge programs in line with a modern defense policy: there is no national security concept, no strategic priorities, and civilian control is only in its nascent stages.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The budget increased from 33 million GEL in 2000 to 56.5 million GEL in 2001, although the defense budget has declined since 1996 (0.7 percent of GDP).

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Maj. Maia Chiabishvili, Ministry of Defense, Defense Resource and Planning Division.

## Triggers

Experts maintain that high-level political instability, such as the recent ministerial reshuffle, will prompt a coup attempt in Georgia. However, Shevardnadze's firing of Interior Minister Targamadze, a leader with an alleged interest in and ability to seize power through illegal means, was in reality uneventful. Shevardnadze appointed one of Targamadze's deputies to the post, which may have assuaged the Targamadze contingent's fear of a direct threat to their interests. The move did not do much to boost the President's image, however.

Coup scenarios may be connected with a general deterioration of public order, perhaps as a result of violent protest and civil unrest, or militia violence. In such cases, experts assert, the Ministry of Internal Affairs might seize power in concert with elite groups to protect their economic interests against a perceived threat.

## Balance

While a number of interviewees suggested that an armed force of a few hundred troops could potentially seize control of the weak Georgian state, virtually all agreed that military coups are low likelihood events. Georgian military forces lack the will, the coordination, institutional cohesion, and capability to carry out a coup and to rule in the aftermath of a coup. And the disparate armed forces of the state check and balance each other, making a successful coup by one element unlikely.

## Militia Violence

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Decreasing

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the surge of paramilitary formations in Georgia reflected a general breakdown of law and order. The National Guard commanded by Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani's Mkhedrioni ('Horsemen') were instrumental in the overthrow of President Gamsakhurdia. As Minister of Defense, Kitovani marched the National Guard into Sukhumi in August 1992. In the absence of a regular army, paramilitary formations coalesced into a fighting force during the war, but the lack of a coherent command structure undermined Georgian military activity. Although quasi-official, the militias often financed themselves through criminal activities. Mkhedrioni were notorious for terrorizing the population in western Georgia.

Militia groups were severely weakened by defeat in Abkhazia, although militias were not disbanded and their main leaders, including Jaba Ioseliani, were imprisoned until Shevardnadze survived an assassination attempt in August 1995, allegedly perpetrated by Mkhedrioni. Since then, Shevardnadze has moved gradually to formalize militia structures and bring them under state authority. After the 1995 assassination attempt, Shevardnadze had members of some paramilitary groups arrested en masse. While this roundup of leaders and supporters significantly quelled militia activity, some groups still allegedly remain active. Militia activity is evident in Samegrelo and Abkhazia and still poses a risk to public order, though the data collected in this assessment suggests the risk is low and stable.

## Grievances and Opportunities

The loss of territorial sovereignty and residual ill will over the war in Abkhazia still serves as a major grievance, particularly in western Georgia among the Georgian partisans. While not strong enough to take Abkhazia, Georgian militia activities nevertheless destabilize the situation and undermine the peace process. These guerrillas have targeted Abkhaz militia, peacekeeping forces, and occasionally



UNOMIG in response to allegations of arbitrary killings of ethnic Georgians by Abkhaz militia. By all accounts, Georgian militia activity nationwide has decreased, though there has been a sharp increase in guerrilla activity aimed at regaining Abkhazia by force since 1996. A source of power for the militias is that they remain armed and organized in command structures.

An equally important root cause of militia activity in Georgia is the thriving trade in contraband and drug traffic, which state entities (e.g., customs) are ill-equipped to handle. Economic motivation now drives criminal activities in hard-hit areas of western Georgia. In fact, this is not a sense of nationalism so much as the lack of opportunities for IDP youth and young adults that seems to provide the ready source for recruitment among militia groups. This suggests that developing legitimate job sources in regions like Samegrelo, Svaneti, and Imereti could reduce the attractiveness of militia activity. Under ordinary circumstances, a stronger police presence would reduce militia activity, but in the Georgian context, police are not likely to have much impact on reducing illicit economic activity.

### **Organizations and Actors**

The most prominent militia groups in Georgia over the last decade were the Mkhedrioni (“Horsemen”), and the National Guard. While the ranks of the old militias have dwindled, there are reports that members simply joined the newer groups.<sup>25</sup> The new groups are the White Legion (led by Zurab Samushia, a follower of Zviad Gamsakhurdia) and the Forest Brothers (led by Dato Shengelia, previously a member of the Mkhedrioni). Both groups reportedly have support among the Mingrelian population and were especially active in 1998.

New militias reportedly draw recruits from the IDP community in Samegrelo, including former militia members in Abkhazia. Activities range from attacks by individuals to organized sabotage of power supplies and the explosion of bombs in Sukhumi. Observers suggest that militia groups have become more sophisticated in terms of coordination and weaponry over the last few years. The team heard accounts that Georgian MPs allegedly encourage the guerrillas to intensify operations against Abkhazia believing that official military support would follow.<sup>26</sup> The guerrillas appear to be linked to the Tbilisi-based ‘parliament-in-exile’, but there is no indication that a tight chain of command exists.

### **Institutions**

As noted elsewhere, Georgian institutions charged with maintaining public order, particularly the army, are weak and lacking in coordination and resources, all of which creates a rather hospitable climate for militias. While militia groups have been outlawed and have seen their influence in Georgian politics dwindle over the years, the weak and self-serving nature of the Ministry of Interior and of the police force provides no real institutional barrier to the existence of militias. That said, militia strength varies inversely with the development of an integrated Georgian military under civilian control. The salience of militias as conflict instigators will continue to decline if the capacity of the MOD to maintain its monopoly of force grows.

---

<sup>25</sup> Billingsley, Dodge, “Security Deteriorates Along The Abkhaz-Georgia Security Line,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 6, 2001 – Internet.

<sup>26</sup> While the Georgian government has denied UNOMIG accusations that Georgian special services have provided support, finances, or training to militias, there has been no formal investigation into the alleged complicity of officials in the arming and training of these groups, nor have there been steps taken to apprehend individuals known to be involved.

## Triggers

Interviewees were concerned that Zviadists or Mkhedrioni might provoke a confrontation between police and demonstrators who gathered in front of the Parliament to protest the crackdown on Rustavi-2. Ioseliani reportedly sought to make an appeal, but was not permitted to address the crowd, a sign of his lack of credibility among the population. There is nevertheless a significant concern that groups in Tbilisi and in certain regions will call upon militia power to respond to a perceived threat or to secure advantage for a particular group interest.

---

## SCENARIO 2: RESUMPTION OF “FROZEN” SEPARATIST CONFLICTS

---

Georgia has suffered violent conflicts in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia since 1990. Both regions are now *de facto* independent, while *de jure* part of Georgia. Neither war has been formally resolved, but relations between Tbilisi and the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali have improved significantly since the conflict, as have unofficial economic and political links. The Abkhaz capital of Sukhumi remains disconnected from Tbilisi, although shared interest in a stable electricity supply has resulted in Georgian-Abkhaz cooperation to ensure the security of the Inguri Hydroelectric power plant on the border.

### Abkhazia

---

Risk Level: High

Risk Status: Increasing

The Abkhaz war was far more violent than the war in South Ossetia, and has had more detrimental effects on Georgia and Abkhazia. And the region is an integral part of most Georgian’s images of their republic. Many people used to spend their holidays in what was then the “French Riviera” of the Soviet Union. Hostilities began in August 1992, when Georgian troops were deployed to Abkhazia in an effort to control the rail line to Russia. A cease-fire agreement, brokered by Russian mediation, in July failed and the Abkhaz captured Sukhumi by September 27, 1993. With all of Abkhazia except the Kodori Gorge under Abkhaz control, some 300,000 IDPs were forced from the territory. CIS Peacekeeping Forces have served as a buffer between Georgian and Abkhaz forces since June 1994, following the *Moscow Agreement on Cease-fire and Separation of Forces* (1993). The peace process is presently stagnant. The Abkhaz side refuses to discuss final status questions, insisting on their independence, and demands that the return of refugees be linked to economic rehabilitation of the conflict zone and a final peace agreement.

### Opportunities and Grievances

Like South Ossetians, many Abkhaz seek to ensure that their minority group controls political, economic, and social opportunities in the region, while the Georgian state seeks to restore its sovereignty over the region. An integrated Abkhazia could lead to the resumption of rail ties to Russia and expand trade. Many IDPs want to return to their homes, and remain angry about atrocities committed in the conflict. Militia groups continue to fight for control of the region.

### Organizations and Actors

*Ardzinba*

Abkhaz authorities under “President” Vladislav Ardzinba control most of the devastated region. These weak competencies are mixed with personal interests in trade with Russia and Georgia.

Ardzimba and his team has a monopoly on political authority and control of power structures. He is reportedly ill, raising questions of a potential power vacuum upon his death.

#### *Abkhaz Government-in-Exile*

Georgian IDPs are nominally represented by the Abkhaz government-in-exile, which has maintained a monopoly on political representation of the region in Tbilisi for over 10 years without elections. Tamaz Nadarashvili's government-in-exile has failed to provide much support to most of its purported constituency. The government-in-exile is strongly opposed to any compromise agreement on the region. Some suggested that Nadarashvili and his colleagues have a vested interest in remaining in exile as the means to maintain their authority and a fairly comfortable lifestyle in Tbilisi.

#### *Georgian Partisans*

While these armed structures initially fought on the Georgian side against the Abkhaz, there are growing signs that the activities of these now illegal armed formations have taken on a less patriotic tone and are now more criminal in nature. UNOMIG and OSCE assert that most of the violence in Gali is from criminal rather than political or ethnic motives.

#### *NGOs*

An NGO community has developed, although the team has been unable to assess its prospects as service delivery and advocacy organizations. Nevertheless, a stronger NGO sector composed of groups that (a) elicit significant youth participation and (b) advocate conflict resolution, reconciliation and bridge-building with Georgian NGOs could stand as a bulwark against organized groups with an interest in jeopardizing the peace process.

- The Foundation for Citizens' Initiative and Future of Humankind, for example, is a policy advocacy group that is supportive of the peace process and studies a wide range of problems, including democratization and media, youth politics.
- The Sukhumi-based Center for Development of a Civil Society provide legal education and assistance; works for development of local self-government; researches the causes, manifestations, and means for early-warning of conflict, and peaceful conflict management, as well as youth educational programs especially geared toward students in secondary schools and universities.
- Finally, the Mothers of Abkhazia Movement for Peace and Social Justice assists in defending the rights of war victims and repatriation of the Abkhaz Diaspora, participates in dialogues between conflicting sides, and in general searches for peaceful means to resolving conflicts.

In conjunction with effective peacekeeping, the restraint of Abkhaz, Georgian, and Russian authorities and the development of an NGO sector in Abkhazia with links to Georgian NGOs may well be the best guarantor of stability between Georgia and Abkhazia, whatever the final status of the breakaway territory.

## *Russia*

Russia is a key member of the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General (Russia, Germany, France, USA, UK) and facilitator of the negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia, and plays a significant role in the political discussions. Although the Russian military claims to have withdrawn from the Gudauta military base in Abkhazia, through the CIS Peacekeeping Force, Russia still maintains a firm military presence in the region. Russia has the ability to quell any direct confrontation between Georgian and Abkhaz forces and has great latitude to act unilaterally to foster regional conflict. While Russia has not recognized Abkhaz independence, Russian government policies treat the region differently than the rest of Georgia, most significantly exempting people in the region from a visa requirement imposed in December 2000 for visitors to Russia from Georgia proper.

## *International Community*

The UN, through the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), is responsible for monitoring the situation in the region, the demilitarization of the border between the two parties, and facilitating a resolution to the conflict. The Group of Friends, while capable of exerting appropriate pressure on the two sides, has either not exhibited the will or has been ineffective in its efforts to push Tbilisi and Sukhumi to resolve the conflict. The joint UN-OSCE Human Rights Office has played an important role not only in supporting adherence to human rights norms and principles, but in funding cross-border projects that try to bridge understanding between Georgians and Abkhaz.

## **Institutions**

### *Georgian and Abkhaz Authorities*

Neither Georgian state institutions nor those of the Abkhaz state have the credibility and neutrality to mediate interests, either within these communities or between them. Local governments in Gali district, while formally subject to Abkhaz authorities, may provide some support to their constituents by organizing local security forces and partially represent local aspirations.

### *Coordinating Council*

Established in November 1997, the Coordinating Council is the main forum for negotiations and includes Georgia and Abkhazia, with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) as Chair. Russia serves as facilitator and the OSCE is a participant. The Group of Friends of the Secretary General (Russia, Germany, France, USA, UK) are observers. While the Coordinating Council is meeting more regularly than before, it has been ineffective in pushing the parties to resolve the conflict.

## **Triggers**

The Abkhaz conflict remains relatively unstable, with Georgian partisans active in a low-intensity conflict with Abkhaz forces in much of Gali region. The level of tension and warfare has remained low since the Abkhaz forced approximately 40,000 Georgians out of Gali in 1998. Subsequently, some 30,000 to 35,000 Georgians have again returned to the border region. These returnees have virtually no protection against criminality or potential expulsion.

Russian regional policy must be considered potential triggers for a wider war. If recent events are an indication, however, those involving Russia failed to re-ignite conflict. When Georgian Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze threatened Abkhaz independence by transferring a force of 200 to 300



armed Chechens under one of their warlords, Gelayev, to the Kodori Gorge in September and October, Russia suddenly “withdrew” its military base from Gudauta in November without coordinating the decision with Georgian or Abkhaz authorities.

Nevertheless, many experts continue to believe, with justification, that the ongoing stalemate could restart low-level conflict, or even full-scale war, in the region. Russian interests in Georgia are not clear. At the same time, some suggested Georgian nationalists, perhaps using remnants of ethnic militias from the early 1990s, could restart the conflict. One particular threat came from the *Rtsmunebuli* in Kutaisi, who suggested in September that he would organize militias to move on the region if a solution was not found by May 2002.

### **Balance**

The “frozen” status of the Abkhaz conflict is unstable and at high risk of a flare-up, compared to South Ossetia. Recent prospective “triggering” events have had little effect, however, which suggests the immediate prospects for a wider conflict are limited. In the long term, Georgian sentiment about the importance of regaining control over the region, incentives for political figures to mobilize support, and the strengthening of the Georgian military’s capacity to retake the territory suggest conflict could resume over the next few years.

Recent developments may offer some hope of a movement toward accommodation between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Following the November political crisis, Shevardnadze appointed Aslan Abashidze as his representative to the conflict resolution process. While regional authorities formally reject any compromise position that limits Abkhaz independence, the Adjara example of autonomy and strong economic performance through open international trade, may serve as a useful model for conflict resolution in Abkhazia. Abashidze’s good relations with Russian military, political, and economic leaders may also be instrumental in promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Broadening the social benefits of any peace settlement, including IDP returns, and developing a more democratic and free-market system in the region would significantly reduce the prospect of conflict, while developing a more just system. As in South Ossetia, any prospective settlement depends on Russian support. As noted above, a movement in the direction of a more definitive normalization of Georgian-Abkhazian relations would also substantially reduce the risk of militia activity and militia-perpetrated violence in western Georgia along the line of demarcation with Abkhazia. Finally, as noted, the strengthening of the NGO community in Abkhazia could have a positive impact on long-term resolution to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.

### **South Ossetia**

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Increasing

South Ossetia was the site of the first violent ethnic and separatist conflict in Georgia in 1990 and 1991. Regional authorities asserted greater autonomy for themselves as nationalist movements grew in the region and in Georgia. As Georgian nationalists advocated “Georgia for Georgians,” Ossetian nationalist aspirations sought to disengage the Tskhinvali region from Georgia, drawing closer to North Ossetia. The political clash between the two sides grew as Soviet and Georgian state authority waned. The nationalist Gamsakhurdia government in Tbilisi sought to reign in the region’s nationalist-oriented authorities. Georgian central government authorities formally abolished the autonomy of the region, while Tskhinvali authorities declared independence. This tit-for-tat

legislative and political struggle grew violent when Georgian nationalists mobilized demonstrators to go to Tskhinvali and assert Georgian preeminence.

Local authorities organized mass demonstrations against this movement. Elements on each side began to use weapons in the struggle for either Georgian statehood or Ossetian rights. Armed conflict over control of the capital led to months of fighting and the use of heavy weapons in the streets. Ossetian separatists with purported support by the Soviet military, succeeded in forcing Georgians to retreat from Tskhinvali.

Since the 1992 cease-fire, violent conflict has subsided, creating an atmosphere of relative stability. The formal peace process continues on a regular basis under the auspices of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and the Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF), which guarantees military security. The July 2000 OSCE Vienna/Baden meeting led the parties to discussions on the draft of the Intermediary Document pertaining to the political settlement of the conflict. While this was a significant step towards final status talks, there is no timetable for negotiations.

The OSCE Mission to Georgia monitors the activities of the JCC and the JPKF, which is comprised of Georgian, Ossetian, and CIS troops. Georgian state authority covers those areas inhabited by ethnic Georgian, while the government of the self-proclaimed independent Republic of South Ossetia controls the rest.

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

Ossetians fought for control over the territory, in the hope of gaining economic, political, and cultural opportunities and protection from Georgian nationalism. Perhaps the most pressing reason to maintain control over South Ossetia is the road that leads from the Russian Federation through Tskhinvali ultimately connecting to the Georgian Military Highway. The revenue derived from goods transport is significant, as it is one of only two roads connecting Georgia with Russia. The Ossetian leadership is reluctant to easily cede this power to the Georgian state, without adequate guarantees. Georgia has a vested interest in regaining control of the lost customs revenue that pours through the Tskhinvali route.

Both Georgian and Ossetian IDPs and refugees have a desire to return to their homes. Slow progress on the question of housing and property restitution for IDPs remains a painful issue in the conflict settlement process. While progress has been made in the peace process, there is still a lack of clarity on the ultimate status of South Ossetia. South Ossetia likewise continues to argue that Georgia should contribute to its economic rehabilitation though few Georgian resources have actually been contributed. Instead, the European Union and United Nations have borne a great deal of the reconstruction burden.

### **Organizations and Actors**

#### *Chibirov*

Recent elections indicate that Ludwig Chibirov's power has weakened, and that region's political life may become more pluralistic or, in any event, less stable than originally thought. A moderate willing to work with the Shevardnadze government, Chibirov was considered by many to be a stabilizing influence on Georgian-South Ossetian relations. His election loss creates uncertainty regarding both relations with Tbilisi and internal stability. Chibirov's "clan" still largely controls the region's main sources of revenue and power structures, providing ample opportunity for rent seeking for contending

political and economic interests. The strength of his hold on rent seeking opportunities may change in the upcoming period and gravitate towards the new leader of the South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoyev.

### *Mafia and Smugglers*

In the “no man’s land” between Tskhinvali and Georgia proper, an extensive market (*Falloy Bazaar*) has developed along the trucking route from Russia. Neither Georgian nor Ossetian authorities officially control this market, the primary commodity of which is fuel, which has permitted the creation of a tax-free smuggling haven. Mafia groups and smugglers from Georgia, Russia, and the Tskhinvali area take advantage of the region’s lack of authority to turn the flows of contraband into substantial profits. The absence of official tariffs, records, or collections by state agencies makes it easy for rent-seeking officials to siphon off smuggling profits. Since officials in both Tskhinvali and Tbilisi pocket a portion of the revenue generated by this illicit market, there is little incentive in either place to see this market dismantled – one obvious result of a final peace settlement. Smugglers may thus have an interest in perpetuating the no-peace, no-war status quo, though an eruption of violence and major instability would undermine business.

### *Russia*

Russia plays a major role in South Ossetia. Russia is an official member of the JCC, with representatives both from Moscow and from Vladikavkaz participating. While nominally a tri-partite military force, the JPKF is led by CIS peacekeepers under Russian command. South Ossetia received significant support from Russia, during the conflict with Georgia. Although it is unclear what role Russia would play, particularly if the recent elections in South Ossetia cause internal instability, it is clear that any settlement between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali must be with the blessing of Moscow. Like in Abkhazia, Russia has not imposed visa requirements on travelers from South Ossetia, which strengthens incentives for traders and travelers to transit through the region.<sup>27</sup>

### *International Community*

Close cooperation between the OSCE, the EU, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been important in encouraging the parties to the negotiating table and providing them support in the JCC, JPKF, and the political negotiations. Similarly, OSCE weapons collection, EU economic rehabilitation, and UNHCR refugee support have created confidence-building measures and helped to remove some of the underlying grievances and opportunities. Particularly noteworthy is the work of the EU and its leveraging effect on the OSCE-sponsored political negotiations. By engaging in infrastructure projects, such as railroad rehabilitation, school reconstruction, and water pipe repair, the EU has provided work for Ossetians and Georgians on projects that create linkages between communities and require the parties to meet to discuss concrete issues.<sup>28</sup> Similarly an EU proposal to help Tskhinvali with electricity supplies from Georgia-proper was made on the condition that the parties make tangible progress on the interim document towards a political settlement of the conflict. The net effect is to bring the parties closer through economic linkages, allow Georgia to appear as though it is providing economic assistance to South Ossetia, and

---

<sup>27</sup> According to one Moscow newspaper, the exemption of South Ossetia from the visa regime also facilitates smuggling. South Ossetians reportedly sell their residence permits to Georgian and Azeri merchants because it is easier than registering for a visa at the Russian embassy. Georgians also make their way into Russia by crossing the South-North Ossetia border or registering in South Ossetia to receive the stamp allowing “free passage” into Russia. Local authorities reportedly close their eyes to such activities (*Versty*, April 26, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> UNDP likewise had led a similar effort, but has since exhausted its donor funding.

bring the parties together at the discussion table. Such community-based infrastructure projects and the processes entailed have a mitigating effect on conflict.

## **Institutions**

### *Joint Control Commission*

The Joint Control Commission (JCC) consists of representatives from Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, Moscow, and Vladikavkaz with participation of the OSCE, UNHCR, and the EU. This regular forum provides an official framework for resolving the Georgian-Ossetian conflict by addressing issues pertaining to economics, refugees, and security. Frequent meetings between the parties serves as a significant confidence-building measure. While issues pertaining to the political settlement of the conflict are not discussed in the JCC, many of the participants are likewise on the panel that addresses these political issues.

### *Joint Peacekeeping Forces*

Similarly, the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) meet in the framework of the JCC process and through a joint headquarters in Tskhinvali. The strength of the JPKF, however, is Russia. Georgian and South Ossetian posts are ill equipped and poorly funded, with many of the soldiers frequently leaving their posts to tend to farming chores at home. Recently, with assistance from the OSCE Mission to Georgia, a joint police unit has been established to address the increasing level of criminality in the region, an issue that the JPKF does not have the mandate to address.

### *South Ossetian Governmental Bodies*

The authorities of the Republic (the “President” and “Parliament”) are formally elected through elections that are semi-competitive. The “President” then appoints the government, subject to the ratification of “Parliament.” Communist forces that oppose the “President” dominate “Parliament.”

*NGOs*

There is a nascent NGO sector in South Ossetia, though primarily based in Tskhinvali. The international community has been instrumental in encouraging the growth of this sector. USAID should consider sponsoring reconciliation/advocacy organizations as well as religious, service provision NGOs in the region.

## **Triggers**

Prior to the “Presidential” elections, the team’s interviews in Georgia and Tskhinvali revealed almost universal belief that the conflict in South Ossetia had reached a plateau and that there was little credible reason to believe conflict would re-ignite. While no formal settlement had been reached, relations between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi had normalized and Chibirov’s moderate leanings made him a viable interlocutor with the Georgians. Internal tensions also appeared well under the control of Chibirov and his associates.

The November/December 2001 election in South Ossetia has altered this balance, giving rise to concerns of impending internal instability, as well as renewed fears of a destabilization of the *modus vivendi* with Georgia. Former Tskhinvali Komsomol leader Eduard Kokoyev and the Chair of “Parliament,” Stanislav Kochiyev, received 47 and 24 percent of the vote, respectively. Chibirov came in third with 21 percent. Kokoyev defeated Kochiyev in a run-off at the beginning of December. The situation in Tskhinvali became tense after approximately 200 armed supporters of Chibirov, primarily from law enforcement bodies, demanded that the “Parliament” nullify the results of the

election. While conflict was averted, this action indicates that Chibirov and his supporters are reluctant to cede power.

Conflict in South Ossetia could be triggered if Chibirov's supporters refuse to hand over power to Kokoyev. While an elite power struggle may serve as a trigger, the greater danger comes if Georgia decides to take advantage of this internal weakness to capture Tskhinvali. Despite the OSCE's efforts at collecting weapons from the population, South Ossetia remains one of the most heavily armed regions of Georgia. If tensions were to mount, the CIS peacekeepers would be obliged by their mandate to secure the zone of conflict. Georgia recognizes this risk and would thus be unlikely to enter the fray.

### **Balance**

Despite the recent tensions, the prospects for a resumption of the conflict appear low. Incentives are strong among corrupt elites in Tskhinvali to agree among themselves to share profits generated by the transport road and Falloy Bazaar. There is widespread belief, however, that no final settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict will be forthcoming until there is resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. This linkage is tied to the hopes in Tskhinvali that if Sukhumi is successful in negotiating a higher status than it had previously held, Tskhinvali will have greater possibilities of ensuring a higher status for itself. Recent statements by Kokoyev suggest that he will take a firmer stance on negotiations than Chibirov, requiring the parties to retrace previous ground covered in the negotiation process. That said, however, the imperative to renegotiate the peace process with a new government does not necessarily mean that tensions will erupt into conflict again. There are unofficial reports that Shevardnadze and Kokoyev have already met privately in Gori, suggesting that steps are being taken to establish a new *modus vivendi* between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali.

Once the new administration's position and the relationship between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali are clear, the international community could reassure both parties of its continuing supports for the peace process with targeted development assistance to the region. This type of assistance, if conditioned on progress in the peace process, will help the parties continue to engage in political discussions and would be instrumental in maintaining stability.

---

### **SCENARIO 3: NEW SEPARATIST CONFLICTS**

---

This category envisions organized, armed conflicts directed against the national government and by ethnic, regional, and/or religious groups to gain territorial autonomy, independence, or some other special status for the region vis-à-vis the state. Such conflicts are regional and may assume the form of mass demonstrations, guerrilla warfare against state security forces, or escalate into full-scale war.

It has been argued that Georgia is not a unified country, but rather a collection of semi-autonomous fiefdoms within internationally recognized geographic borders. Two violent regional conflicts in the early 1990s led to de-facto independence for a portion of Shida-Kartli, known as South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. Fears that other regions of Georgia would follow the same path focus on Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara, Kvemo-Kartli, and Samogrelo.

## **Javakheti**

---

Risk Level: Medium

Risk Status: Increasing

The current administrative region of Samtskhe-Javakheti consists of two previously distinct regions: Samtskhe, centered around Akhaltsikhe, has a predominantly ethnic Georgian population; Javakheti, with its population of more than 100,000 concentrated in the districts of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, is approximately 90 percent Armenian.

The international community has frequently cited Javakheti as the next potential secessionist region of Georgia. The presence of a Russian military base in Akhalkalaki, a high concentration of ethnic Armenians along the border with Armenia, isolation from Georgian language and culture, and the possible repatriation of Meskhetian Turks are cited as issues that could transform this region into a hotspot. A 1998 armed protest by Javakheti residents, who prevented the Georgian military from entering Javakheti to conduct military exercises, is frequently mentioned as further evidence of separatist ambitions.

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

#### *Social and Economic Decay*

Samtskhe-Javakheti is often referred to as Georgia's Siberia. High altitude and a harsh climate exacerbate already difficult living conditions in all parts of Georgia. Employment options in Javakheti are limited; agriculture has historically been the primary source of income. Subsistence farming and trade are central to survival in Javakheti. The Russian military base in Akhalkalaki, which employs approximately 1,600 local residents, is the single largest employer in the region. Local officials estimate that more than 7,000 family members directly benefit from the salaries of these employees. In addition, the base supplements its provisions through purchases at the local markets, benefiting retailers. Small service-oriented businesses (e.g., restaurants) have also grown in Akhalkalaki to serve the needs of base personnel.

As other employment options remain scarce, migrant labor, primarily to Russia, has become an import source of income for the population. Transfer payments from family members abroad constitute an important support system. Such economic migration, however, has had a tremendous effect on the population, as the region experiences an outflow of skilled, able-bodied laborers and a pronounced brain drain. At the same time, the out-migration of predominantly young men can serve as an important safety valve, given the high correlation between young, unemployed men and conflict.

The region's roads have so substantially deteriorated since the end of the Soviet Union that many have become nearly impassable. Trade and communication are thus visibly hindered, discouraging economic development. The main road linking the Georgian and Armenian parts of the region is particularly dismal, impeding not only economic but also social and political connections. One exception is a small stretch of road between Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda that was repaved thanks to a visit by President Shevardnadze. The railroad that could provide an alternative link between Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki is no longer operative.

A crumbling primary and secondary educational system as well as no regular instruction in the Georgian language means that the mostly Armenian population of Javakheti has limited access to higher education in Tbilisi or job opportunities in Georgian government offices. All qualifying

examinations for professional certification are given only in Georgian, which excludes the overwhelming majority of the population in Javakheti who speak Armenian and Russian. Efforts to bring teachers of Georgian into the school systems have been controversial. A president's fund was established for that purpose. DFID is also bringing teachers into the region. Much higher salaries are offered to lure teachers to Javakheti, generating considerable resentment among other teachers. The opening of a branch of Tbilisi State University in Akhalkalaki will provide better access to education, though confidence in the quality of education to be offered remains low. Furthermore, the new university could simply reinforce the isolation of Javakheti residents from the rest of Georgia.

### *Weak Government Institutions*

The Tbilisi-appointed *Rtsmunebuli*, who is based in Akhaltsikhe with his cadre of approximately 40 staff members from Tbilisi, is viewed by many in the population as a means of control imposed by President Shevardnadze on the region. Similarly, the *Gamgebelis* are also viewed as outsiders. Accusations of corruption associated with the offices of the *Rtsmunebuli* and *Gamgebeli* only compound the frustration voiced regularly in the *Sakrebulo* (local councils that are elected) and felt among the local populace that those officials are not elected. In the early 1990s, residents of Javakheti protested the appointment of three *Gamgebelis* in a row, preventing the candidates from taking office. A compromise was eventually reached with Tbilisi. The political party Javakh asserts that, in 1997, it collected over 40,000 signatures in Javakheti supporting the dissolution of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and granting Javakheti the status of administrative-territorial unit.<sup>29</sup> The petition campaign, however, was unsuccessful underscoring the impotence people feel toward the formal governing structures.

*Gamgebelis* uniformly complained about their lack of authority and resources in the highly centralized system. They expressed clear interest in gaining more of both, but are less attentive to issues of accountability. They were less concerned about whether they were elected or appointed, but argued that they had a much better idea of local problems and solutions than did the power holders sitting in Tbilisi. When asked about a strategy to shift the balance of power by perhaps working with other *Gamgebeli* and/or working through political parties, there was no response. The general approach seems to be to write to the capital and wait for the center to devolve power.

### *Social Deterioration*

The primary grievances are common to both ethnic Georgian and Armenian communities. Interviewees from several communities cited poor water quality as the number one problem. Polluted water directly affects public health, as indicated by a recent outbreak of hepatitis A in Akhaltsikhe. Agriculture depends upon a reliable and clean supply of water for animals that provide the prized meat and dairy products in the region. A public opinion survey conducted by faculty of the university at Akhaltsikhe cited environmental problems as the leading concern. Second were economic problems, led by unemployment. Another common problem that affects most citizens is the lack of reliable electricity and heat. Winters in the elevated plateau are long and cold. Tbilisi has been unable to provide reliable electricity for several years. Small trees are cut all along the roads to provide some means to heat homes in the absence of other heating sources. Illegal cutting of trees is a source of substantial soil erosion, another problem for an agricultural community. More immediately it highlights the sharp deterioration in living standards since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

---

<sup>29</sup> Rochowanski, Almut, Assessment of the Current Situation in Javakheti, UNDP Georgia, June-July 2001

### *Ethnic Cleavages*

Discussions with local leaders and representatives of civil society do not provide substantial anecdotal information to suggest dangerous underlying tensions between Georgians and Armenians. Irritations do exist, however. Armenians from Javakheti are unhappy about being subject to higher tariffs and fees, when they interact with the *Rtsmunebuli* and the Akhaltsikhe authorities. Some misperceptions also emerged during our interviews in Aspindza. One woman spoke authoritatively that, in Javakheti, not only is Georgian not spoken but also the Georgian currency (Lari) cannot be used. She added that street signs are only in Armenian and Russian. In fact, the Lari was accepted everywhere the team traveled in Javakheti, although prices are posted in rubles. Moreover, street signs were usually in three languages: Armenian, Georgian, and Russian. We were also told in Akhaltsikhe that targeted central government and foreign investment had privileged Javakheti. We saw no evidence of this. Scholars agree that Javakheti is the “least invested part of Georgia.”<sup>30</sup> The entire region, Armenian as well as Georgian, appears to be equally poor.

The language issue is also complex. The implosion of the Soviet Union ended the widespread use of Russian as a common language. Georgians no longer learn Russian as their second language. This development has clearly disadvantaged the Armenian population.

### **Organizations and Actors**

#### *Ethnic Armenians and Diaspora*

More than 90 percent of Javakheti is ethnic Armenian. The population uses the Armenian and Russian languages almost exclusively, with few people having solid Georgian language skills. Many ethnic Armenians follow the tradition of the Armenian Apostolic church, which differs theologically from the Georgian Orthodox church.

The Armenian Diaspora is considered by some to be a source of financial support for the community in Javakheti. Complaints voiced by residents of Javakheti indicate that while the Diaspora has contributed some money to the region, it has been at a far lower level than one might expect. The Diaspora reportedly concentrates its efforts on helping Armenia.

Volunteers from Javakheti reportedly fought on the Armenian side in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. Some accounts say that these fighters returned to Javakheti with their weapons, making Javakheti one of the most heavily armed regions of Georgia.<sup>31</sup> The Javakh, recognized as the most important political force in Javakheti, is divided between a pro-Georgian and a pro-Armenian wing. The Dashnakh are reputed to be the most radical members of Javakh and are linked to the Armenian party of Dashnaktsutsyun. They support unification with Armenia whereas the other wing of Javakh does not. There is concern that the Dashnakh is the armed faction--not surprising since they supplied the young men who fought in Nagorno-Karabagh.<sup>32</sup> The dominant political figures in Javakheti are from the moderate wing. When asked about the Dashnakh, interviewees referred to that group only along with several other players in the region. No one attached a particular importance to them in their discussions with us. That does not mean that they are not a potential threat to stability, but we had no signals from our visit in the region to confirm or deny it.

---

<sup>30</sup> Voitsekh Guretski, “The question of Javakheti,” *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 3, #1, 1998:5 (internet)

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Guretski, “Javakheti”:12.

### *Russian Military Base*

The Russian military base in Akhalkalaki provides an important sense of security and protection for the Armenian population that remains fearful and suspicious of Turkey. Armenians told the team that their affinity for Russia is embedded in history and culture. In Akhaltsikhe, we were reminded of the two triangles that have dominated the region: Russia, Armenia, and Iran form one; Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, the other. Animosity between Armenians and Turks serves as a wedge dividing Armenians and Georgians. The Armenian population's commitment to the military base is reinforced by its economic role. It employs 1,600 Javakheti residents. While the officers at the military base are Russians, more than half of the soldiers under their command are ethnic Armenians from Javakheti. Rumors are rife about the sale of commodities from the Russian base for personal profit. Some assert that weapons have also been sold.

### *Clans and Mafia*

Clan and mafia structures in Samtskhe-Javakheti play an important role in daily life. While there may be concentrations of ethnic Armenians or ethnic Georgians within certain clans, clans cross ethnic divides depending on the economic and political opportunities. One Armenian *Gamgebeli* is reportedly part of a Georgian clan linked directly to the president. The *Gamgebeli* of Ninotsminda arranged for his community to receive a reliable supply of electricity directly from Armenia because he was a member of a presidential delegation to Armenia, demonstrating his connection with Shevardnadze. The point underscores the centrality of personal ties. This web of economic and political interests can provide a source of cohesion by cutting across regional, religious, and ethnic cleavages. However clans could be the source of conflict if the economic pie shrinks or if wholesale changes of those in power threaten turf.<sup>33</sup>

### *Clergy*

The pastor of the Armenian Apostolic Church suggested that the clergy is already playing an informal role as ombudsman for its congregation. While we cannot say whether this one pastor is an anomaly or representative of many religious leaders, it is worth noting that members of his community have approached him to intervene in cases where local officials or law enforcement personnel have wronged members of the community. The pastor has been effective in bringing to bear some moral pressure on local officials and clan leaders. He also told us that he has developed good working relations with the local Catholic priest and leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the region. This suggests that in Samtskhe-Javakheti, religious leaders have begun working across religious and ethnic lines for the larger good.

## **Institutions**

### *Local Government*

Few institutions in Javakheti have solid foundations, as clan relations are the real drivers. *Sakrebulo* and *Gamgebeli* members are theoretically responsible for resolving problems within the community, but their lack of control over tax revenues prevents them from having actual fiscal authority, which in turn limits their ability to address community problems. Public confidence in these offices is thus low. Election of the *Gamgebeli* and devolution of authority from *Rtsmunebuli* might improve the

---

<sup>33</sup> A brawl in Ninotsminda in mid-December 2001 in which a hand grenade injured 13 people has been officially attributed to ethnic-Armenians clashing over a business arrangement gone awry. Other sources blamed a power struggle between two clans over personnel change within the local internal affairs forces after the replacement of Targamadze.

situation, although for the time being, clans, rather than formal institutions and public offices, hold the key to political, social, and economic life.

### *International Organizations and NGOs*

International organizations and donor agencies have had limited involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The most prominent donor agencies working in the region are USAID, USDA, DFID, IOM, and UN (i.e., UNICEF, UNWFP, UNOCHA, UNV). Primary assistance is in the areas of humanitarian aid, NGO capacity building, community development, education, good governance, income generation, infrastructure/rehabilitation, and information/media. Aside from the organizations that distribute food or vaccines, the vast majority of development assistance to the region is through trainings and workshops. NGOs in Javakheti are limited and dependent on international support. NGOs are clearly perceived as vehicles for supplementing meager salaries, as NGO leaders simultaneously hold positions as government bureaucrats in some communities.<sup>34</sup>

The work of the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) is worth noting. In conjunction with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), CIPDD conducts confidential research and reporting in Javakheti that allows the organization to “take the temperature” of the region. Interview summaries are gathered and sent on a regular basis to the HCNM. This process also allows CIPDD to gain an understanding of which types of projects might be useful to implement. Project suggestions are referred to the OSCE and subsequently to other donors. While the information provides an early warning mechanism and a means for intervention, the HCNM maintains the confidentiality of the reports and does not allow CIPDD or the OSCE to share the material with outside organizations.

Horizonti, a local organization with funding from USAID, appears to take a leadership role among NGOs in the region. Their stated goal is to mobilize communities by activation of citizens and to help local constituencies better advocate for their own needs. Horizonti supports community-based organizations (CBOs) through research and training.

Mercy Corps International (MCI) implements the Georgia Community Mobilization Program with USAID funding. This community capacity-building project functions through broad-based community development, technical assistance, and subgrants to CBOs. The approach is appealing, in that it not only empowers the community, but it creates a process whereby communities can identify specific needs. By addressing actual community-identified needs, the Community Mobilization projects helps to ease some of the underlying social and economic grievances.

The International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), through USDA funding, is working on both micro-credit and small infrastructure projects. IOCC’s focus on repair of roads connecting farms to market and its efforts at improving water quality are apparently unique in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Such activities can have a positive effect on capitalizing on the regions agricultural strengths, while easing some economic burdens and linking communities through commerce.

### *Religious Community*

The religious communities play a role in guiding the spiritual and moral beliefs of a large portion of the population. Our discussion with the pastor of the Armenian Apostolic church in Akhalkalaki

---

<sup>34</sup> Aspindza roundtable participants introduced themselves both as office holders in local government and leaders of local NGOs.

suggests that the church can play a positive role in that impoverished region. Not only can it bridge the gap between religious communities (which correspond to ethnic communities), but it can also help to meet some of the most basic material as well as spiritual needs of the people. In the past few years since his arrival, the pastor has begun a dialogue with his counterparts in the Georgian Orthodox Church and in the Catholic Church. The first challenge was to set aside misunderstandings as well as competition. Since then, reportedly the three have worked together to help the neediest citizens regardless of confession.

## **Triggers**

### *Withdrawal of Russian Military Base*

At the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit, Russia agreed to withdraw from the Vaziani and Gudauta bases and to reach an accord with Georgia on the status of bases in Akhalkalaki and Batumi by the end of 2001. Russia favors a 15-year time frame for withdrawal, citing a lack of financial resources to relocate, while Georgia seeks a three-year time limit for withdrawal.

The interests of the Armenian population of the region and Georgian government are at odds on the future of the base. The base is an important source of employment and income for the population in Akhalkalaki. Additionally, the population seeks to retain Russian forces, which in are viewed as protection against any potential Turkish threat. Local politicians expressed concern that Russian troops would eventually be replaced by NATO forces, which the ethnic Armenian population anticipates would be Turkish troops.

In addition to the loss of jobs, the base closure could provide a ready supply of weapons to an angry population. The wild card is whether Russia and Armenia would have primary interest in dampening or promoting conflict. Given that Georgia and Russia have not yet agreed to a timeframe for closure of the base, it is unlikely that this will be a trigger during the next few years.

### *Meskhethian Turks*

As a condition for membership in the Council of Europe, in 1999 Georgia agreed that Meskhethian Turks, deported in 1944 from Georgia, would be allowed to repatriate to the country within 12 years. While the government has developed no concrete plans for repatriation, there is widespread opposition to their return within the population of the region, both among ethnic Georgians and Armenians. Competition for scarce land, water, and employment would be exacerbated by their return. A visceral distrust and animosity towards the Meskhethian Turks turns attempts at discussing this issue into heated debates. If the Georgian government tries to impose large numbers of Meskhethian Turks on the population, demonstrations and possible revolts are inevitable. While Georgia has committed itself to repatriating the Meskhethian Turks, the slow progress by the Georgian government on initiating plans suggests that Georgia is in no hurry to meet its commitment to the Council of Europe. There is widespread belief that even if Georgia allows the Meskhethian Turks to repatriate, they would be allowed to settle in other parts of Georgia. This would significantly ease the threat of increased tensions in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

### *Clan Competition*

Competition between clans in Samtskhe-Javakheti could also lead to destabilization. At present, two major clans share control of the trade route from Armenia and the fuel business. If the competition between these groups increases, or if it appears that instability in Javakheti would end the influence of the Akhaltsikhe *Rtsmunebuli*, providing more income to the local clans, conflict may be generated.

Similarly, Armenian nationalist groups, closely affiliated with clan and mafia structures, could see instability in Javakheti as advantageous. Under the banner of Armenian nationalism, these groups could rally support from the population. In this way, Javakheti could easily be converted to a tax-free smuggling zone, similar to South Ossetia.

### *Armenian Annexation*

Some analysts have suggested that Armenia has an interest in annexing Javakheti. Given Armenia's unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh and its animosity towards Turkey over the Armenian genocide, Armenia has closed borders to its east and west. Initiating a conflict with Georgia over Javakheti, a region with limited resources, does not appear to be rational. An attempt to annex Javakheti would seal off Armenia's northern trade route, leaving Iran as Armenia's only connection with the world. Moreover, in its current economic and social condition, Javakheti would not be a net gain, but rather more of a burden for Armenia. While it is highly unlikely that Armenia would be interested in annexing Javakheti, it cannot be excluded that the Dashnakhs may try to destabilize the region in a unilateral attempt to separate Javakheti from Georgia. Given this eventuality, Armenia would likely try to stabilize the situation, lest it appear to be in support of the Dashnakhs.

### *Russian Imperial Ambitions*

Russia has had great difficulty in adjusting to the loss of its empire. Russia's hand is evident in the separatist movements in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and autonomous Adjara as one means of trying to reinsert itself into the region. At the same time, Russia is concerned that Georgia's military and institutional weakness allows its territory to be a safe haven for separatist fighters from Chechnya. Some analysts suggest that in order to reassert control, Russia may have an incentive to foment problems in places like Javakheti. In this way, Russian military bases and peacekeeping forces can remain in place, allowing Russia a direct hand in the region. Certainly, instability within the borders of Georgia further weakens attempts at solidifying Georgian independence from its former colonial master.

### **Balance**

A poor economy, competing interests, access to international transit routes, large concentrations of ethnic Georgians and Armenians, and rumors of weapons in the population are reminiscent of the pre-conflict situation in South Ossetia. While Javakheti remains currently stable, numerous actors have tremendous ability to influence the situation. The risk of instability increases as the date for closure of the military base or repatriation of Meskhetian Turks approaches, though, as stated above, these are not short-term concerns. The greatest present danger comes when one actor believes that he can gain influence or wealth by igniting the situation. Ample kindling is available to create a substantial conflict.

Countervailing tendencies include the network of clans that weave the population into informal groups that cut across the obvious ethnic cleavages. These clans seem to provide a means for survival for a population with no apparent official means of support. Barter and subsistence farming have replaced normal economic activity from Soviet times; the wealthy make their money from smuggling and other illicit activities. Presumably the clans provide some degree of protection for the privileged and the impoverished. Although the picture is hardly encouraging, the clans seem to provide some sort of order. At the same time, atomization of an exhausted population provides a kind of buffer against social mobilization that should not be discounted. Georgia has no history of revolution generated by economic and/or social grievance. Armenia's interest in maintaining positive relations

with Georgia is another countervailing tendency in Javakheti. Religious communities provide an important bridge between groups and serve as a social safety net for many of the less privileged.

## **Samegrelo**

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Stable

The region of Samegrelo in Western Georgia is adjacent to Abkhazia. Since the team was not able to visit the region due to the security concerns of the Regional Security Office, the analysis of the potential for conflict in the region is less robust and more uncertain than in the rest of the report. However, particular aspects of Samegrelo and the importance of the region make it imperative to consider the potential for separatist and communal conflict in the region. The team suggests that the USAID Mission conduct a follow-up study on the Samegrelo region.

The region abuts the low-level conflict in the Gali rayon of Abkhazia and houses approximately 250,000 IDPs from the 1992-1993 fighting. The region is also populated by Mingrelians, a branch of the Georgians, with a distinct dialect, pattern of names, and somewhat separate historical background to Eastern Georgia and Tbilisi. The more temperate climate and fertile lowlands made Samegrelo a productive agricultural region in the Soviet period, with hazelnuts and mandarin oranges important exports. The region is home to the port of Poti, the terminus of one of the main trade routes from East to West across Georgia. Large numbers of displaced persons, active militia groups, active conflict across the Inguri River, regional dissatisfaction with Shevardnadze, and scarce resources create the potential for tension. Access to Poti and its own source of transit income adds to the potential for developing separatist aspirations.

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

While much of the population of the country is dissatisfied with the efforts of the Georgian authorities to resolve the Abkhaz conflict, such sentiments may be stronger in Samegrelo than elsewhere due to the proximity of the region to Abkhazia and the high number of IDPs from the region. Tensions between IDPs and the local population that perceives disproportionate benefits from international engagement flow to IDPs apparently remains a source of tension. Surveys suggest that IDPs are no more vulnerable than the rest of the population in the region, although IDPs in collective centers do appear more vulnerable. UNHCR, UNOCHA, UNICEF, WFP, and the IFRC focus on meeting urgent humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable, including children. Historically, much of the activities of the international community target IDPs, particularly those in collective centers. However, aid organizations have now agreed to not distinguish between IDPs and the rest of the population in administering assistance. If successfully implemented, nondiscrimination should reduce tensions between IDPs and the rest of the population as well as provide concrete benefits to recipients across the region. Crime has been increasing in the region, with some sentiments that criminals are disproportionately from IDP centers. The lack of law enforcement in adjacent Gali rayon spills over into greater instability in the region.

In addition to the conventional complaints about economic conditions, lack of democracy, and weaknesses in social protection found throughout Georgia and shared in Samegrelo, some interviewees in Tbilisi suggested that people in Samegrelo saw Tbilisi as alien, irrelevant, and exploitative and thus might seek to run the region on their own. Increasing local autonomy would thus be a potential goal for alternative political leaders, but many interlocutors suggested that greater local prerogatives would strop long before autonomy and not lead to separatism. There are also political grievances against the Shevardnadze regime. A substantial portion of the population had been

supporters of Gamsakhurdia, and may resent the repression of Zviadists after the fall of his regime. This resentment extends to the militias and leaders that removed Gamsakhurdia as well as Shevardnadze.

### **Organizations and Actors**

Interviewees suggested that Mingrelian clans dominate the region and compete with Tbilisi-based clans. However, many Mingrelians hold high positions in Tbilisi; thus the clan system in the region has connections at the national level that would inhibit the potential appeal of separatism. Militias remain active in the region, with both the Forest Brothers and White Legion fighting low-level guerrilla insurgency against the Abkhaz authorities in Sukhumi. Interviewees suggested, however, that militias were also involved in criminal activities and smuggling; continuing these activities and maintaining corrupt ties to trading/smuggling partners in areas under Abkhaz control and in the rest of Georgia provide incentives to keep militia violence at a low level. IDPs, especially those in collective centers, are formally represented by the Abkhaz government in exile, which in practice appears to do little to represent the needs of their purported constituents. But these structures may inhibit the formation of alternative leaders and representation in the NGO community. Local government, as in the rest of Georgia, is weak, underfunded, and not able to meet many of the needs of residents. The NGO sector is developing, with support from UNV, CARE, and the IRC, but the team is unable to assess this development without travel to the region.

### **Institutions**

Without visiting the region, the team was not able to consider the potential for local government, civil society organizations, or other institutions in the region to mediate disputes and reach resolution. The situation may be similar to that in the rest of Georgia, with neither local nor central institutions credible as areas for the resolution of competing interests. International organizations have avoided this mission, and focused on observation of the situation through UN Military Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). However, the community development activities of many donors should build some local capacity for dispute resolution as well as representation through their support for the process of communities working together to address local needs.

### **Triggers**

While incentives and organizations that might seek separatism do not appear strong, continued instability in Gali rayon and the unresolved status of Abkhazia keep the region unstable, with militias profiting from this instability. Few Georgians expect the Abkhaz conflict to be resolved soon.<sup>35</sup> This instability leaves the potential for provocations that could escalate the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia, with particularly negative consequences for Samegrelo. Political parties opposed to the Shevardnadze government might seek to re-engage the Abkhaz and spark more conflict in the region. The continued failure of the Georgian state to solve the Abkhaz conflict might lead to open opposition to the Tbilisi authorities. Zviadists might be especially prone to this activity since they were historically strong in Western Georgia, were armed under Gamsakhurdia's presidency, and their nationalist goals are explicitly violated by Abkhaz separatism. The ongoing failure of the Georgian state to restore sovereignty over the region by force might encourage people in the region to seek greater local authority since Tbilisi has little potential to resolve this issue.

---

<sup>35</sup> A September survey showed 74 percent of the Georgian population did not expect Abkhazia to be reincorporated into Georgia in the next five years (Dobson 2001a).

## **Balance**

The limited information available to date suggests that the prospects for separatist violence in the region is low since much of the population are not separatist. However, the incentives to expand local autonomy and struggles over control of resources between the Tbilisi authorities and the region remain potent and leave some difficult to determine probability of separatist conflict. Conflicts within and between communities in the region seem more probable, and will be considered in the section on communal conflict.

## **Adjara**

---

Risk Level: Low

Risk Status: Stable

Adjara is an Autonomous Republic within Georgia. While Adjars are ethnic Georgians, they are predominantly Muslim, having been the subjects of Turkish rule for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Aslan Abashidze, Chair of the Supreme Council of Adjara, is an autocratic leader who enriches himself and his clan through his position. Supporters claim that he has been instrumental in raising the Adjara standard of living and maintaining the economic base of the region. Access to the Black Sea, a border with Turkey, good relations with Russia, tourism, and agricultural exports have contributed to Adjara's relative economic prosperity and stability. Recent overtures by Shevardnadze towards Abashidze include appointing him as the President's special representative on the Abkhaz and Ossetian conflicts in November as well as rumors that he may become Prime Minister, signaling a closer relationship between the two clans. However, few expected him to be able to resolve these conflicts.

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

Statistics suggest that social and economic conditions in Adjara, while worse than during the Soviet period, are better than other parts of Georgia. This relative advantage creates animosity in other regions towards Adjara because Batumi does not provide revenues to the Georgian state; unlike other regions, tax revenue is held within the Adjara, with only occasional sharing with Tbilisi for political purposes on orders from Abashidze. Some Georgian elites argue that the untouchable status of the region and prerogatives allowed Abashidze should be revoked. Georgian efforts to remove Russian military bases from its territory would affect the base in Batumi, removing source of revenue to the population and prop for Abashidze.

### **Organizations and Actors**

Abashidze and his clan control Adjara, dominating the economy and business. Abashidze controls the regional police, military, and security services, and has his own border posts between Adjara and Georgia. Another example of Abashidze's authority is that while Georgian military units in other regions of Georgia are comprised of recruits from across the country, military stationed in Adjara are exclusively from Adjara. Abashidze's Revival Party has supporters throughout Georgia and seats in Parliament. Abashidze is a national figure and ran for the Georgian presidency, although he lacked the support to win. Abashidze's close relationship with Moscow and the Russian base in Batumi gives the Russians both physical access to Adjara and political influence in Batumi. Anti-Russian sentiments in Georgia have given Abashidze's political foes the advantage of painting Abashidze as an agent of the Russian government as well as a mafia baron.

## Triggers

Given Abashidze's strength in Adjara, the relative economic stability, lack of overt dissatisfaction from the population, and de-facto autonomy from Tbilisi, any internal drive to further separate Adjara from the rest of Georgia seems unlikely. It is difficult to imagine how a push towards separatism would benefit the leadership or the population.

Tensions could arise if Abashidze and his Revival Party grow in influence nationwide, appearing to take a larger slice of the political pie. Additional seats in Parliament or Abashidze's elevation to a ministerial position or perhaps the presidency could create animosity among his political foes. Concerns from other clans that Abashidze is gaining economic and political power at their expense may be sufficient to generate hostilities towards Adjara. Abashidze's opponents could use his purported solid relationship with Moscow as a pretext to engage in conflict to protect Georgia from encroachment by Moscow and its agents.

## Balance

Overall, the prospects for violent conflict as a result of separatist aspirations appear low. Maintenance of the status quo would be most beneficial to the Adjara population and to Abashidze's circle. While growth in Abashidze's national power may cause tensions among the Tbilisi elite, there is no substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is a realistic possibility.

## Kvemo-Kartli

---

Risk Level: Low  
Risk Status: Stable

One of Georgia's largest and most diverse regions, Kvemo-Kartli is a mere 25 kilometers distance from Tbilisi, yet it could not be more disconnected from national politics and culture. Many of its 300-odd villages, particularly those located closest to the border with Azerbaijan, are enclaves populated by Azeris who speak Azeri and Russian, not Georgian. The region has Azeri schools (kindergarten through secondary) and for the students educated in these schools, the universities in Azerbaijan exert a strong pull.

Kvemo-Kartli is governed by 6 district *Gamgebelis* and some 86 village councils (*Sakrebulo*s). Economically, Kvemo-Kartli was among the harder hit regions following the collapse of the Soviet economic system, which supported a thriving industrial center located near the district capital, Rustavi (population 155,000 and falling), as well as a vibrant agricultural sector. The ensuing regional economic collapse triggered an extensive out-migration of the region's youth population seeking educational and opportunities in Tbilisi, Russia, and Azerbaijan.

## Grievances and Opportunities

In much of the border region of Kvemo-Kartli, the population of towns and villages is mostly ethnic Azeri, especially in the area adjacent to the border with Azerbaijan. Other villages in the region are populated by Assyrians and Greeks, and some, almost entirely by resettled Svans and Adjars. While the problems of the region are similar to those of the rest of the country, the settlement pattern (village-based enclaves) creates tensions within and between these communities over access to scarce items such as water or opportunities to develop, providing incentives for competition with other villages or groups. Socioeconomic conditions in the region are worse than in other areas of Georgia, further exacerbating the competition for scarce resources. Corrupt, brutal police brought in from

outside the region, and the perception that they operate with the contrivance of local authorities, fuels discontent.

### **Organizations and Actors**

The old pattern in which councils of elders informally controlled their communities was viewed as bankrupt in Kvemo-Kartli. Power in these communities has been transformed into a contest between clans, elders, the wealthy, and criminals. While these factors do create inter-group tensions that could fuel an outbreak of communal conflict (see below), there was little evidence of a regional movement pushing for autonomy, separation, or some other special status with respect to the central government. On the contrary, a shared sense among ethnic Azeris that the region has been harmed by corrupt local politicians and Georgian clans, neglected by central authorities and international aid organizations was equaled by an apparent desire to strengthen, not weaken, ties with Tbilisi in order to address local needs.

### **Institutions**

#### *Government Bodies*

With authority patterns in villages unclear, interviews suggested there was no credible leader or institution at the regional level to mediate disputes between villages and communities (with the exception of town *Gamgebelis* in Bolnisi and Marneuli). The ethnic Georgian *Rtsmunebuli* and *Gamgebelis* of the region were viewed as alien and irrelevant. The NGO sector is underdeveloped, with particular hopes to develop and promote employment. Although the government in Tbilisi is seen as alien and irrelevant, the team detected a note of sympathy for President Shevardnadze, who many ethnic Azeris see as having curbed the virulent nationalism stirred up by Zviadist militia forces that fueled ethnic tensions and led to deportations of Azeris in the 1990s. Azeris emphasized the relationship between Tbilisi and Baku, personified by the bond between Shevardnadze and Azerbaijan's president Aliiev as a factor contributing to their continuing, weak support for the central government. On the other hand, there was considerable discontent expressed with the current Russian visa policy, which has imposed an additional obstacle in the path of local youth who wish to work abroad.

#### *International Organizations and NGOs*

The level of activity of international organizations and NGOs is also quite low in Kvemo-Kartli. The most prominent organizations are the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), Counterpart, World Vision, Salvation Army, and FINCA. Much of the assistance in Kvemo-Kartli is concentrated in humanitarian relief and assistance to the thousands of IDPs housed in collective centers throughout the region. It appears that community development, health, and infrastructure work are all narrowly focused on the collective centers, with less attention being given to other members of the population. There appears to be little international or domestic focus on inter-ethnic or inter-religious relations or on the overall underlying economic and social problems that pervade the region.

### **Triggers**

Potential triggers for conflict include the gross misuse of state authority and use of MVD forces. The relationship between the regional population and Tbilisi could also be destabilized by a change in political leadership at the national level if it sours the relationship with Azerbaijan. On the other hand, violence in neighboring areas, from the Abkhaz conflict to the bloody war over Karabagh, has nourished a sense that provoking yet another separatist war would serve the interests of no one in the region.

## Balance

A new separatist conflict launched in Kvemo-Kartli must be considered as a low risk event. Although a small minority may still hold out the hope of unification with a greater Azerbaijan, the vast majority seem to be much more concerned about the region's dire economic and social conditions and with intra-regional conflicts and inter-group relations, rather than about relations with the Georgian state.

---

## SCENARIO 4: COMMUNAL CONFLICT

---

Risk Level: High

Risk Status: Stable

This scenario considers the possibility of violence erupting between or among ethnic, religious, racial, or other communal groups, perpetrated by one group against another group or groups. In this case, the state or government is not the primary target of violence. Such conflicts vary in their degree of organization, scale, and intensity and cause at least several fatalities.

### Grievances and Opportunities

The lack of resources and limited access to employment for groups makes the competition for these resources intense with the potential to create tensions. These tensions may become more intense if there is an ethnic or religious component that differs between competing groups.

In Kvemo-Kartli, interlocking socioeconomic, ethnic and religious grievances combined with corrupt, weak institutions render the region at high risk for communal conflict. An economic environment that was in Soviet times relatively robust now ranks among the country's bleakest (with a greater than 50 percent unemployment/underemployment rate), resentment among Azeris against the district *Gamgebeli* (all of whom are ethnically Georgian) coupled with a history of discrimination against the regional Azeri population, a lack of impartial institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution, and increasing tensions over the building of Mosques make Kvemo-Kartli vulnerable to localized, ethnic/religious conflict. Local corruption also fuels a pervasive distrust in local officials and the growing sense that government is nothing more than a rent-seeking opportunity and a license to break the law with impunity.

In Samtskhe-Javakheti, poor social and economic conditions, a scarcity of arable land, and limited assistance from Tbilisi creates competition for resources and opportunities. Competition could galvanize around ethnic complaints since there are large Georgian and Armenian populations. To date, such ethnic tension has not been evident although, as resources continue to be scarce, tensions may increase. South Ossetia, Georgian, and Ossetian villagers, still harboring resentment from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, may be further irritated by competition for resources and access to opportunities, such as water, land, employment, and access to corruption. In Samegrelo, poor socioeconomic conditions and the high number of displaced persons creates the possibility of tensions between the host population and IDPs.

Differences between IDP and resident communities in Samegrelo over resources and access to distributional benefits divide Georgians. Some interviewees in Tbilisi suggested that jealousy and rivalries between IDPs and local populations had the potential to turn into conflict between these communities. IDP communities are formally organized and have the potential to assert their prerogatives. Local populations, however, tend to be less organized which may inhibit potential violence. But weapons in Samegrelo may be more readily available, due to the proximity of Abkhazia and the continued low-level activity of partisans against Abkhazia. As in the rest of Georgia, access to

land and other resources is scarce. Subsistence is a struggle for communities with inconsistent electricity and decaying agricultural infrastructure. The intensity of the competition, and access to weapons, suggests intra and inter-village conflict is possible over resources like firewood, water, and access to trade routes.

### **Organizations and Actors**

While actors can be present throughout Georgia, the most likely locations are South Ossetia (Georgians and Ossetians), Samtskhe-Javakheti (Georgians and Armenians), Kvemo-Kartli (Georgians and Azeris), and Samegrelo (residents and IDPs).

Georgia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state. While major urban areas, such as Tbilisi, have diverse populations, groups appear to be fairly well integrated and assimilated. In rural areas, however, it is not uncommon to have one ethnic village situated next to another ethnic village. Often these different ethnic groups share different religious traditions (e.g., Georgians – Orthodox, Armenian – Apostolic, Azeri – Muslim). Different ethnic populations tend to be more isolated from daily interaction at the village level.

In Samegrelo, while there is no issue of ethnic or religious difference between the residents and the IDPs from Abkhazia, there is clearly competition for resources, which could put these groups at odds. In Kvemo-Kartli, the groups who would likely perpetrate communal conflict are somewhat amorphous, but could involve clans, militia, and village groups organizing themselves against what they see as infringements of rights of ownership and religious expression.

### **Institutions**

In theory, the state institutions should provide the arenas to resolve conflicts or intervene to mediate conflicts and ease tensions. But particularly in regions where there are ethnic differences, these already weak Georgian institutions are often seen as biased. The sense that issues will not be resolved fairly makes these institutions conflict promoting rather than inhibiting. Corruption and clan ties only compound the problem. To their credit, South Ossetian and Georgian authorities, however, have recently formed a joint police force designed to objectively respond to breaches of law in the conflict zone.

#### *International Organizations and NGOs*

Current assistance patterns by the major donors and their partners indicate that potential for communal conflict has not figured prominently in allocation decisions. The majority of assistance is concentrated around Tbilisi, with lesser effort being given to the rest of the country. Given the Team's analysis that Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo-Kartli, South Ossetia, and Samegrelo have the potential for tensions, it is striking that only Samegrelo has significant donor activity. Even given this level of activity, Zugdidi appears to have the greatest concentration of assistance.

It is worth noting that CARE's USAID-funded work on Community Mobilization, similar to the work of MCI in Samtskhe-Javakheti, is a model worth replicating.

### **Triggers**

In South Ossetia, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo-Kartli, and Samegrelo, particular triggers could range from disputes between farmers over water or land to issues of unfair treatment by government officials. Triggers can be real or imagined, but might make one group feel that it has been slighted by another, or present the opportunity for gains for group members. Other triggers could include disputes

between IDPs and returnees over property or even aid flows and the escalation of ongoing tensions between Islamic groups and state and local authorities over the construction of mosques in areas like Gardabani and Marneuli. Although the situation seems pronounced in Kvemo-Kartli, a general lack of reliable, unbiased information about local and national politics feeds rumor-mongering, which serves to exacerbate tensions among groups. Finally, there was a general fear that militia action could spur local populations to conflict.

### **Balance**

While the risk of these types of conflicts is high, it is probable that these conflicts will remain localized. In addition to the direct costs of any communal conflict, struggles within and between communities might spark concern about more extensive conflict in other scenarios.

---

## **SCENARIO 5: CIVIL UNREST**

---

Risk Level: Medium

Risk Status: Increasing

Civil unrest, broad-based violence directed against the government or key public institutions to change policies or the government that involves at least several hundred participants and employs violence, has complex roots. While public dissatisfaction with governments is often high, galvanizing discontent into violent conflict is rare. Triggering events like government repression or elections, or the emergence of a charismatic leader, appear necessary to spark conflict. Civil unrest may take many forms including labor strikes, riots, and violent demonstrations.

### **Grievances and Opportunities**

Potential causes of civil unrest in Georgia focus on the drastic deterioration of social and economic conditions for the majority of the population. Public disaffection focuses on chronic energy shortages, rampant corruption, the unresponsiveness of government, and the growing gap between a privileged elite that holds economic and political power and the rest of the population. All are emblematic of an increasingly dysfunctional system that exploits the country's resources for the benefit of the few, but fails to generate significant growth.

### **Organizations and Actors**

While the primary actors in civil unrest are the citizenry, the demoralized and disaffected population is unlikely to organize and demonstrate by themselves. Instead, demonstrations need at least some organization to get started, and then might pick up significant popular support and/or move to violence once underway. Many actors in Georgian politics can get limited numbers of citizens out to protest given particular provocations or precipitating conditions. The October demonstrations to support Rustavi-2 while being raided by Security Ministry forces were reportedly initially organized by Zhvania, and aided by the live feed from the TV stations itself. The subsequent demonstrations outside Parliament were again supported by opposition politicians and at least in part organized and led by the unofficial student union (allegedly with some faculty support). And the scattered demonstrations over the lack of power in Tbilisi last winter and again this fall were reportedly abetted by people in vans that interviewers assumed were linked with opposition parties who drove around and threw out old tires for demonstrators to burn.

### **Institutions**

The Georgian state is meant to represent its citizens and help them meet their needs, and if it did so adequately, there would be little fear of demonstrations. The weak and corrupt state, however, instead

serves as a central grievance that might lead to demonstrations rather than mitigate the potential for civil unrest.

## **Triggers**

### *Energy Crisis*

The population has suffered numerous winters with limited electricity and heat. In the interest of avoiding discontent in Tbilisi, a substantial proportion of the limited electricity supplies available are channeled to the capital. Kutaisi, the second largest city, had no heat or power for weeks at a time last winter. But intermittent electricity and lack of heat in Tbilisi finally generated limited civil unrest last year. The population largely blames government corruption for the sparse, irregular supply of utilities. Concern is mounting that low water levels at the Inguri dam, limited gas supplies to the Gardabani power station, and financial problems at AES-Telasi (the electricity distributor) bode ominously for the winter of 2001-2002. Demonstrations sparked by any catalyst group have the potential to develop into large-scale demonstrations, which, in turn, pose a risk of violence in the event of provocations.

### *Populist Politicians*

Public confidence in politicians in Georgia is low, and the public seems unlikely to turn readily to those in public life for redress of their grievances. Nevertheless, there are signs that a few national politicians are attempting to increase their political prospects in the upcoming national elections by gaining mass support through populist appeals. Mikhail Saakashvili, for example, has grown in popularity on an anticorruption platform and nationalist appeals.<sup>36</sup> To the extent politicians like Saakashvili mobilize mass support, there is an opportunity for a contested election and a possibility for a reformist government with a popular mandate. At the same time, a successful reform candidate campaigning against vested economic and political interests poses the risk that mobilizations before the elections will generate conflict, as existing power holders feel threatened and react against a reformist with strong popular backing. In addition, attempts to repress or discredit populist politicians may spur protests by supporters.

### *Overt Acts of Repression by the Government*

The attempted crackdown by the Ministry of Security on Rustavi-2, Georgia's leading independent television station, brought students and others into the streets of Tbilisi in November 2001. Protestors demanded and got the resignations of the "power" ministers, which led Shevardnadze to fire his entire cabinet, including Kakha Targamadze, the notoriously corrupt Interior Minister who apparently ordered the raid. While this situation was resolved peacefully, it indicates that some of the population in Tbilisi will not tolerate overt repression. While the demonstrations were peaceful and constructive, as with any mass mobilization, demonstrations potentially threaten public order if there are provocations on the part of protesters, outside agitators, or the police.

## **Balance**

The likelihood of widespread civil unrest is difficult to gauge, and depends on interest groups such as clans or politicians that would encourage an already disgruntled population to take to the streets. In this case, groups with organization and resources could mobilize the population around electricity

---

<sup>36</sup> In a September poll, 56 percent of those surveyed expressed confidence in Saakashvili – more than any other leader – and 20 percent preferred him as the next president which again made him the leading contender at present (Dobson 2001b).

shortages, economic decline, corruption, or any other galvanizing cause. While another cold, dark winter would seem an obvious trigger, Georgians have historically not gone to the barricades in large numbers over economic and social hardships. The government raid on Rustavi 2 galvanized a large group of demonstrators for only two days. Crowds dwindled quickly after the President invited student leaders to a meeting and defused the opposition (in part through selective payoffs and corruption). There appears to be only limited support for street demonstrations.

While popular tolerance has been high, Georgians remain atomized and not politically active, and many people are integrated into informal corrupt structures that underpin the existing system, the potential for civil unrest is increasing. For years the public has seen little alternative to the current situation and little advantage in struggling for change. On the other hand, the limited demonstrations last winter and start of energy protests this fall (earlier than last year) suggest that public tolerance with egregious official misuse of power is waning. And there are many potential triggers and organizations with incentives to use civil unrest for their purposes that warrant concern in the future.

**Table 2: Existing and Potential Drivers and Inhibitors of Violent Conflict in Georgia**

SCENARIO	RISK LEVEL RISK STATUS	DRIVERS (+)	INHIBITORS (-)
<b>Violent Change in Government</b>			
Post-Shevardnadze Succession	HIGH ↓	-Sudden Death/departure of Shevardnadze -Accelerated general election -Corruption -Lack of heir apparent/constitutional successor	-Designation of heir apparent/constitutional successor -Confidence in constitutional successor -Free and fair elections
Violence as Electoral Strategy	LOW ↑	-Corruption -Spoils of victory/control of State -Incentives to win by whatever means possible -Irresponsible media -Weakness of institutions to punish offenders	-Few historical precedents -International observers -Media and NGO role in election campaign -Political elites recently promoting election law
Military Coup	<u>LOW</u> <u>U</u>	-Dissatisfaction among servicemen with status quo -Uncertainty regarding succession -Low-level societal conflict -Recent dismissal of power ministers who retain support within security apparatus/militias	-Lack of capacity, coordination among armed forces -International reaction to deposing elected, civilian government
Militia Violence	LOW ↓	-Smuggling/other illicit economic activity -Unemployment/lack of economic opportunities for youth -Few institutional barriers to formation and operation of militias	-Economic recovery -Discrediting of militia groups after experience in 1990s
<b>Resumption of Frozen Conflicts</b>			
Abkhazia	HIGH ↑	-Recent violent conflict -Georgian partisan desire to regain control -Criminality and illicit activity -IDP pressure to regain Abkhazia -Abkhaz government-in-exile pressure on Tbilisi to retake Abkhazia -Spontaneous return of IDPs to Gali and border region -Russian military presence and supporter of Abkhaz -Russian bombardment in Kodori	-Reconciliation-oriented NGO community in Georgia and Abkhazia -UNOMIG observers -CIS peacekeepers -Coordinating Council -Group of Friends of the Secretary General -Abashidze's appointment as conflict mediator -Shared management and protection of power plan

SCENARIO	RISK LEVEL RISK STATUS	DRIVERS (+)	INHIBITORS (-)
South Ossetia	LOW ↑↑	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recent violent conflict</li> <li>-Competition between mafia groups</li> <li>-Incentives from smuggling</li> <li>-High levels of criminality</li> <li>-Well-armed population</li> <li>-Temporary uncertainty in Georgian-Ossetian relations, following Chibirov's defeat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Extensive trade reinforces <i>status quo</i> or reconciliation with Georgia</li> <li>-New <i>modus vivendi</i> with Georgia as Kokoyev administration comes into power in Tskhinvali.</li> <li>-Coordination among international entities: UN, OSCE, JCC</li> <li>-Nascent NGO community interested in ties with Georgia</li> <li>-International organizations overseeing peace process and providing economic carrots as conditioning levers</li> </ul>
<b>New Separatist Conflicts</b>			
Javakheti	MED ↑↑	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Harsh and deteriorating economic conditions</li> <li>-Dysfunctional local agricultural economy</li> <li>-Scarce employment opportunities</li> <li>-Poor infrastructure (e.g., roads)</li> <li>-Isolation from rest of Georgia</li> <li>-Lack of Georgian language skills and related opportunities</li> <li>-Lack of opportunities for youth</li> <li>-Crumbling educational system</li> <li>-Weak local government institutions</li> <li>-Presence of Armenian nationalist groupings in the area (Javakh, Dashnakh), some of which support unification with Armenia</li> <li>-Potential ethnic card</li> <li>-Presence of large numbers of weapons</li> <li>-Potentially imminent closure of Russian military base</li> <li>-Potential repatriation of - Meskhetian Turks to region</li> <li>-Competition between local clan and mafia organizations</li> <li>-Information vacuum that allows the spread of misinformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Russian military base's continued operation</li> <li>-Income remittances from migrant labor population residing in Russia</li> <li>-NGO community</li> <li>-Religious community that promotes interfaith dialogue</li> <li>-Youth out-migration</li> <li>-Armenia's desire to maintain good relations with Georgia</li> <li>-Assistance by international community in ensuring infrastructure improvements and jobs creation</li> <li>-Clans that cut across ethnic, religious cleavages</li> </ul>
Samegrelo	LOW ↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Abuts unstable area in Abkhazia</li> <li>-Mingrelian linguistic and cultural distinctions from other Georgians</li> <li>-Large IDP population</li> <li>-Disproportionate aid given to IDPs over host population</li> <li>-Zviadist sentiments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of apparent separatist aspirations</li> <li>-Community development activities of donors</li> </ul>

SCENARIO	RISK LEVEL RISK STATUS	DRIVERS (+)	INHIBITORS (-)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of institutions</li> <li>-Active Militia groups</li> <li>-Smuggling and criminality</li> <li>-Access to Black Sea port (Poti)</li> </ul>	
Adjara	<u>LOW</u> ⇌	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Destabilization of links with Tbilisi</li> <li>-Pressure on Adjara to increase remittances to Tbilisi</li> <li>-Change in local authority post-Abashidze</li> <li>-More assertive Georgian push to remove Russian base</li> <li>-Religious differences with rest of Georgia</li> <li>-Possible growth in Revival's influence promoting jealousy among other political elites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improvement of Abashidze–Shevardnadze relations</li> <li>-Apparent internal solidity of Abashidze government and power forces</li> <li>-Relatively strong economic conditions in Adjara</li> </ul>
Kvemo-Kartli	<u>LOW</u> ⇌	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Large Azeri population with strong cultural/ethnic/linguistic ties to Azerbaijan</li> <li>-Low-level ethnic, religious conflicts</li> <li>-Perception that local authorities do not reflect ethnic balance of region, are corrupt and non-responsive to local needs</li> <li>-Disaffection with local Georgian authorities</li> <li>-Change in government post-Shevardnadze</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Amicable relations with Azerbaijan</li> <li>-Diffuse support for President Shevardnadze</li> </ul>
<b>Communal Conflict</b>	<u>HIGH</u> Ū	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Rapid economic decline over much of the past decade</li> <li>-High regional unemployment</li> <li>-Influx of IDPs</li> <li>-Youth cohort deprived of opportunities</li> <li>-History of ethnic tension, deportations, ethnic violence, militia violence</li> <li>-Perception that local authorities do not reflect ethnic balance of region and are corrupt and non-responsive to local needs</li> <li>-Lack of local governance structures seen as impartial and capable of mediating conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-NGO community with active interest in promoting intra-regional reconciliation</li> <li>-Youth out-migration</li> <li>-Many crosscutting cleavages rather than sharp inter-group divisions</li> </ul>

SCENARIO	RISK LEVEL RISK STATUS	DRIVERS (+)	INHIBITORS (-)
Civil Unrest	MED ↑	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discontent precipitated by sharp economic decline since 1990, energy crisis, government acts of repression (e.g., crackdowns on media outlets)</li> <li>-Declining public confidence in institutions</li> <li>-Flawed, fraudulent national elections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of collective action/protest tradition</li> <li>-If elections were perceived by the public as free and fair</li> <li>-If the government took concrete action on major anticorruption reform</li> <li>-If effective energy reform policies ended electricity and heat shortages</li> </ul>

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

---

The preceding analysis suggests possible directions for USAID programming. Development assistance could help the people of Georgia reduce the underlying grievances and opportunities for violence in society, encourage Georgian organizations and actors that seek to regularize and make peaceful the articulation of interests as well as those that seek to mediate interests, and help Georgian institutions become more capable and better able to serve as areas where disputes are aired and resolved. USAID would likely have less influence on most of the triggers identified above, but might be able to impact some of these precipitating events that may lead to violence.

The broad outlines of a strategy to reduce the potential impact of violence emerge from the theoretical work on the causes of violence, the correlational analysis of the variables that are associated with the outbreak and magnitude of violent conflict, the general developments of the independence struggle and independence of Georgia, and the different scenarios that might lead to further violence in the country in the future.

Georgians need to build both a more robust society and a more capable state, by creating a vibrant market economy where agricultural, industrial, trade, energy, and service firms productively interact and grow; social interests are aggregated, expressed, and mediated through the media, NGOs, local government, and political parties; and state as well as non-state institutions provide physical and social security as well as institutional areas for the regular, predictable, and transparent mediation of interests. Georgia has a long way to go to develop these fundamental attributes. While identifying the broad outlines of what this new Georgia would look like is clear; how to help Georgians get there is not.

USAID can help Georgians move toward a less conflict-prone future through both work at the national level and in the different regions of the country. USAID's strategy already aims to support the transformation of the country into a more capable state, with a market economy, energy market, democratic politics, and adequate social welfare institutions. The preceding analysis suggests that these efforts together have the potential to reduce the prospects of further conflict, as well as support the resolution of past conflicts and mitigation of their detrimental effects on development in the country. To do so, the Mission might explore how it could more concretely target activities to reduce the risk that the scenarios described above will materialize. This would involve rethinking aspects of existing programs to consider how to reduce the risk of conflict and increase the potential for peace by increasing the coordination of the four Strategic Objectives in the USAID/Caucasus portfolio in regions of the country that appear at higher risk of conflict in the future or are central to supporting and developing peace in the country: Samegrelo/Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and, to a lesser extent, Kvemo-Kartli.

### A. Programmatic Recommendations

- USAID should concentrate significant effort on concrete projects that aim to improve the economic conditions in Samtskhe-Javakheti since the region appears at increased risk of conflict and has been largely neglected by the donor community.

Projects in Samtskhe-Javakheti should include community involvement in ways that link the ethnic Armenian and Georgian communities, with particular attention to projects that draw on community labor and link the region with the rest of Georgia. Programs should emphasize

infrastructure, such as water quality, which would have a direct positive impact on public health and is essential for the revitalization of agriculture—the dominant economic sector in the region. Roundtable meetings in both communities identified polluted water as their most pressing problem, and polluted water had caused an outbreak of hepatitis A during the team’s visit.

In a recent survey conducted by faculty at the university in Akhaltsikhe, citizens throughout the region ranked environmental problems their number one concern. Hence, a focus on poor water quality would also contribute to USAID’s efforts to reduce human suffering in targeted communities. Poor water quality in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and the resultant effects on public health potentially serve as root causes for tension. Maintaining water treatment facilities provides another mechanism for long-term regional cooperation among ethnic communities.

Transport routes, railroads, and telecommunications are other projects worthy of assistance that serve multiple goals. They would improve conditions in the regions, facilitate the export of agricultural products, and expand the connections between the regions and the rest of the country in myriad ways. These projects can further benefit the communities by creating employment and by bringing groups from different towns and ethnic groups together for constructive pursuits. The Mission could also use the projects to strengthen the local government. This could be more direct in the fund or trust approach discussed below. The EU and UNDP, for example, have had solid successes in South Ossetia with their community-based infrastructure work. Through community-based advisory panels, transparent tendering processes, and hiring of local labor, the EU, and UNDP have been able to provide infrastructure improvements while encouraging closer interaction between Georgians and Ossetians for constructive pursuits. Such programs have merit in preventing future conflict.

USAID might consider two possible models:

- One is to expand the Mercy Corps/CARE Community Mobilization Project that funds projects identified by the communities themselves. They have funded irrigation systems, school and road repair. Practical programs, particularly ones that would bring citizens from Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki together, seem particularly promising.
- Another model to consider is a social development fund or multi-donor trust, which the international community has used with success in Kosovo, Malawi, Bolivia, and Peru. USAID could team with other international organizations to leverage its inputs. The Mission could also consider trying to leverage funds from the Armenian diaspora to fund projects directly through the local governments, which, if carefully monitored, could have the added benefit of strengthening local government.
- Through its partner, Internews, USAID has made important strides in helping independent television and radio stations. However, information flow to and from Javakheti remains limited. Newspapers and other sources of print media are likewise spotty. This information vacuum contributes to the circulation of rumors and potentially destabilizing misinformation. The team recognizes that media has the ability to incite or defuse tensions. The team feels that there needs to be a concerted effort to draw Javakheti closer to Tbilisi, while easing fears in Tbilisi that Javakheti is on the brink of crisis. USAID should increase its support for broadcast news exchanges, public service announcements, and journalist exchanges. Existing successes of linking independent stations to a national network should be replicated.

- USAID should consider developing an informal early warning mechanism to take the temperature of regions of the country. The Mission could call upon its implementing partners, particularly NGOs with expertise in conflict prevention and early warning to establish a reporting mechanism for at-risk areas, such as Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo-Kartli, and South Ossetia. Researchers from NGOs could be contracted to gather information, by interviewing members of civil society, government, political parties, and businesses or otherwise establishing data collection mechanisms. The goal of such a system is to catch tensions and address them before they deteriorate into deadly conflict. The Mission might consider a loose adaptation of the IGAD conflict early warning and response system used in Africa.
- USAID should consider restructuring its political process activities to focus on reducing the risk of conflict. Two conflict scenarios are associated with national election campaigns and elections. Thus the team recommends that the Mission support Georgian entities charged with ensuring the campaign and electoral process are transparent and fair and work with political leaders, parties, and NGOs on building incentives to avoid violence in politics. Such an approach could help to reduce the potential for violent conflict surrounding a highly charged campaign and a controversial and potentially fraudulent electoral process.
- The Mission's current Economic Program needs to be integrated into an overall Mission strategy for conflict prevention. While policy reform programs are important, there is concern that the Mission is focusing its economic reform resources in this area. Reform of the banking sector will undoubtedly make an important contribution to Georgia's transformation to a market economy. In the near term, however, other needs seem more pressing. The team recommends that funds be steered toward agriculture, the sector in which Georgia has traditionally enjoyed a comparative advantage. This would also entail a re-direction of funds away from the capital, which currently claims 34 percent of the economic reform budget. Currently, less than 17 percent of the budget is used for the rest of the country.

Concretely, USAID could work to repair irrigation systems and improve water quality – both of which would support agricultural production (see recommendation above). Equally important and complementary is the land tenure issue. USAID should work with Georgians and other donors to put in place land registration procedures that will settle land tenure issues. Only when rights to land are clarified will the foundation for a prosperous agriculture be laid. At the same time, USAID should help implement regionally and eventually internationally recognized standards and ranking for Georgian agricultural products. Georgian meat and dairy products, fruits, and vegetables are well known and prized in the territories of the former Soviet Union. They could find a ready market there if consumers were assured of reliable quality. The next step is to help Georgian farmers reestablish some of their old markets in Russia, for example, so that the sector could re-emerge from subsistence farming. Once that is accomplished, USAID should help rebuild processing and packaging plants for agricultural goods so that Georgians benefit economically for all stages of food and agricultural production.

- The Mission's Energy and Environment program should focus more attention on how environmental issues can help precipitate tensions and ultimately conflict. The lack of electricity and heat results in the population cutting down trees for firewood. Widespread decimation of trees has resulted in soil erosion, decline in crop output, and deteriorating water quality as already scarce resources become scarcer. USAID should explore reforestation programs and the improvement of water quality, particularly in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

- The Georgian Winter Heating Assistance Program (GWHAP) can help ensure that lack of electricity does not become a destabilizing factor in Georgia this winter. The potential exists for elements in society to exploit such circumstances to foment civil unrest. However, subsidizing the energy sector is not a long-term solution to a chronic problem. GWAP retains relief pressure on Georgian officials to take action and responsibility for electricity scarcity and does little to address the root causes of conflict in Georgia. Likewise, utilization of a significant portion of the social sector funds for this one project limits USAID's ability to achieve one of its main human sector goals of maintaining a flexible response capability to ensure that "urgent needs are met during crises." In the long term, USAID needs to encourage Georgia to carry out more effective energy reform, both in legislation and practice.
- The team recommends that the Mission adopt a cautious, calibrated approach to implementing the Organic Law on Local Governance to guard against the risk that decentralization poses for separatist or other forms of conflict. Decentralization is a complex issue. On the one hand, weak links between the center and periphery in Georgia are one element of the country's weak State and fragile cohesion. At the same time, the concept of local government appears more democratic to most Americans, even though it may mean simply the multiplication of opportunities for corruption and abuse. Even where local government is not necessarily democratic, it may be more effective in providing for citizens. Adjara is a case in point. While perhaps an extreme example of decentralization, it provides some lessons on how regions can benefit by localized decision-making on political and economic issues.

The Mission's decentralization strategy has been effective in providing assistance to legislative and electoral reform. Efforts to truly decentralize Georgia, however, are greatly undermined by the existence of the presidential appointments of *Rtsmunebuli* and *Gamgebeli* in the regions. Much of the authority in the regions is dependent on decisions made by these offices. A constructive way to formulate governance options might shift from centralization and decentralization to envisage a more calibrated sharing of resources and authority more in line with the European concept of subsidiarity, which is quite different from the U.S. notion of decentralization. A limited but reliable shift of resources to the local level to deal with concrete tasks like education or the environment might be options in which both the center and periphery can define a mutually beneficial relationship. Hence, the team recommends that decentralization be removed from USAID priorities for the time being.

- The international community, through the OSCE, has made some effort to strengthen the office of the Public Defender (Ombudsman). The team lauds these efforts and believes that continuing them could help to diffuse tensions that may lead to violent conflict. While there has been some progress in Tbilisi and Kutaisi, however, there is currently no office in Samtskhe-Javakheti or Kvemo-Kartli. USAID should meet with the Public Defender's office to determine whether additional support would be helpful in opening additional regional offices. Strengthening the regional presence of the Public Defender would provide citizens with an additional independent voice to air concerns and adjudicate disputes at the local and national levels.
- Given that this assessment finds a high risk of communal conflict in certain regions, USAID should consider giving greater support to interfaith or interethnic reconciliation organizations, particularly in conflict-prone areas like Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. For example, USAID might consider support for the intercultural alliance based in Rustavi, which aims at

using local councils and other means to preach tolerance and mutual respect. Concrete activities selected by the community that promote interfaith or interethnic collaboration should be given priority.

- USAID should consider activities that reduce the barriers that language poses to national integration in regions such as Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo-Kartli, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. Specifically the Mission should investigate the possibility of providing Georgian language instruction to the local population. Access to higher education and government jobs is dependent on adequate Georgian language skills. With poor quality language instruction, limited access to Georgian media, and dependence on Russian language skills in Javakheti, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, a situation is emerging in which local populations will not be able to communicate with individuals in the rest of Georgia and will be shut off from opportunities requiring Georgian language skills.

Georgian language instruction is a delicate and potentially incendiary issue in certain areas of Georgia. However, the team believes that the success of such a program depends on the programmatic modalities used, sensitivities to the local population, and on building local recognition that knowledge of Georgian could help individuals and communities to prosper. Current efforts by DFID and the President's fund to bring teachers of Georgian to Armenian towns have generated resentment on two counts. They are paid a higher salary than the most experienced teachers in the region. Second, they are perceived to provide second-rate and irregular instruction. Mindful of these pitfalls, we suggest two alternatives to achieve this goal:

- The Mission could explore the possibility of a teacher exchange between Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. Teachers of Georgian and teachers of Russian or Armenian could teach some introductory classes in their own language to children in the other community. As Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki are relatively close to each other, teacher exchanges could be arranged on a day-trip basis, thus avoiding the necessity of relocating. Increasing contacts among "locals" in both communities is a potential added benefit that could spillover into other areas of cooperation. The Mission perhaps together with regional government would provide transportation. Although such an exchange could be established between university professors, once the new university in Akhalkalaki is established, it may be more important to begin with school children, since research shows that civic education programs are generally more effective when targeted at this level. Cultural exchanges of children presenting dances, music, or other activity might also accompany the teacher exchange.
- USAID could consider funding extension services at the new local university in Akhalkalaki that focus on both Georgian language instruction and the development of the Javakheti region's agricultural potential. The effect will be to build stronger community ties with the regional university and promote agricultural development.

## **B. Organizational Recommendations**

- USAID should continue its analysis of informal structures of power (e.g., clans) in Georgia, in order to understand which interventions would be most effective. The CVA team applauds the Mission's efforts to conduct research in this area. Recognizing that Georgia currently has few functioning formal institutions is the first step to understanding how best to assist

Georgia. In order to be truly effective, USAID will need to convince the leaders of informal structures that more effective progress can be made in the development of Georgia, through their support. Exclusive concentration on reform of formal structures will not have adequate results.

- USAID should convene regular meetings of the international donor community in Georgia to monitor and evaluate the potential for violent conflict in Georgia and coordinate conflict interventions. As the lead donor agency, USAID has the *gravitas* to focus international attention on particular problem areas. The UN, EU, and OSCE already devote much effort to understanding potential conflict in Georgia. By working with these organizations and bilateral donors, USAID can better leverage its activities in the area of conflict prevention.
- U.S. Government agencies should seek to improve coordination of their efforts, vis-à-vis conflict prevention in Georgia. A more concerted use of diplomatic pressure and conditionality is warranted in encouraging the Georgian Government and the Shevardnadze Administration to make adequate progress on reforms, including better implementation of the anti-corruption committee's recommendations.
- A strong regional focus on the countries bordering Georgia is indispensable to effective USAID assistance. Georgia is porous and vulnerable to outside influence, which can produce both good and ill effects. Conflicts can be imported from neighboring countries as we have seen in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. At the same time, Georgia's recovery and future prosperity will depend to a great extent on ties with Russia and Turkey, in particular. The Mission should look for ways to strengthen constructive relations between Georgia and its neighbors. Trade and environmental cooperation suggest themselves as arenas in which win-win parameters can be constructed. Integration of USAID programs and partners in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia would be an important first step. Integration and information sharing among partners will help to create programs that encourage regional stability.

### **C. General Recommendations**

- USAID should seek to help Georgians increase the capacity of the state through the development of state institutions, civil society, and a market economy. The weak Georgian state makes the resumption of conflict in the country possible. Conflict prevention first suggests that assistance activities “do no harm” and then assess how assistance could reduce the prospects for violence. Stronger integration between economic and energy programs and democracy and social assistance activities could reduce the risks of conflict by strengthening selected local communities and central institutions.
- USAID should encourage the development of rule of law in Georgia by supporting Georgian groups that can apply pressure on political institutions to fulfill their constitutional and legal role of enforcing the rules of the game. A potentially useful point of entry is through assistance to small businesses to help them organize, form associations, and advocate aggressively for their rights.
- USAID programs should support Georgian constituencies that seek to transform selected state ministries into institutions, helping Georgians to create a stronger state. Until stronger constituencies are developed that can bring pressure on state authority, reforms will remain

unimplemented. Assistance can help provide information; mobilize and activate constituencies; establish forums for the interaction and mediation of interests, as well as for dialogue with these developing institutions; and help Georgian constituencies monitor the development of institutions.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Anderson, Mary. 1999. *Do No Harm: How AID Can Support Peace – Or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Black, David, Susan Jay, and Michael Keshishian 2001. *Civil Society Assessment*. USAID Center for Democracy and Governance.
- Dobson, Richard (2001a). “Georgians Fast Losing Faith in Shevardnadze and Their Democracy.” *Opinion Analysis*. M-238-01. U.S. Department of State, Office of Research. December 3.
- Dobson, Richard (2001b). “Georgians Turn From the U.S. to Russia for Security.” *Opinion Analysis*. M-237-01. U.S. Department of State, Office of Research. December 3.
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. November 2001. *Transition Report 2001: Energy in Transition*. London: EBRD.
- Faranda, Regina. 2001. “Will Georgian Gloom Be Country’s Undoing?” *Opinion Analysis*. M-244-01. U.S. Department of State, Office of Research. December 18.
- Guretski, Voitsekh 1998., “The Question of Javakheti.” *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1998
- International Monetary Fund. October 2001. *Georgia-Recent Economic Developments and Selected Issues*. Washington, DC: IMF.
- Jones, Stephen F., 1996. “Georgia and the Georgians,” in Graham Smith (ed.) *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*. Longman, Harlow, U.K., 1996, pp. 291-313.
- Jones, Stephen F., 1993. “Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition,” in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras. (eds.), *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khutsishvili, Georgi. 2000.”Ethnic and Religious Conflict, Internal Displacement, and Human Rights.”
- King, Charles (2001a). “The Benefits of Ethnic War: Eurasia’s Unrecognized States.” *World Politics*. Vol.53, No. 3.
- King, Charles (2001b). Potemkin Democracy: Four Myths about Post-Soviet Georgia.” *The National Interest*, Summer 93-104.
- Lund, Michael, and Andreas Mehler. 1999. *Peace-Building & Conflict Prevention in Developing Countries: A Practical Guide*. Brussels: SWP-CPN.
- MacFarlane, Neil Larry Minear, Stephen Shenfield. 1996. *Armed conflict in Georgia: A case study in humanitarian action and peacekeeping*, Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies.

- Morris, Sharon 2001. *A Framework for Conflict Analysis*. Draft. USAID Bureau for democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. Washington, DC: USAID.
- Morton, Alice L. et. al. 2000. *Aftermath: Women's Organizations in Postconflict Georgia*. CDIE Working Paper No. 305. Washington, DC: USAID.
- Nodia, Ghia. "Georgia's Identity Crisis." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 1995
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty - Georgian Service* (<http://www.rferl.org>)
- RFE/RL Newslines - Transcaucasia & Central Asia Daily Digest* (<http://www.rferl.org/newslines>)
- RFE/RL Caucasus Report (<http://www.rferl.org/caucasus-report>)
- Rochowanski, Almut. 2001. "Assessment of the Current Situation in Javakheti for UNDP Georgia."
- Smith, Graham et. al. 1998. *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Suny, Ronald. 1999. "Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia." *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3.
- Suny, Ronald. 1997. "Living with the Other: Conflict and Cooperation Among the Transcaucasian Peoples." *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1.
- Suny, Ronald. 1988. *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. Stanford: Hoover Institution.
- United Nations Development Program. 2000. National Human Development Report Georgia, 2000. (<http://www.undp.org.ge>)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 2001. *Guide to Program Options in Conflict Prone Settings*. Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)..
- World Bank. 2001. *Georgia: Poverty Profile Update*. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region.

## **APPENDIX 1: SCOPE OF WORK**

---

### **CONFLICT ASSESSMENT IN GEORGIA November 2001**

#### **STATEMENT OF WORK**

##### **OBJECTIVE**

This Statement of Work provides for conducting USAID's first conflict assessment in Georgia. This assessment will concentrate on two specific potential conflict situations: Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Samegrelo<sup>37</sup>. This assessment will begin to address issues of how to better use development assistance to help prevent conflict and enhance stability to Georgia, and hence the South Caucasus Region. It will examine current conflicts in Georgia, examine potential areas for escalation and future conflict, and recommend means of using development assistance to prevent and mitigate these problems. Focusing on two case studies (the Samegrelo and Javakheti regions), the assessment will glean both "lessons learned" regarding the development assistance and conflict, as well as set forth any "best practices" which could be applied to other regions in the country. Programmatic recommendations will enable the Mission to improve the focus on conflict management by integrating this issue into key portions of the development portfolio.

The conflict assessment supports USAID/Caucasus' strategic theme of conflict prevention, and would strengthen and update vital information found in the Mission's Strategy (Appendix D: Conflict Vulnerability Assessment of Georgia).

##### **BACKGROUND**

###### ***1. Georgian's Recent History***

Throughout its history, Georgia has been characterized by fragmented "fiefdoms" which continually seek their own independent course. As a result, regional conquerors have been able to easily overcome the disunity of territorial warlords and claim the country as their own. Similar trends continue to plague the country: since declaring independence in 1991, Georgia has suffered three interlinked civil wars. Towards the end of the Gorbachev era, Georgian nationalist extremists, led by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, gained significant political and popular support. Under the slogan of "Georgia for the Georgians," used by the Gamsakhurdia faction, friction increased dramatically in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Sustained armed conflict broke out first in South Ossetia, even before the break-up of the Soviet Union. In a short time, the Gamsakhurdia faction also alienated a significant portion of the ethnic Georgian population. This led to violent fighting in the center of Tbilisi and the ultimate overthrow of Gamsakhurdia. With no clear leader, the loose anti-Gamsakhurdia coalition turned to Shevardnadze. Shortly after the return of Shevardnadze, active conflict began in Abkhazia. Nearly simultaneously, widespread violence ignited as the Mkhedrioni sought out real and imagined supporters of Gamsakhurdia. Although the rampage of the Mkhedrioni was nation-wide, it was particularly concentrated in Samegrelo. In the aftermath of the Georgian defeat in Abkhazia, chaos and near disintegration marked Georgia. It also marked the beginning of a slow, incremental, yet

---

<sup>37</sup> This is not to downplay the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the unstable situation in the Pankisi Gorge, or the risk of uncontrolled separatism in Adjara. In fact, how these situations affect and shape national governance issues will be examined closely in the assessment.

marked improvement. This improvement stalled in 1998. Neither the Abkhazian nor the South Ossetian conflict has been resolved.

Georgia continues to present a scenario of omni-present conflict throughout the country. Widespread civil unrest and demonstrations occurred during the past winter due to electricity shortage of lack of essential services; repeated incidences have already begun in scattered regions outside Tbilisi. A brief military uprising of soldiers protesting lack of salaries and food took place in May 2001. Ethnic and religious tensions continue to be rife for conflict throughout the country.

Compounding such a setting is Georgia's political spectrum, which has become more unstable during recent months:

- Eduard Shevardnadze resigned as head of the ruling party (CUG), thereby leaving it without strong leadership;
- Opposition parties continue to boycott Parliamentary sessions, and threaten to boycott local elections;
- The populist former Minister of Justice is actively campaigning in Georgia's regions on a platform of anti-corruption.

## 2. *A Focus on Two Regions*

Two regions in Georgia—Javakheti and Samegrelo—encapsulate some of the serious problems which face the country:

### A. *Javakheti*

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region, located in south-central Georgia, borders Armenia and Turkey. Geographically, the region is an isolated high plateau, with a harsh climate, set off from the rest of Georgia by the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range. Caucasian analysts consider this to be a potential breakaway region in Georgia, largely because of its demographic mix (the majority of the population is Armenian), as well as its isolation from the rest of Georgia.

The region has a total population of less than 250,000. Over 90% of the population in two districts—Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda—is ethnic Armenian. There are also Dukhobors<sup>38</sup> residing in this area.

Samtskhe-Javakheti is also the region from which Muslim Meskhetians were deported in 1944—the majority having been deported from Samtskhe to Central Asia. During the Soviet period these forcibly displaced persons were prevented from returning. As part of Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1999, the country agreed to repatriate the Muslim Meskhetians, the majority of whom consider themselves ethnically Turk. Such a policy is widely assumed to be unpopular with the ethnic Georgian and Armenian populations of the region.

Samtskhe-Javakheti is routinely evaluated as either the poorest or next to poorest region in Georgia. Remote and isolated, only one road leads into the heartland of the area, portions of which have fallen into such gross disrepair that it is difficult to access major cities during the winter. Inhabitants speak Russian and Armenian, have no access to Georgian media, and school their children in these two

---

<sup>38</sup> Dukhobors are members of a religious sect that was resettled from Russia in the 1830s. As of the 1989 census, there were less than 5,000 Dukhobors living in the region, primarily in Ninotsminda. Many, however, have since migrated to Russia.

languages. In Akhalkalaki, the major employer in this otherwise impoverished area is the Russian military base; the currency is the Russian ruble. In most major settlements, vast numbers of youth have migrated out of the region.

Several international donors (USAID, UNICEF, USDA, DFID, UNDP, OSCE) have launched programs throughout the region in sectors such as humanitarian response, NGO development, and micro-credit.

### ***B. Samegrelo***

Samegrelo presents a different set of circumstances, and perhaps illustrates many of the traits of Georgia, which render it prone for conflict. In recent history, many of the Zviadists spawned their activities in Samegrelo. Bordering Abkhazia, Samegrelo boasted a well-developed agricultural sector (especially citrus and hazelnuts) during the Soviet period, and is still rated as one of the least-poor regions of the country. Yet due in part to the war, the high number of IDPs per capita, and to its status as a “front line” region, there is great disparity between the moderately well off and the poor. Several thousand IDPs from Abkhazia now living in Samegrelo are permanent migrants, crossing the Inguri River in order to cultivate land or harvest hazelnuts in the Gali area.<sup>39</sup>

The situation is rendered unstable primarily as a result of two factors. Occasional tit-for-tat armed exchanges (including antitank missiles) between Georgian Partisans and Abkhaz Militia continue to occur. In addition, the region features popular demonstrations, primarily by politically disaffected IDPs, for timely payment of benefits and more rapid progress in negotiations on return to and settlement in Abkhazia. Also affecting the region is an apparent increase in smuggling-related criminal activity due to the relative dearth of law enforcement and civil authority in neighboring Gali. Car thefts and burglaries are common crimes. Added to this scenario is Samegrelo’s location as the gateway to the Kodori Gorge, which is controlled and populated by Svans and purported to be the locus of much criminal activity.

Hostilities have erupted into crisis. In May 1998, 30,000 were forced to flee Gali once again, although many have returned.

International donors include USAID, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNHCR, WFP, launching programs in youth development, primary health care, micro-lending, NGO capacity building, conflict resolution, community development, and agriculture.

## COMPONENTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment will carefully examine the potential for conflict throughout the country, focusing on the Javakheti and Samegrelo regions as case studies. Specifically, it will “take the temperature” to assess the potential for conflict, and identify specific regions, disputes, or circumstances which may quickly ignite and escalate into violence. The assessment will address the following questions:

- 1. Conflict Triggers:** Given Georgia’s situation today (widespread corruption which fuels social unrest and creates ubiquitous animosity against the government, robbing people of salaries, pensions, and services; religious intolerance; ethnic tensions; clans; a Soviet-legacy), what is the current potential for escalated conflict in Georgia? Are there regions that are more at risk for

---

<sup>39</sup> The Abkhaz often blame increased partisan activity on the returnees. On the one hand, the Abkhaz encourage returnees as a source of labor for the lucrative citrus and hazelnut crops. On the other hand, they fear creating a base of support for further partisan activity.

violent conflict than others? Based on the assessment team's review of the causes of conflict, which potential triggers are (a) present in regions which pose the greatest risk for violence, and (b) comprise major factors which could set off intra-regional conflict? Can such potential be quantified, based on these known variables?<sup>40</sup>

2. **Capacities for Peace**<sup>41</sup>: Which systems and institutions serve as “connectors” that are prized more than a potential conflict, and which would not break down if a conflict occurred? What attitudes and actions maintain and foster peace? Which shared values and interests represent common connectors that could be strengthened through development assistance? Are there common experiences (such as the recent memory of the 1995 civil war) which unite people against war? Which symbols and occasions (such as the heritage of national music) unite Georgians throughout the country? How can development assistance build on these capacities for peace?
3. **The Parties**: If conflict—or its potential—is present, who are the “main players”? Do they align themselves along ethnic, religious, political, or clan ties? What is the strength of these ties? Do parties ever meet to discuss their differences, and, if so, how are meetings convened and facilitated? Does the entire population polarize around issues, or are there a few “chiefs” who are leading the fray?
4. **USAID's Development Assistance**: How have the main thrusts of USAID's development assistance (decentralization, CBO/NGO development, political parties, economic aid) fostered or abated potential conflict?
5. **Development Efforts in Samegrelo and Javakheti**: Which development organizations (including USAID) are currently engaged in the two case study regions? What activities are they undertaking? How can these activities mitigate potential conflict? Is there any evidence that activities have demonstrated any effect, either positive or negative? Why or why not? How can USAID development efforts build on any positive work underway, or gain from “lessons learned?”
6. **Indigenous Organizations**: Which indigenous organizations (NGOs, CBOs) are currently working for peace and reconciliation? Have they demonstrated any effect? Why or why not? How can USAID development efforts build on any positive work underway, or gain from “lessons learned?”
7. **Political Scenario**: What is the political spectrum, both with regard to regional and local politics? How has this changed with the November 4<sup>th</sup> elections? Could current political entities potentially incite the public to violence? Are there grass-roots forces that would welcome such a move?
8. **Regional Focus for Case Study Regions**: Both of these regions border areas outside of Georgia's immediate territorial jurisdiction. How does this arrangement factor into possible

---

<sup>40</sup> These variables have been examined in USAID's review paper on the causes of civil conflict and communal violence (Sharon Morris, USAID/W/G/DG, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> These questions are taken from Mary B. Anderson's careful review of development assistance and conflict, *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace—or War*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999. The Mission highly recommends this book as background reading for the assessment team.

conflict? What events and situations have led to simmering tensions? What is the potential for resolving such festering wounds? Can USAID's development assistance provide a means for resolving some of these problems?

- 9. Present and Future Scenarios & Early Warning Signals:** Based on the above analysis, which conflicts in Georgia merit the Mission's immediate attention, and are in USAID's manageable interest? Which link most directly with our development strategy and activities? What are scenarios which could either trigger or abate conflict? What would be the result of such scenarios in short, medium, and long-term settings? Which early warning indicators should be monitored to assess the immediate conflict potential?
- 10. Recommendations:** What are the team's recommendations for USAID's development assistance, taking these possible scenarios into account? What are the opportunities to foster peace and stability? How can these issues best be integrated into existing development assistance? Would the Mission be advised to establish a conflict monitoring system? If so, what form would this take? What, if any, additional resources would be needed to launch any possible new efforts?

## TASKS

The CVA Team will accomplish the following tasks:

1. **Desktop review** of major information sources on Georgia, the Samegrelo and Javakheti regions, and border areas, including Northern Armenia and Abkhazia. These sources would include recent assessment as well as historical overviews. The Mission will provide many documents, but the Contractor will also need to locate many information sources through contacts which the Mission provides. It is also expected that the Team will generate other contacts during the course of the review.
2. **Field Work:** Two weeks of travel and investigation in Georgia (approximately one week per region). Upon arrival, the CVA Team will be briefed by the Mission on their perceptions of the current dynamics in these regions, and will discuss any special parameters for the fieldwork, including travel logistics.

The team will meet with a broad array of internal aid workers, Georgian activists, reformers, journalists, community and women's groups, NGO leaders, political players, etc. It will confer with Embassy staff as well as others in the donor community. The Mission will provide many suggested contacts, although the Team is expected to develop other contacts in the course of the fieldwork.

*Each team member is expected to provide their own laptop computer. The Mission cannot provide office space for non-USAID staff members.*

3. **Briefing and Presenting Initial Report** to Mission and Embassy staff, including the Mission Director and Deputy Director, the Program Office, the Democracy and Governance Office, the Humanitarian Response Office, the Political Officer, and the Charge d' Affairs;
4. **Producing a Final Report** of detailed results and recommendations for the Mission. A draft report will be delivered to the Mission by December 3<sup>rd</sup>; the Mission will provide comments by December 10<sup>th</sup>, and the Contractor shall provide the final report to the Mission by December 14<sup>th</sup>.



## **TEAM COMPOSITION**

The Conflict Assessment Team will be comprised of both USAID/W and contractor staff (four expatriates and two Georgians):

### **USAID/W**

Lawrence Robertson, USAID/W/E&E, Team Leader  
Ann Phillips, USAID/W/PPC  
USAID/W/G/DG (TDB)

### **Contractor Staff**

One expatriate conflict expert  
Two Georgian conflict experts

### **LEVEL OF EFFORT**

This assignment will require a total of 21 days, which includes the desktop review in Washington, field work, and report writing.

All expatriate team members shall take part in preliminary discussions and review in Washington, participate in all phases of fieldwork, and assist with compiling the report.

The **contractor** shall be responsible for:

1. Providing one expatriate conflict expert to work with the team throughout the assignment (21 total working days):

Desktop review in Washington	3 days
Fieldwork and briefings in Georgia	12 days
Compiling report	6 days

2. Providing two Georgian conflict experts to travel to the field and work with the team to compile the report (15 days for each expert);
3. Providing two translators (10 days for each translator);
4. Delivering a draft and final report to USAID/Caucasus.

A six-day work week is authorized.

### **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Expatriate Contractor Qualifications**

The Contractor shall provide an expatriate conflict expert with the following qualifications:

- Advanced degree (M.A. or Ph.D.) in democracy-related field, with strong background in conflict

The Mission recommends that, during the field work stage, three team members (two expatriates and one Georgian) work in Samegrelo, and three team members (two expatriates and one Georgian) work in Javakheti.

resolution. Emphasis should include regional disputes, ethnic conflicts, religious tensions, and political contentions. Experience in the former Soviet Union, preferably in the Caucasus region. Knowledge of Russian is highly desirable. Superb English communication skills (both spoken and written). Ability to work in a team setting and produce work products in a timely fashion.

**TIMEFRAME**

The Mission requests this Conflict Assessment occur in the first quarter of FY02. The following timeline is preferred:

October 31- November 2	Desktop review of documents in Washington
November 5 - 16	Field Work in Georgia
November 19-20	Briefings and initial report presented in Tbilisi
November 26-30	Compiling report
December 3	Draft report to USAID/Caucasus
December 14	Final report to USAID/Caucasus



## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW LIST – CONFLICT ASSESSMENT GEORGIA**

---

### **Washington, DC**

Charles Fairbanks, Professor, The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies  
Charles King, Professor, Georgetown University  
Judith Deane, World Bank  
Toby Davis, State Department  
Ambassador John W. McDonald, Chair, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy  
Zevno Baran, Center for Strategic and International Studies

### **Tbilisi, Georgia**

#### **U.S. Embassy**

Phillipe Remler, Chargé d'Affaires  
Peter Swavelly, Second Secretary, Political and Economic Affairs  
Maka Gogoberidze, Political and Economic Affairs

#### **USAID Mission**

Michael Farbman, Mission Director  
P.E. Balakrishnan, Deputy Mission Director  
Cate Johnson, DG Director  
Kent Larson, HR Director  
Peter Argo, EE Director  
Earl Gast, PPS  
Joe Taggart, DG

### **Nongovernmental Organizations**

#### **Center for Social Studies**

Marina Muskhelishvili, Head, Center for Social Studies

#### **The Caucasian Institute**

Ghia Nodia, Chair  
Kiana Melikishvili  
David Chiabishvili

#### **ICCN**

George Khutsishvili, Chair  
Irakli Kakabadze, Editor in Chief, "Peace Times"  
Rusudan Mshvidobadze

#### **Institute of History and Ethnology**

Liana Melikishvili, Researcher

#### **Internews**

Mark Berhendt



ICFJ

Bob Ortega

International Republican Institute (IRI)

Dmitri Shashkin, Program Officer  
Joshua Rozenblum, President Program Officer  
Paul E. Fagan, Program Officer, Azerbaijan and Georgia  
Maka Shengelia, Office Manager

IFES

Shalva Kipshidze, Office Manager  
George Sekhniashvili, Deputy Project Manager  
George Baratashvili, Legal Adviser  
Maya Gogoladze, Civic Education Program Coordinator

IRIS-Georgia

David Usupashvili, Deputy Chief of Party

Mercy Corps

Lela Kerashvili, Director of Grants and Compliance

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Mark Mullen, Director  
Keti Khutsishvili, Parliamentary Program Officer

PA Consulting

David Thornton

Urban Institute

Barry Reed

Media

*Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company*  
Erosi Kitsmarishvili, General Director  
Nick Tabatadze, CEO

Internews

Mark Berhendt, Director  
Genadi Uchumbegashvili, Managing Director



Student Organizations

ICCN Round Table

Student Self-Government (State University of Tbilisi)

Giorgi Meladze

Lia Sanikidze

Beate Kobiashvili

Biai Pataraiia

Elene Agladze

Cuantsa Liparteliani

Irakli Vacharadze

Students

Levoln Poltschkoria

Manana Tevzadze

Georgi Shubitidze

Movement for a Dignified Future

Gigouri Eigouri

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

Alexander Rondeli, President

Archil Gegeshidze, Senior Fellow

Save the Children

Jonathan Hodgdon, Director

Indira Amiranashvili, Program Coordinator

International Rescue Committee

Thea Maisuradze, Grants Manager

**International Organizations:**

UNOMIG

Ermina Van Hoye, Special Assistant to the Special Representative

Captain Peter Huller, Liaison Officer

UNHCR

Rajen S. Parkeh, Field Advisor, Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNDP

Nana Gibradze, Program Analyst



UNOCHA

Nino Zhvania, Field Advisor

UNIFEM

Lela Bakradze

OSCE

Ambassador Jean-Michel Lacombe  
Ivar Vikki, Deputy Head of Mission  
Volker Jacoby, Mission Member  
Klaus Rasmussen, Mission Member  
Anna Westerholm, Democratization Officer

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Rexane S. Rasmussen, Consultant

World Bank

Tevfik Mahmet Yaprak, Country Manager

**Georgian Government Officials:**

Office of Customs

Anonymous representative

Ministry of Defense

Maj. Maia Chiabrishvili, Maia, Chief, Defense Resource Management, Ministry of Defense  
Koba Liklikashvili, Former Press Secretary, Georgian Ministry of Defense  
Irakli Machavariani, President's Representative to the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Resolution

Parliament

Armaz Akhvledani, Member of Parliament  
Roman Kusiani, Member of Parliament, Regional Policy Committee

Multiple regional and local government representatives (see regional sections, below)

**Samtskhe-Javakheti**

Akhaltzikhe

Horizonti Round Table

Marina Modebadze, Democratic Women  
Levan Murgulia, Green Cross



Georg Ardguladze, Democrat Meskhs Union  
Kili Gozalishvili, Union Bale  
Gia Ciklauri, Cultural Union “Dyaochy”  
Revaz Zedgenidze, Horizonti  
David Narimanashvili, Democrat Lawyers Union  
Lela Inasaridze, Voice of Meskhety  
Ilia Zandiashvili, Business Center

Kakha Zereteli, *Gamgebeli*

*Rtsmunebuli's* Office for Samtskhe-Javakheti  
Malchaz Khoshteria, Deputy to Gigla Baramidze  
Marina Gochachiladze

Guliko Bekauri, Professor, Tbilisi State University, Akhaltsikhe

#### Aspindza

Levan Khulsishvili, *Gamgebeli*  
Valiko Khitarishvili, Member of *Gamgebeli*  
Mamyka Khizadze, Deputy of *Gamgebeli*  
Tengiz Shavadze, Deputy of *Gamgebeli*  
Iuza Buckhrikidze, Head of Sakrebulo  
Mackhas Davlasheridze, Member of Sakrebulo  
Chichicko Kadridze, Member of Sakrebulo  
Zina Zedgenidze, Georgian Demographic Society (NGO)  
Zaur Beridze, Head of statistics department  
Ketevan Mamuksshvili, Department of Social Assistance and NGO-Samepho  
Manara Kiknadze, Journalist of TV and radio department “ekho”  
Eldar Kldiashvili, Head of education department  
Ivaridze, Head of agricultural department

#### Ninotsmida

Raphikh Arzrumunian, *Gamgebeli*  
Vasili Konstantin Georgivich, NGO RTV Parvaka  
Artur Vartanian, NGO Democratic Development of Youth  
Sergei Martosian, Correspondent for OSCE HCNM Project  
Erik Malivelian, Our Radio  
T. Yadian, Union Abgar Akhalkalaki  
Vartatsilian Konstantin Teorgievich,

#### Akhalkalaki

Artush Ambarcumian, *Gamgebeli*  
Aebon Gabrielian, Head of Sakrebulo  
Ararat Begranian, Member of Sakrebulo  
Merujan Kogian, Member of Sakrebulo



Ararat Kamalian, Member of Sakrebulo  
Pastor, Armenian Apostolic Church

Center for Reform and Democratic Development Support

Ararat Esoian  
Elena Ogailician  
Anya Jalicogian  
Elizaveta Forojanian

Union Gia  
Alexander Vakhtangishvili  
Makhare Matsukatov

Ararat Kamalian, Deputy of the Rayon Sakrebulo  
Sports Union for Youth of Javakheti  
Vaagn Tsakhalian  
Aram Batoian

Union of Citizens Initiative for Democratic Development of Samtskhe-Javakheti

Levan Levanian  
Vagarmak Makhdekian

Union Abgar  
T. Yadian  
T. Esoian

Gorelovka

Lubov Demomeva, *Gamgebeli*

**South Ossetia**

Tskhinvali

Konstantin Kochiev, Assistant to the President, Republic of South Ossetia  
Batradz Kharebov, Deputy Chair, State Committee for Information  
Inal Pliev, Director, Journalists for Conflict Resolution  
Irina Yanovskaya, Field Coordinator, Tskhinvali Office, *OSCE*  
Tskhinvali focus group: participants from local NGOs, television and radio stations, UNHCR  
personnel and OSCE staff at OSCE headquarters in Tskhinvali

Kvemo-Kartli

Rustavi

Public Movement Multinational of Georgia  
Olga Raitenbakh, Program Director  
Zaur Khalilov, First Deputy Chair  
10 Additional participants from above organization in round table discussion

*Gardabani*

Ramin Bairamov, Chair, Intercultural Cooperation Bridge

15 additional participants from above organization in roundtable discussion



### **APPENDIX 3: SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS – CONFLICT ASSESSMENT GEORGIA**

---

Name:

Position:

Institution/Organization:

Region:

- 1.) What are the main grievances that could lead to serious, violent conflict in your region (or in Georgia) over the next five years?  
Explore economic, social (ethnic, religious, regional status, other), then political factors.
- 2.) Are these grievances stronger, weaker, or about the same as they were five years ago?
- 3.) What group or groups in your region (or in Georgia) hold these grievances, and against whom or what?
- 4.) Other actors within the region or outside the region who share these grievances?
- 5.) What opportunities exist that might allow organized, violent expression of these grievances?
- 6.) Are opportunities growing, shrinking, or about where they were five years ago?
- 7.) Are opportunities likely to grow, shrink, or stay about the same as they are over the next five years?
- 8.) What regional or state institutions have the capacity to control or demobilize conflict?
- 9.) If regional or state institutions do not have this capacity, why not?
- 10.) Looking ahead five years, is the capacity of regional or state institutions likely to increase, decrease or remain about the same?
- 11.) What kinds of political or economic events have spurred aggrieved groups to serious violent conflict in the region (or in Georgia) over the past five years?
- 12.) What expected events might spur aggrieved groups to violence over the next five years? (elections, campaigns, population repatriation/migration, major economic windfall, deterioration, etc.)
- 13.) Which international actors deliberately or unwittingly exacerbate tensions that could fuel an eruption of violence in your region (or in Georgia)?
- 14.) How is the future behavior of these international actors likely to increase/decrease conflict vulnerability? How likely?
- 15.) What specific changes in policy or behavior of international actors may reduce tensions that could spur conflict in the region (in Georgia)? How likely?
- 16.) For the conflict scenarios you deem likely over the next five years, trace through the probable future chain of events that leads to an outbreak of violent conflict? (e.g. Armenian nationalist groups in Javakheti seeking special status for region, economically hard-hit zone, opposed to Georgian govt., lack of restraint by Armenian government, triggering events (base closure, repatriation of Meskhs, etc.) – SEPARATIST VIOLENCE
- 17.) Reiterate likelihood of conflict scenarios identified as low, medium, high over next five years.
- 18.) Compare the likelihood of conflict scenarios identified with past five years? Any changes?
- 19.) Any strategic recommendations that could mitigate the vulnerabilities for conflict you have identified?

