

Thinking Out Loud About NATO in Georgia and Georgia in NATO

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Policy brief no. 21 | 26 June 2018

Presented at the conference Small States and the New Security Environment at the Nordic House, Reykjavik, Iceland

Executive summary

2018 marks 10 year anniversary from NATO Bucharest summit where eventual membership has been promised to Georgia. At the same time it marks 10 years since the devastating Russia- Georgia August war, when according to many experts that promise has been berried deep. Over the course of the past 10 years, intensive debate has been sparked about NATO – Georgia relations, every time we are coming closer to yet another summit. The questions stand unchanged from all sides: Georgians keep being desperate how quickly can we enter that half open door of membership? Western Europeans keep asking about defensibility of Georgia, eastern Europeans keep pushing Georgia agenda, Russia is bluntly against.

At the same time there is a life in Georgia, simultaneously full of expectation and skepticism. All the interest, discussion and constant battle of ideas on this subject serves as the clearest confirmation of our expectations, hope, aspirations, our attitude and our strongest desire to step into the doors of a promised security arrangement as soon as possible, but also, at the same time, we are people of extreme...it really concerns me that miscommunication, inaccurate expectations result in disappointment; failure of delivery on promises, immediately causes an anger or raises skepticism.

There is favorite saying both in Brussels and Tbilisi: we have “More NATO in Georgia and Presented at the conference Small States and the New Security Environment at the Nordic more Georgia in NATO”. With this aspiration Georgia is becoming a country of different role, scope and importance on daily basis; it is being transformed from beneficiary state to security provider state. This has been consistent policy of basically all governments in Georgia, that differ on every little issue but not the Georgia’s NATO membership. Nevertheless, the main question remains, what is it that NATO can offer to Georgia today, that will keep hopes up and strengthen Georgians fight for freedom and democracy? However, in this paper I will explore Georgia’s homework and duties to be carried out, necessary for mobilizing resources and potential we already have for self defense. Maybe the key for Georgia’s NATO membership is in Tbilisi’s policies and due performance of tasks necessary for de-occupation domestically.



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Analysis

In 2016, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Georgian armed forces. There is no part of our history when our state achieved any tangible success without the participation of armed forces. It is perhaps at the expense of our constant aspirations towards liberty and sovereignty or that of our geography that the history of the Georgian state was always being written on a battlefield. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, Georgia went through 25 exceptionally severe years. About a fifth of the country is occupied even today. There are three Russian military bases on the territory of independent Georgia. There are two “embassies” opened by the occupant country on sovereign Georgian territory with the enemy playing a daily game of “war and peace”, through the threat of physical force.

Despite the undeniable financial and man-power advantage of the occupying state, as well as the creeping annexation and a multitude of unresolved security problems faced by the citizens living across the occupation line, we in Georgia cannot yet seem to find consensus about the nature of our armed forces, their structure, their main aims and objectives, whether or not the army should be compulsory or voluntary and professional, about the

plans for reserve forces and mobilization, the inevitability of the civilian-military union, etc. Furthermore, despite constant reforms and reforms of reforms, there is no strategic discussion going on about the nature of the armed forces or about the institutional system of defense and security in general. To date, the country has not arrived at a consensus about its friends and enemies or, for that matter, the partnership umbrella.

The realization of the fact that in 2017 Georgia has not yet finalized the process of the formation of its armed forces and that every year brings new, tectonic changes to the Georgian army leaves us with a feeling that the ruling elite lacks the confidence in winning the battle, thus undermining very essence of military force. Thus it is hiding behind the arguments of limited resources and the maintenance of stability, feeding people and itself with an argument of illusory war that it can win definitively, hence not preparing itself for the one that is real and possible. The temptation of deceiving yourself or averting your eye does not cause the threat to disappear or be minimized in any way and usually leads to severe repercussions.

An imaginary or illusory war is the process created through the combination of various factors during which you convince yourself that you will manage to get by and avoid a decisive battle for the de-occupation by means of this policy or, more precisely, for retaining the sovereignty of your country. It is when the risks of physical confrontation, losing more land and more lives become a secondary matter and tiptoeing on the pathways of “remaining unnoticed” you shrink the boundaries of your freedom step-by-step.

Georgia can easily be considered to be a type of country where the “stick and carrot” tactic determined by the enemy has become a textbook document of Georgian domestic politics. Yes, the state should not prevent the attempts of its citizens, to expand the markets for the sales of their products or services; however, the state policy, which encourages dependence on the occupant, bolstering the agenda of the occupant country itself, is fundamentally wrong. It is fundamentally incorrect for a political system to reveal positive sentiments towards the actions or political-economic steps taken by the occupant while the occupation



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army remains on its territory, kidnapping its citizens and altering land on an almost weekly basis.

Given the fact of such an imaginary or made-up war, we have lost the actual image of the enemy. As unbelievable as it may sound, it is a direct result of our state policy that a significant part of our population does not consider Russia to be the enemy at all while for another part, the line between the kindness and cruelty of Russia is blurred.

The main objective for Georgia, as a state, must be to end the illusion of looking for and dealing with this illusory war. This is due to the fact that despite the interests of the Russian businesses in Georgia or the number of kilograms of fruit and vegetables we sell in Moscow and Rostov, the Kremlin will still ceremoniously welcome the “elected” leaders of the self-declared territorial entities. In addition, it will continue the unwavering implementation of the plans designed to ensure the further detachment of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region from Georgia. Moreover, every kilogram of fruit and every liter of wine well sold in Russia will always be an instrument for the success of Russian soft power and the Georgian state will be unable to use it for strengthening its vital national interests or sovereignty. In addition, the key to a “successful” trade-economic project will remain, without any alternatives, in the hands of the Kremlin being opened or closed according to its necessity.

We must stop looking for a war which we will surely win and start getting ready for a war which is more expectable, taking into account the abilities, ambitions and the potential of the enemy. It is imperative that every day and every penny be spent looking for the ways that will approximate us to de-occupation, given the very real threats. Armed forces alone cannot deal with the occupation. De-occupation must be an idea appended to the state policy. Our domestic as well as international agenda must become more intensive, demanding, proactive and ambitious in order to always be in the center of events and putting all the advantages that Georgia has in line for the survival of our country.

In order to achieve this objective, we need to start with a strategic vision, a unified civilian-military strategic project, that will make Georgia defendable with the resources and capacities we have or can have in the future given proper planning and prioritization of capitals, both financial and human.

Conclusion

Given the growing threats and challenges, democratic states are discussing new, innovative and development-oriented systems for strengthening security and ensuring peace as well as new models for self-organization. Perhaps for the first time in the past 25-30 years, the world agenda is once again saturated with principal discussions over security, as well as financial resources, being devoted to making it healthier and more responsive.

The success of the state is only achievable when it manages to correctly prioritize the existing threats, its own capabilities and top interests, consequently creating a strategic plan and forming tactical objectives, barring and doing its best to neutralize the main challenges to its security instead of encouraging them.

The aim of my research is to offer a wide front for combating occupation, thus bringing Georgia closer to safer and more secure future.



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- o When the state and its representatives are acting according to a unified, previously agreed strategic plan of acquiring the main condition for victory which is intra-state consensus and the unconditional support of the population
- o When the armed forces, both with its active and passive personnel, is an important but still just one part of this unified plan
- o When the population is the participant and owner of the national strategy on de-occupation
- o When the enemy does not even have an illusion of achieving victory by using soft power and winning the hearts and minds of the Georgians
- o When there is a consensus about support to Georgia in pursuing its strategy amongst the partners and allies

A country which does not have a clear, transparent and unified national de-occupation strategy saves resources at the expense of the critical costs for the country's security, also exercising restraint on the international arena, will manage at best to postpone the inevitable but will not achieve its goals with regard to avoiding the major threat. A confused population, which has lost the image of the enemy, is an open invitation for this enemy to intervene in the future and inflict even more violence.



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