



## **SPEECH AND REMARKS**

**H.E. MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI, PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA**

**CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE, JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL  
FOR ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES & NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC  
INSTITUTE**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2004**

---

### ***INTRODUCTION***

- **Thank you all for coming tonight – I see many familiar faces here.**
- **Those familiar faces remind me of all the time that I have spent in Washington – coming here is always a bit like coming home.**
- **And this homecoming is undeniably the most special.**
- **Thanks also to the organizers of this event – SAIS is a global leader and institution of great learning. It has a proud tradition of excellence in international scholarship - globally and in our region of the world. I am honored to speak here.**
- **Although I studied next door at GW – perhaps if I am a good President I might one day be accepted here...(joke).**
- **Thank you to Dr. Brezinski – someone I believe who has set the standard for excellence in public service, leadership and international thought.**
- **I'd also like to extend special thanks to the National Democratic Institute. NDI has been active in Georgia for more than 10 years and has done tremendously important work.**

### ***A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE ROSE REVOLUTION...***

- **By now, everyone in this room is familiar with the dramatic events that took place in Georgia during the month of November.**
- **Those events so eloquently labeled as the Revolution of Roses...**

- **Revolutions are strange in a way – when the processes that contribute to their creation are underway one becomes consumed by a special energy – an energy that in our case was underlined by both hope and apprehension.**
- **Hope that we could reverse Georgia’s tragic decline and build a better future.**
- **Apprehension over how events would unfold – could violence be avoided? Would the Georgian people and the Georgian dream succeed?**
- **Three months have passed since our Revolution took place.**
- **What have we learned?**
- **I think we have learned three important lessons. Lessons that only now are becoming clear as my government and me set about the task of re-building Georgia.**
- **The first lesson is that we could survive the succession challenge.**
- **What is arguably the single greatest challenge to any transitional nation and in particular, those states of the former Soviet Union.**
- **Many members of our neighborhood seem to have trouble with this issue – with President’s not knowing when to leave and political opposition unable to unite or imagine a better future outside the context of inside deal-making.**
- **In Georgia – we proved that succession can be peaceful. It can occur - if dramatically – within the framework of the Constitution.**
- **It can occur under the banner of a united opposition.**
- **And most importantly, it can occur with the strong and genuine support of the people.**
- **Passing the succession test – we have showed at home and abroad - that Georgia has matured and that the State, while weakened during the previous era, nonetheless exists.**
- **For anyone who ever thought, *or hoped*, that Georgia was a failed State – our Revolution and our people, proved them forever wrong.**
- **Emerging from the Rose Revolution – Georgia is stronger than ever, more united than ever – and more resolute in its commitment to build a stable and prosperous State than ever.**
- **The second lesson of the Rose Revolution is that Georgians are very much Members of Europe and the European family of nations.**
- **In reflecting on this point, I am not simply looking to geography, but rather, to national identity.**

- **What we saw in November was a population mobilized in defense of the principles of liberal democracy.**
- **What we saw was a population that refused to have their voice – their choice – and their future stolen from them by a corrupt and incompetent government.**
- **The Revolution was not a protest against low wages or electricity shortages, or the lack of basic security guarantees.**
- **Nor was it about people coming out to support me.**
- **Rather, our Revolution was about people fighting for their freedom and their desire to live in a democratic society.**
- **A society that respects human rights, freedom of speech, the rule of law and the belief that citizens – and citizens alone – have the right to choose their leaders and their destiny.**
- **What the former government never understood – never grasped, and never believed in – was that democracy – in order to succeed and be genuine – must be derived from the people AND be responsible to the people.**
- **Otherwise it will not be a true democracy.**
- **The Georgian people proved that they have the courage, wisdom, and universal desire to live in a democracy.**
- **I am extremely proud of my people today and deeply honored to be their President.**
- **I am the President of a democracy!**
- **This is a democracy whose national identity and destiny is rooted in Europe – as a full and contributing Member to Euro-Atlantic institutions – to regional security, and economic development.**
- **The third lesson of the Revolution is that Georgia has a special relationship with the United States of America.**
- **I make this claim – this evaluation – based on the realization that Georgians and Americans share a common set of values.**
- **That we share common beliefs and common aspirations to make our societies more free and more prosperous.**
- **That we believe in government working to serve the people.**
- **That we believe in the sacred principle that the power of the State derives from its citizens and that no man is above the law.**
- **These values – which were at the very core of the Revolution, have served to re-enforce the bonds that unites our countries and our peoples!**

- **During this trip to Washington my goal is to strengthen those bonds...**
- **To those who believe our Revolution was somehow covertly supported by special American interests – I can only say that they fail to understand our culture and our values.**
- **The values of freedom and democracy are not established through grants or loans.**
- **They are not the product of assistance programs or negotiations.**
- **While that assistance was absolutely crucial in building our skills and capacities...and was used extremely well...**
- **...It was our values – which are a reflection of our culture and our identity – that have allowed us to succeed.**
- **That we share common values is why I believe programs like GTEP have been so incredibly successful.**
- **That Georgia has contributed from DAY ONE to the war on terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq – and is ready to contribute even more - is because we share a common belief in freedom.**
- **To be Georgian is to be part of the family of democratic nations – composed of our European brothers and our American friends and partners.**

### ***CONFRONTING GEORGIA'S CHALLENGES***

- **Looking at Georgia today – it is easy to see that we are located on the frontlines of some of the most pressing challenges facing Europe and our increasingly inter-connected world.**
- **We live in a neighborhood that contains numerous geo-political and geo-strategic threats.**
- **We live in a country where reconstruction and reform is a national security imperative.**
- **We also stand on the edge of enormous opportunities – opportunities to help the world fight global terrorism, increase its energy security AND open new and untapped markets.**
- **Under my leadership – during my Presidency – I intend to realize these opportunities, to take advantage of those opportunities - so that Georgia will re-gain its rightful place in the democratic community of nations.**
- **So that Georgia will prosper.**

- So that Georgia will always be welcome in Washington with the words told to me this morning at the US Senate by Senator Nelson – *That Georgia Is a Breath of Fresh Air for All Freedom Loving People....*

### ***WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES?***

- Georgia nevertheless faces some very specific challenges. These challenges are in:
  - Governance reform;
  - Security reform; and
  - Economic reform.
- This trio of sectors represents the principle avenues that we intend to address and focus our reform efforts on.
- 1. **The First Step Is Governance Reform – *Setting the Example For Georgia and the Region.***
  - We must eliminate corruption...
    - a. Visible and Institutional forms.
  - We must make government more efficient and responsive. But How?
  - By reducing bureaucracy and red tape.
  - By downsizing government and increasing professionalism and transparency.
  - By reforming our civil service.
  - By providing real salaries, establishing new standards and enforcing the rule of law.

All of these steps will require courage and strong political will.

We must move forward swiftly to take advantage of public support.

The whole region is watching us – some hope we will fail – but I know that the vast majority hopes we will succeed!

As Georgia succeeds in strengthening its governance – in establishing A MODEL OF GOOD GOVERNANCE – we have the ability to bring positive change to an entire region.

Not through exporting Revolution – because Revolutions don't work that way.

But rather, by providing an example that democracy and stability – prosperity and respect for human dignity - are possible in our region of the world – in that interconnected space linking Europe with the greater Middle East.

When Georgia succeeds, the region succeeds.

**In that respect, what is good for Georgia is good for Europe, the US and more than 400 million inhabitants of the region.**

**2. The Second Step Is Security Reform – *What Keeps Georgia Strong and Stable***

- **Internally we plan to introduce civilian control over ALL power Ministries.**
- **We plan to create AND FUND the capability to defend against all threats to Georgia.**
- **To bring lasting stability we must and we will restore Georgia's full territorial integrity using peaceful means – I think the Revolution proves that we can create great change without violence...**
- **That means taking the necessary steps and creating the right conditions to peacefully return Abkhazia.**
- **Returning Abkhazia and confirming Georgia's territorial integrity will take time and great effort – MY GOVERNMENT AND I VIEW THIS EFFORT AS ONE OF OUR TOP PRIORITIES...**
- **We must make Georgia a country that ALL citizens will want to be a part of and live in.**
- **HERE I WANT TO EMPHASIZE HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR GEORGIA TO RESTORE GOOD RELATIONS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS – IN PARTICULAR RUSSIA.**
- **Russia is a special case due to our historic ties and the last decade of less than perfect relations.**
- **Russia is a special case because of its vast markets and the role that Russia CAN play in promoting or reducing regional stability.**
- **After my trip to Moscow I have hope that a new era in relations is commencing – one that is based on pragmatism and the mutual recognition of shared common interests.**
- **While I have no illusions that our relationship will be transformed overnight – I do see that the door is open for new and more positive relations.**
- **Georgia is ready to cooperate with Russia and is ready to meet the Russians half-way on many issues.**
- **Just as Georgia has legitimate interests in the region – so too does Russia (i.e. border security...fighting terrorism...economic growth).**
- **As long as Russia remembers and respects our national sovereignty.**
- **As long as Russia abides by its international commitments to remove its bases.**

- **As long as Russia realizes that we cannot and will not become a battlefield between two GREAT-powers.**
- **I am ready for a new era.**
- **I believe Mr. Putin understands this and is prepared to continue the good start that we began a few weeks ago in Moscow.**
- **I intend to continue down the path of new and improved relations with Moscow.**

**Our challenge – Georgia’s challenge - is to work cooperatively with all our partners to advance lasting security and stability.**

### **3. The Next Step Is Economic Reform – *What Will Re-build Georgia:***

- **We need to strengthen and improve the investment climate in Georgia. How?**
  - **Tax liberalization.**
  - **Elimination of corruption and harassment by State officials.**
  - **Provision of greater personal security for investors and businesses.**
  - **Creation of one-stop-shop for foreign investors.**
  - **Development of natural *comparative advantage:***
    - **Agriculture, trade, transport, wine, tourism, light manufacturing, etc.**
- **We need to ensure access to regional markets.**
- **We need to find new sources of financing for entrepreneurs.**
- **We need to develop new public/private partnerships.**
- **We need to strengthen infrastructure.**
- **IN PARTICULAR – WE NEED TO DO ALL WE CAN TO BUILD THE ENERGY CORRIDOR – OF WHICH GEORGIA IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PARTICIPANT.**
- **This means fulfilling our obligations for the BTC and South Caucasus pipelines – pipelines of stability, prosperity and security.**
- **Energy projects in our region are not just about economics – rather they represent concrete vehicles for promoting human development, regional integration and lasting peace.**
- **Georgia is proud and I am proud to contribute to this process.**

**It is clear to me, that the investments we make in Georgia’s economic development are actually investments in Georgia’s future.**

**Improving Georgia's economic strength will improve Georgia's governance.**

**It will give real and powerful reasons for separatists to seek a joint future inside Georgia.**

**Improvements in governance will in turn strengthen stability and lasting security.**

**This is an inter-connected, inter-dependent cycle.**

**We see and recognize these critical relationships – and plan to take advantage of them.**

***RESULTS SO FAR...***

- **I have always believed that actions speak louder than words.**
- **That deeds and results are the only way to judge and evaluate progress.**
- **After only 100 days we have succeeded in delivering some impressive results – defying the skeptics.**
  - **Increased tax revenues.**
  - **Arrests of some of the most corrupt officials and a visible crackdown on smuggling.**
  - **Renewed relations with the IMF.**
  - **The creation of the most competent and progressive government in Eastern Europe.**
- **We also know that expectations are very high – perhaps unreasonably so.**
- **We also know that we will make mistakes from time to time.**
- **And we also know that we will learn from any mistakes we might make.**
- **What is important in this respect is maintaining the pace of change and providing – FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A DECADE – leadership that sets an example.**
- **The Georgia of the past was a nation where neither the leaders nor the people could believe in the future –**
- **I believe we have succeeded in changing that perception.**
- **I believe we have succeeded in offering hope.**
- **I believe we have succeeded in showing strength in the face of enormous challenges.**
- **And I believe that we have a vision that can transform a nation and an entire region!**

***A JOINT APPEAL...***

- **Tomorrow morning I will be meeting with President Bush and his team.**
- **I look forward to meeting the President - and letting him know just how serious Georgia is about fighting corruption.**
- **Just how committed Georgia is to reforming its defense and security structures.**
- **Just how serious Georgia is about entering NATO and the EU.**
- **Just how serious Georgia is about reviving its economy.**
- **And just how serious Georgia is in fulfilling its responsibility to spread peace and stability in the region.**
- **We know that many challenges lie waiting in the future – we know that re-building our State will not be romantic and that it will take very hard work, sacrifice, focus – and commitment.**
- **We know that we have to deliver with concrete actions and measurable results.**
- **I believe that we won't disappoint. I believe that step-by-step we will succeed.**
- **Today – there is a special window of opportunity in Georgia.**
- **This is a unique time.**
- **Georgians and people all around the world have been energized by our positive example.**
- **While this special window of opportunity is open – we will need to rely on the collective efforts of all of us – and here I mean the international community in general, and AMERICA in particular – in order to succeed.**
- **Let none of us in this room underestimate just how much we can achieve when we work together – when we continue to deepen and expand our cooperation.**
- **Tonight – I wish to issue an appeal to all of you – to help us take advantage of this historic opportunity.**
- **That together we can advance stability and democracy in one of the world's most complex and important geo-strategic regions.**
- **Georgia has benefited greatly from its partnership with the United States in the past – and I have argued – and I BELIEVE.....that this success is due to our shared system of values and beliefs.**
- **I am sure that our cooperation in the future will be even more robust – even more close - and even more fruitful – FOR THE VERY SAME REASONS.**
- **Georgia and the United States are partners – we are allies and we are friends....**

- **By working together – honestly and openly, For Georgia – For Europe – And for the Entire Region - we can build a brighter, safer and more prosperous future.**

**THANK YOU.**