



Istituto Affari Internazionali

PRESS RELEASE

Giorgi Baramidze, vice prime minister of Georgia, meets with IAI

Briefing on the Georgian's political situation
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Meeting with IAI staff yesterday, Georgia's vice prime minister and minister for European affairs, Giorgi Baramidze, restated his country's ambitions to join NATO and, in prospect, the EU.

Mr. Baramidze took pains to dismiss concerns that a potential admission of Georgia within NATO would represent "a threat" to Russia.

Referring to the Russia-Georgia conflict of August 2008, Georgia's vice prime minister expressed his conviction that an effort by the EU member states could contribute to "prevent[ing] Russia from launching a second wave of military operations" against Georgia. Mr. Baramidze asked NATO and EU members not to close their eyes to the "human rights violations" and episodes of "ethnic cleansing" in Georgia's pro-Russian breakaway provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, for which Russia should be held accountable. Russia maintains troops in both provinces, which it recognises as independent states.

Last Saturday Mr Baramidze participated in a seminar organized by the Italian foreign minister, Franco Frattini, and attended by a number of foreign ministers and ministers of European affairs from EU member states as well as countries from the Balkans and the Caucasus.

The urgency to stabilise Eastern Europe and reinforce the dialogue on energy issues emerged during the seminar as major topics of discussion: "Georgia – Mr. Baramidze maintained – could represent a valuable alternative for European energy dependence [on Russia's supplies]". He specified that this need not be understood as an anti-Russian aim. Mr Baramidze recalled that the Nabucco pipeline, designed to transit through Georgia and Turkey – thus bypassing Russia's territory – will be able to supply a maximum of 31-32 billion cubic metres (cm) of gas. This figure presents no challenge to Russia's ambition to satisfy more than half of the EU's energy needs, estimated to rise to around 750b cm per year in the next future, bringing the level of its exports to Europe up from the current 130b cm to approximately 400b cm per year.

Ministers attending the seminar organised by Mr Frattini expressed the intention to hold regular meetings with a view to monitoring and supporting the integration process of Eastern European countries into NATO and the EU.

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