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Human Rights Challenges in Georgia

Abstract

Since the Rose Revolution of 2003, human rights problems in Georgia have been improving. Economically and socially, Georgia has been reaching milestones as it continues to improve different facets of the state. In contrast to past research, current writing on Georgia has become increasingly more positive. Many pieces written on Georgia tell of a growing and thriving country that has gone to great lengths to strengthen national pride and to gain positive global recognition.

Keywords

Human rights, War on terror, Georgia, Russia, United States foreign policy

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Human Rights Challenges in Georgia

By Latife Bulur

Since the Rose Revolution of 2003, human rights problems in Georgia have been improving. Economically and socially, Georgia has been reaching milestones as it continues to improve different facets of the state. In contrast to past research, current writing on Georgia has become increasingly more positive. Many pieces written on Georgia tell of a growing and thriving country that has gone to great lengths to strengthen national pride and to gain positive global recognition.

Georgia has gained the attention of many foreign countries, such as Russia and the United States. Continuing a history of tense relations, Russia and Georgia are still unable to resolve their differences. Small skirmishes continue between these two countries as they had in the past, and hope for a resolution seems unlikely.

The relationship between Georgia and Russia extends back to the early 1600s, and has worsened since Georgia became an independent state in 1991. Much of the data found on Georgia's tumultuous history with Russia has already been addressed in the previous research done on Georgia. An understanding of the conflict between these two countries can help lay the groundwork for a better comprehension of Russia's and Georgia's current tensions.

The contemporary relationship between Russia and Georgia is tense and complicated. As Georgia began to transition into a more democratic state, a schism was forged between itself and Russia. Small conflicts continue to arise between the two countries, although the reasons for such conflicts are debated.

Some scholars believe that Russia grew bitter towards Georgia because of Georgia's interest in "joining the West," and in building strong relations with the United States. Also, Russia disapproved of Georgia joining NATO. Others believe that the tension arose out of the era of Putin and Shevardnadze. Previous research delves mainly into the effect these two men have had on Georgia in the past, and illustrates how tensions between the countries have developed from this history. Current research illustrates Russia's problems with Mikhail Saakashvili, the present day Georgian president, and his goals to modernize Georgia.

As a corollary to the past conflicts with Russia, Georgia has also suffered conflict closer to home. Various separatist groups have attempted to become an independent state, autonomous from Georgia. While the separatists' movement is no longer a major threat in Georgia, there is a good amount of literature that details this complex time in Georgia's history.

Since the Rose Revolution, however, Georgia has made positive internal developments. As discussed in past research, the Rose Revolution was a major turning point in Georgian history, removing a corrupt Shevardnadze from power and elevating Saakashvili as the new Georgian president. This non-violent revolution has positively changed the face of Georgian government and its view on national politics.

Since the changing of the regime, Georgia has made many advances towards developing economic stability and national security. Current research shows that Georgia has taken steps towards democratization and modernization. As Georgia builds more positive relationships with strong allies, such as the U.S., it continues to gain more global prestige and recognition. It is fitting

that past research highlights the Rose Revolution and that current research demonstrates the rewards of the successful revolution.

An examination of past research reveals that Georgia's future was once very uncertain, with the separatist movements and the Rose Revolution affecting internal politics. However, Georgia has since managed to suppress the separatists, and lay the foundation for a strong government. These optimistic developments promise a brighter future for Georgia, its democracy and its people.



General Resources

Champion, M. 2007. "Georgia Thrives Despite Russian Cloud." *Wall Street Journal – Eastern Edition*. New York: A6.

Annotation: This brief article illustrates how Georgia has been developing economically, despite efforts by Russia to halt such progress. The author provides various examples of this growth, such as the new railway system between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and efforts to join NATO. However, it should be noted that Russia imposes embargos on trade and transportation between Russia and Georgia, supposedly in response to an espionage dispute. This article also mentions the President of Georgia's (Mikhail Saakashvili) actions taken to improve economic affairs.

Dubnov, A. 2006. "EU Sticks Up for Georgia." *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 58 (42): 18.

Annotation: This short article reports on the E.U.'s involvement in relations between Russia and Georgia. The E.U. is siding with Georgia, and condemns Russia for its harsh policies regarding economic, political, and humanitarian issues. This article also mentions how the E.U. strongly encourages both states to settle their current situation before the issues escalate.

Dvali, G. and G. Sysoyev. 2002. "Georgia Won't Let Itself be Bombed Again." *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 54 (35): 3-4.

Annotation: This article reviews the relationship between Russia and Georgia, evaluating how it has become strained in light of past experiences. Former Georgian Minister Eduard Shevardnadze accused Russia of the bombing of Georgian villages, while Russian officials deny having any involvement in the bombings. Shevardnadze warned Russia that Georgia would retaliate should another similar incident transpire.

Mitchell, L. A. 2006. "Democracy in Georgia Since the Rose Revolution." *Orbis*: 669-676.

Annotation: This optimistic article examines the positive relationship that has been forged between the U.S. and Georgia. Georgia's democracy-promotion efforts have been successful, and the U.S. has continued to show unconditional support for the Georgian government. On the other hand, the U.S. shows disinterest in pointing out Georgia's democratization shortcomings, which some claim is politically motivated. This author believes that the U.S. is truly sincere in keeping a positive approach with Georgia, not only to promote friendly foreign relations, but to actually promote worldwide democracy.

Nixey, J. 2006. "Feeling the Heat: Georgia Nation and Russian Relations." *The World Today* 62 (12): 21-22.

Annotation: This short article reports on the current relations between Georgia and Russia. The author believes that much of the tension between these two countries is due to Georgia's desire to build relations with the U.S. and to move toward democratization.

Weir, F. 2006. "Putin Pinched by Russia-Georgia Crisis." *Christian Science Monitor* 98 (227): 2.

Annotation: This article reviews Russia's opinions on the Saakashvili government in Georgia. Russian experts are accusing Saakashvili of aggravating relations with Russia all in the attempts of adopting Western ideals and support. There is mention that both countries worry about the outbreak of war. This is because experts speculate that both sides will not back down and the E.U. will not be able to push harder than it already has for a resolution. Georgia hopes that the E.U. will be able to convince Russia to stop trying to intimidate Georgia.

Chocheli, V. and V. Papava 2005. "Global Exchange Rate Instability and Its Implications for Georgia." *Problems of Economic Transition* 48 (4): 55-83.

Annotation: The authors of this piece focus on how monetary policy in Georgia has been transformed since the post-communist era. The authors look closely at the impact of inflation on economic growth. Issues such as Georgia's underdeveloped monetary system are reviewed and the authors make the claim that Georgia's biggest concerns should not be external factors, but rather internal economic instability.

Coppieters, B. and R. Legvold. 2005. Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Annotation: The authors of this book examine the challenges Georgia has faced since the success of the Rose Revolution. Under President Saakashvili, many of Georgia's problems are being confronted, but the authors argue that issues in Georgia need to be taken seriously by the rest of the world as well. This book also illustrates the complex relationship Georgia has with Russia. Chapters in this book are written by Georgian and non-Georgian writers, providing an interesting and wide-range of different points of views and topics.

Fairbanks Jr, C. H. 2004. "Georgia's Rose Revolution." *Journal of Democracy* 15 (2): 110-124.

Annotation: In this dense article, the author discusses the complex issues Georgia faces in developing its democracy. The author begins by discussing how Georgia gained its independence. After that monumental event, the Rose Revolution followed in Georgia's history, shoving the country quickly into modernization. The author states that Georgia's example of a peaceful and powerful revolution can inspire other troublesome states aspiring for democracy.

Freese, T. 2005. "A Report from the Field: Georgia's War against Contraband and Its Struggle for Territorial Integrity." *S AIS Review* 25 (1): 107-121.

Annotation: The author of this piece explores how Georgia, led by President Saakashvili, wishes to maintain its territorial integrity despite Russian influence. A major problem for Georgia is the passing of contraband through the region and the black market trading occurring there. The author examines various tactics employed by Georgian officials to end the illegal trade. While attempts are somewhat successful, the author also explains a few remaining anti-contraband problems faced by the Georgian government.

Khaduri, N. 2005. "Mistakes Made in Conducting Economic Reforms in Postcommunist Georgia." *Problems of Economic Transition* 48 (4): 18-29.

Annotation: The author portrays what he believes are good economic reforms to make in a growing government. After mentioning those reforms, he compares them to the policies made by the Georgian government shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. The author criticizes Georgia, and claims that it has yet to gain any positive experience in reforming economically. This piece is somewhat informative on Georgia's economic politics. However, the author clearly takes an anti-Georgian policy approach.

Kwok, J. 2005. "Red Blues: Strife in Post-Soviet Georgia." *Harvard International Review*: 11-12.

Annotation: This short but powerful article explains the state of Georgia after former President Shevardnadze was removed from power. Current President Saakashvili has much to do to repair Georgia, but substantial foreign aid is required, in addition to a balance of political pressure and cultural compromise. Even with the remnants of a separatist movement in the early 1990s still affecting the current policies, Georgia shows promise for reform. The author hopes that Saakashvili will strengthen domestic policies and encourage economic growth.

Papava, V. 2005. "Georgia's Economic Role." *Problems of Economic Transition* 48 (4): 84-92.

Annotation: The author of this piece takes an economic approach to how the Caucasus region developed independently from Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia, in its weakened state, lost much power over the Caucasus states, including Georgia. Many countries in that region began to develop methods for improving their economies and for becoming self-sufficient. This author suggests ways in which the countries of the Caucasus, along with Georgia, can develop their economies using the natural resources available in the region, such as gas and oil.

Papava, V. 2006. "The Political Economy of Georgia's Rose Revolution." *Orbis* 50 (4): 657-667.

Annotation: This author examines the impact of the Rose Revolution on Georgia. The revolution proved to be a turning point for the country, successfully boosting the country's economy and establishing valuable relationships with foreign institutions such as NATO. Georgia is nationally growing stronger, but by doing so, it has also forged a further rift between itself and Russia. This author recommends that Georgia refine its policies to better protect its democracy against Russia and to further its economic development.

Rogers, P., R. Keukens, et al. 2006. "Reforming the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health and Prison Mental Health in the Republic of Georgia." *Mental Health Practice* 9 (5): 38-40.

Annotation: The authors of this piece are concerned with the human rights violations that have occurred since Georgia attained independence. Regardless of improving conditions in the region, there are still issues of corruption and torture in psychiatric services in Georgia. After findings were discovered that assessed the full scale of this problem, the Georgian government has taken action to investigate the matter further. This article explores the facets of the process, from the initial discovery of the human rights violations, to the government's actions to counter such violations.

Saakashvili, M. 2006. "The Way Forward: Georgia's Democratic Vision for the Future." *Harvard International Review*: 68-73.

Annotation: This piece is written by current Georgian President, Mikhail Saakashvili. In this article, the President tells of ways he plans on reforming the Georgian state, and points to the problems the country faces as improvements are made. He writes of how the government is attempting to stop the corruption left over from the separatist movement, how he wishes to reform the education system, and other ways he hopes to build a stronger democratic Georgia. In doing so, Saakashvili wants Georgia to gain global prestige and national strength.