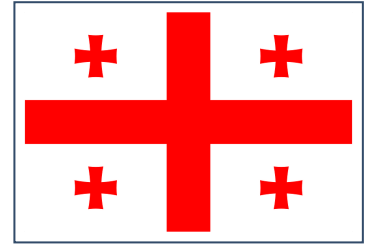




Georgia Position Paper

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I/ Background Information on Georgia

Georgia is situated at the strategically important crossroads where Europe meets Asia. Over the centuries, Georgia was the object of rivalry between Persia, Ottoman, and Russia, before being eventually annexed by Russia in the 19th century. As one of the most independence-minded republics, Georgia declared sovereignty on November 19, 1989, and independence on April 9, 1991. Georgia has made notable progress since 2004 in accelerating democratic reforms in different areas, including public service, elections, judiciary, local governance, and economic development. In June 2014, Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the European Union. Plus, the visa-free travel to the Schengen zone was granted to Georgia in 2017.

But since emerging from the collapsing Soviet Union as an independent state in 1991, Georgia has again become the arena of conflicting interests. Increasing US economic and political influence in the country has long been a source of concern for neighboring Russia, as have Georgia's aspirations to join NATO and the EU. Tense relations with Russia have been further exacerbated by Russia's support for the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; periodic flare-ups in tension and violence culminated in a five-day conflict in August 2008 between Russia and Georgia, including the invasion of large portions of undisputed Georgian territory. Russian military forces remain in those regions while Georgia does not have any military stationed in the separatist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia is struggling to resolve old conflicts with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and approximate towards the European Union and Euro-Atlantic structures.

II/ Past Achievements and Attempts of Georgia on the Issues

A. The Question of the Caucasus:

- The Caucasus is “the lands in between.” Geographically, the countries lie between Europe, Asia, Russia, and the Middle East. And Georgia is an essential country in the region considering its regional power.
- From a geopolitical perspective, the North Caucasus is unquestionable of interest to Georgia, and for two reasons. Firstly, some parts of the North Caucasus are ethnically homogenous with Abkhazia and South Ossetia – two regions to which Georgia has always felt it has a claim. Secondly, it forms a natural barrier between Georgia and the Russian Federation. Georgia is still thinking about the North Caucasus both in



terms of the potential consequences of a conflict with them and in terms of the advantages of an alliance with them. Over the last two decades, Georgian politicians have dithered between making common cause with the North Caucasus against Moscow or neutralizing its “destructive” influence on Abkhaz and South Ossetian issues.

● Twenty years after the end of the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus map is still torn up by war, with three de facto statelets— Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno Karabakh. In addition to the vast diversity in languages and ethnicity, the area also includes a variety of Christian as well as Islamic beliefs. Furthermore, the Caucasus has many natural resources, such as metals, minerals, and coal.

● South Ossetia was one of the first flashpoints of ethnic conflict in the disintegrating Soviet Union when, in 1990, calls for unification with their ethnic kin in North Ossetia led to conflict with Georgia's nationalist government. After that, South Ossetia remained under rebel control, with Russian forces acting as peacekeepers. Simmering tensions flared up into an all-out war between Georgia and Russia in South Ossetia in August 2008. Georgia launched an assault on the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali to flush out separatist rebels, following frequent exchanges of fire. Russia responded by pouring thousands of troops into South Ossetia and launching bombing raids on Georgian targets. Russian forces pushed further south before pulling back to South Ossetia. At the same time, Russia ousted Georgian troops from Abkhazia, another breakaway territory. Thousands of ethnic Georgians sought refuge in the rest of Georgia. Russia has crossed another “red line”; by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia -an action condemned by the international community-, establishing diplomatic relations with them and opening embassies in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

● Abkhazia is a de facto independent state, only recognized by the Russian Federation and five other UN member states. The conflict is between the Georgian and the Abkhaz people that are seeking independence from Georgia. Georgia stated that there wouldn't be any force to resolve the dispute. Then with both a resolution from the UN and a statement from OSCE, the region was internationally recognized as a part of Georgia.

● For the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transcaucasian nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan have special significance for Georgia. Despite Georgia's apparent cultural and religious affinities with Armenia, relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan generally have been closer. Economic and political factors have contributed to this



situation. First, Georgian fuel needs good relations with Azerbaijan that is vital to the health of the Georgian economy. Second, Georgians have sympathized with Azerbaijan's position in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh because of similarities to Georgia's internal problems with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both countries cite the principle of "inviolability of state borders" in defending national interests against claims by ethnic minorities.

B. The Question of the Caspian Sea and Surrounding Territories:

- The Caspian Sea, the largest landlocked body of salty water in the world, is surrounded by ve "Caspian States": Russia in the north; Iran in the south; Azerbaijan in the west, and Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the east. Caspian Sea's location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East has kept the region's strategic importance to international geopolitics.
- Georgia has no direct involvement in the issue and, therefore, no achievement on the subject. However, in 1999, Georgia signed an Intergovernmental Declaration on laying the legal framework of the construction of the trans-Caspian pipeline. In the early 1990s, Turkish and Turkmen leaders suggested the concept of a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline Project, which would transit Turkmen gas westward to Baku across the Caspian Sea for transshipment further west through Georgia and Turkey. Supported by the US, this pipeline would be linked with the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline and through it to the Nabucco Pipeline. Unfortunately, the parties failed to reach a collective agreement, and negotiations collapsed in 2000 – due to payment and price issues, the lack of a legal framework governing the use of the Caspian Sea, and capacity allocation among Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

C. The Question of the Shift of Trade Routes in Eurasia:

- Georgia, together with being a loyal western ally and having signed the Association Agreement with the EU, is looking to China as a key trade partner and an investor. The Association Agreement placed Georgia in a critical position to become a transit hub for Eurasian trade with the EU. It is possible to understand Georgia's significance for the EU just looking at Georgia's trading links, both in the South Caucasus, reaching to Central Asia and China to the east, Iran to the south and the west via the Black Sea to Romania and Ukraine. Georgia is unique in the South Caucasus as the only country to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with China. In Georgia, China is interested in the country's ports for trade connections across the Black Sea; the fact that Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the EU is also a point for



attraction. Through Georgia, Chinese investors hope to link with the EU and other markets. In addition to the EU Association Agreement has an FTA with The Commonwealth of Independent States (or CIS) countries since 1994.

● Following the free trade agreement, Georgia and China had to work on developing innovative zones and joint industrial technologies. For this reason, Georgia and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on developing economic zones and entrepreneurial capacity between the countries within the Tbilisi Silk Road Forum in November 2017.

● It should be noted that Georgia and China are also strengthening cooperation within the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative. Within the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative Chinese corporation CEFC China Energy Company Limited purchased 75 percent of Poti Free Industrial Zone shares. Poti Free Industrial Zone is strategically located adjacent to the Black Sea port city of Poti – the largest sea port in Georgia. This brings significant logistics and supply chain advantages to companies looking for a straightforward and tax-friendly business environment.

III/ Objectives, Aims and Possible Solutions Proposed by France on the Issues

A. **The Question of the Caucasus:** Relations with the North Caucasus have been a significant security issue for Georgia ever since its independence. The conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are rooted not only in Georgia's relations with its minorities but also with these minorities' relationships with their northern relatives. However, the North Caucasus is not an aim in Georgia's policy but rather an instrument to advance its foreign policy agenda.

In Georgia, the relationship between the central powers in Tbilisi and the breakaway entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has changed dramatically since the war in 2008 with the following recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states by Russia. Previous contacts with the breakaway entities have stalled or are today functioning differently in a decreased manner in comparison to what they used to be. Channels of communication between Moscow and Tbilisi have been opened in the wake of the French mediation following the 2008 war. The war for independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the collapse of the Soviet Union has produced thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in countries where traditional attachment to the soil runs very deep. This suggests that secure solutions of "exchanges of territories" or even compensations for abandoning an ancestral home and moving away may not yield much in terms of sustainability.

The primary objective of Georgia is to keep the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of its



country. The solution proposed should be to call upon countries to respect the internationally recognised borders of Georgia and that the international community remains united in its rejection of the unilateral declaration of independence of South Ossetian and Abkhazia statehood.

Georgia stresses the importance of protecting the safety and rights of the ethnic Georgians still living within the breakaway regions, promoting respect for displaced persons right of return under safe and dignified conditions. In June 2019, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from those areas (document A/73/L.89), stressing the need to respect their property rights and underlining the urgent need for unimpeded humanitarian access to all those residing in conflict-affected areas of Georgia. Georgia remains committed to peaceful reconciliation. It believes that reconciliation, reintegration and a commitment to a rules-based order and diplomacy are the only means to achieve peace. International monitoring mechanisms must be allowed unimpeded access to those areas about the creation of conditions conducive to safe and dignified return while expressing serious concern over illegal detentions and kidnappings along the administrative boundary line, deprivation of the right to life, prohibition of education in the native Georgian language and the illegal building of razor wires. As for the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, which is already precariously balancing its close ties to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, any hostilities and combat operations over Nagorno-Karabakh poses two distinct and direct threats to the country's security. The first immediate threat to Georgia's security stems from the possible targeting of critical regional energy infrastructure. The targeting of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, for example, cannot be easily ignored or underestimated, especially given the danger of a quickly-expanding battlespace if skirmishes quickly spiral out of control. Georgia also faces a broader, more strategic threat from the fighting in the form of the possible Russian response. This threat is rooted in the geographic constraints and limits to Russia's possible military intervention, which could involve the Russian army assets stationed in occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In such a scenario, the Russian Federation would likely pressure Georgia to grant overflight or even ground access through Georgian airspace and territory for the deployment of Russian forces. This possibility would probably consist of an attempt to deploy Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, exacerbating regional instability and augmenting the already dangerous Russian military presence in the region. Overall, Georgia tries to remain neutral in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict while protecting its territorial integrity from possible threats.



B. The Question of the Caspian Sea and Surrounding Territories:

The most critical first step is to set the name for Caspian legally. Since the name of the Caspian is still not lawfully set as a sea or a lake, but set as having a new 'special legal status,' it still has no international law.

Although the weight of historical evidence indicates the Caspian instead as an international sea, it is neither a sea nor a lake. Therefore, neither the international law of the Sea nor the law of inland applies. With the achievement of defining Caspian as a sea or lake UN's

UNCLOS may apply to the situation to resolve it objectively. As for its legal regime, the past treaties do not address the issue of the seabed sovereignty or delimitation of seabed resources.

The whole issue boils down to the question of how to demarcate or share the Sea among the littoral states by taking into account the past treaties and current realities. The seabed (and the oil and gas resources underneath) should be divided into national sectors, and the Sea's surface and water layer should be shared. Political disagreements among the players are inevitable in the region and will surface once their interests and priorities clash. Unless military security in the Caspian basin is ensured, Iran and Russia will delay by any means the process of the resolution of the legal framework. A vital step to take for the decision of the problem is to ensure security by an objective international party. The most obvious solution to address the challenge is to hold more conventions with the mindset of the 2018 Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.

As for Georgia, Georgia hopes to capitalize on pipeline revenues and would like to limit Russian access to its lines and ports greatly. Any arrangement between Georgia and the US or Azerbaijan that omits Russia is beneficial in Georgia's eyes.

C. The Question of the Shift of Trade Routes in Eurasia: Georgia is very keen on developing Anaklia, the country's first deep-sea port on the Black Sea, in addition to its Poti Port. Anaklia envisioned as a future smart city harboring an exclusive economic zone and industrial clusters; it aspires to become a maritime hub for the region, competing with the Turkish ports to the west. Anaklia is planned as an alternative to the Batumi and Supsa Ports for the transshipment of oil and gas.

Georgia considers good relations with China as a possible counterweight to Russia's dominance in the region. Georgian policymakers, as well as the business community aim, do all they can to attract Chinese investment. The Georgian Chamber of Commerce (GCC) is setting up a Silk Road Information Desk in Tbilisi, and it is also negotiating with different provinces in China to open GCC representation offices.

Georgia encourages forum participants to attend the third Silk Road Forum, which will be held in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi in October 2019.

Overall, the 'One Belt-One Road' initiative is important for Georgia, and the country is



actively involved in its development. Georgia was among the first countries that signed the memorandum for developing the 'One Belt-One Road' initiative in March 2015.

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