

REORGANIZING SECURITY: NEW *GLASNOST* AND *PERESTROIKA* IN GEORGIA

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Question: How is Georgian foreign and security policy formed? *Answer:* officials read President Shevardnadze's 'Monday Morning Interview' in the newspaper and take action accordingly. This joke is common in Georgia. As with most jokes, it has an element of truth, maybe not so much concerning Georgia's policy-making, but concerning the way people *perceive* policy-making. Additionally, it illustrates the incoherence of Georgia's security policy and inefficient communication within the political establishment.

In 1999, Georgia declared in a parliamentary session that the prioritized goals of the state are membership in NATO and the EU. The only way to reach these goals would be strengthening statehood through the entrenching of democracy. In this regard, both conceptions and reality are parameters that need to be taken into consideration when reform is initiated at the state level and below. True, Georgia has initiated security reform in several stages during the past decade and recent developments indicate that a new phase has been reached - a phase that encompasses many more visions than before, but also more challenges. Consequently, the aim of this article is to critically assess some of the security issues currently on Georgia's agenda of reform against the background of Georgia's adherence to a democratic agenda. How is Georgia's security reform progressing? is a question the article will seek to answer, Here, the civil security structures will be the focus, which means that military reform will be given only minor attention. The first question to assess is also the natural point of departure - the conceptual level.

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What is reform at a conceptual level?

Building a complicated structure of steel and concrete without a blueprint is a tedious and questionable task. This is no less true when it comes to building and rebuilding security structures. Therefore, a security concept and a doctrine are both required when a state undertakes reform and formulates policy. The concept outlines the priorities and goals, while the doctrine serves as a blueprint on how to reach the goals. Regrettably, Georgia has lacked both a concept and a doctrine since the fall of the Soviet Union. For states that have a long history of coherent and predictable actions and policies, such matters have nothing but a formal role. For states like Georgia, however, the need is of paramount importance. There has only been a vague and incoherent idea in Georgia about what its security concept should encompass, with everything from territorial integrity to education and culture being included. Trying to cover all dimensions within one concept at once naturally leads to a situation where nothing is prioritized. In the end, this undermines the whole point of having a concept in the first place.

Further, having a security concept is not only a prerequisite for reform, but also serves the purpose of providing stability in politics. It brings predictability and legitimacy, especially if reform enjoys the status of law after being adopted by the Parliament, a process which is under way in Georgia. There are factions that would rather see the concept passed in the 'bureaucratic way' -- instead of via Parliament -- but if Georgia wishes to build its society on democratic foundations, such actions could well prove counter-productive in the long run.

If one is to look for priorities in Georgia's security policy today, the state budget, presidential decrees and draft laws are among the few at hand. The problems of finding priorities are two-fold. First, Georgian policy is often reactive instead of proactive. Second, as implementation of decrees and laws is often poor, it is of little use as a foundation for analysis.

Discussions on what to do on the question of security have been going on for a long time. Most Georgian officials and politicians do acknowledge the needs for a security concept and for reform, but political issues have put constraints on the speed of development.¹ The most progressive development currently is the assistance given by the US-led and funded

¹ See Eric C. Miller, 'Georgia Struggles to Develop National Security Framework', *Eurasianet*, 28 March, 2003

International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) in drafting a new security concept. This would be the first real concept of this kind in Georgia. It is too early to forecast its impact, but it will undoubtedly set a new landmark in Georgian security policy.

What do the new *glasnost* and *perestroika* encompass?

The second question to answer is what the main issues of reform encompass. The reform of Georgia's civil security structures consist of two things at a general level that deserve to be mentioned. First, there is the new *perestroika* – the restructuring of the existing system. Georgian security reform has at least two dimensions in this respect. The first relates to the problems and issues that the structures are meant to handle, such as terrorism and anti-government plots. The second concerns the obstacles and problems of the actual reform – such as bureaucratic inertia. These two dimensions are linked, and occasionally are the very same phenomenon. Even if the reform does not have any explicitly stated goals, the reform also aims at removing these obstacles and problems. They can even be seen as security risks in themselves, as they infringe on the ability to act on external risks and threats. This shows the links between civil and military elements of society.

In this context, it can be mentioned that Georgia has a military doctrine, dating from 1997. However, it has never been used as intended and effectively is a dead document, even though it does point out two potential causes of war, namely '[...] separatist forces aiming to destabilize the state and the aspirations of some states to dominate the region with the use of force'.² This illustrates what the Georgian structures are supposed to handle, namely issues related to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, along with the presence of other paramilitary forces on Georgian territory; and, second, Russian interference in Georgia's internal affairs. Moreover, the civil security structures have many responsibilities, ranging from border protection, the prevention of tax crimes and property protection to counter-terrorism. Reform aims at handling all of these issues more efficiently.³

Military and civil issues overlap within the security field. Protection of the territorial integrity of Georgia is based on three lines of defence and is not solely a task for the military forces. The first line consists of Border Troops, followed by a second line of regular

² Jared Feinberg, Jared, *The Armed Forces in Georgia*, (CDI, Washington, 1999) p 18

³ Galina Gotua, Galina 'Striding Towards Civilian-led Defense Ministry', *Georgia Today*, 22 September, 2003 (from: <http://www.georgiatoday.ge/>)

army units. Finally, there is a third line of Interior Troops and officers from the Ministry for State Security.

Reforms are not only carried out to enhance the current security situation, but also encompass a long-term idea related to democracy. In the end, strengthening of statehood leads to greater security. There are various ways of doing this. One is to enhance civil control over military and paramilitary structures. The goal is greater legitimacy is, and thus transparency is on the political agenda – even for the security organizations. This is the new *glasnost* in Georgia that, together with the new *perestroika*, will be further addressed in subsequent segments of this article.

What are the objects of reform?

The third question that arises when addressing reform is: who or what are the objects of reform? The two major structures pinpointed here are the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of State Security. The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) has a total staff of some 23, 400 of whom the majority are ex-Soviet police officers. The main task of the MOI is to assist the local police force, to maintain law and order, to fight terrorism and organized crime and to guard prisons and special cargo transportations in addition to property protection.⁴ It is a very unpopular organization, for several reasons. For example, it has strong links to the old Soviet structures and has been the subject of many complains about human rights violations. In addition, the level of corruption is high: many high-ranking employees have allegedly been involved in the contraband smuggling of tobacco and petrol. The responsibility of property protection has also proven to be a major source of bribes as it creates opportunities for extortion: excessive fining of drivers for alleged traffic violations is one issue that has contributed to the negative perceptions of the MOI. Another issue is that it has become a stronghold for political élite groups which, through the intrinsic rules of extra-budgetary spending, enjoy a strong economic position.⁵ This is one of the key obstacles to reform.

The MOI has an armed branch, the Interior Troops, which consist of some 6400 soldiers based in Kutaisi and Tbilisi, among other places. The situation is not what it has

⁴ Feinberg op. cit., p 25

⁵ David Darchiashvili ‘Georgia: A Hostage to Arms’, in Anna Matveeva and David Hiscock eds. , *The Caucasus - Armed and Divided: Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Humanitarian Consequences in the Caucasus*, (Saferworld,London, 2003) p. 76f

been, and it has only got 59 per cent of the conscripts needed (2000) to fill its units.⁶ The tasks of the Interior Troops have varied, but now include a mixture of police and military responsibilities. The force is heavily armed with tanks, armored personnel carriers (APCs) and an airborne brigade. Furthermore, the MOI also encompasses the State Department of Border Guards. Previously, these belonged to the Ministry of Defense but they are now being transferred to the MOI. Its police functions will increase (for example, it will be given investigative responsibilities). The force consists of some 8700 personnel, supplemented by APCs, amphibious vessels and a Motorised Rapid Reaction Force.⁷ But its status is poor: it is constantly underfunded (by \$2.7 million in 2001) and has not been able to carry out its duties, even along the border with Chechnya. A similar unit is the Coast Guard which, after the ongoing reform, will be subordinated to the Border Protection Department of the MOI.

The other major object of reform is the Ministry of State Security (MSS), which is a civil institution that includes a force of some 4000 servicemen, of which a minor part constitutes of a special force detachment and some combat guard units.⁸ The most important responsibilities of the MSS include monitoring of anti-governmental plots and terrorism as well as investigation of economic crimes. The historic root of the MSS is the old Soviet KGB and this has, naturally, affected the *modus operandi* of the organization. It has won little admiration among the Georgian public. The reasons are, allegedly, that responsibilities of supervising tax crimes have provided fertile soil for bribes as some officials have been promoting payments of 'fees' instead of taxes.⁹ In addition, there have been some links between the unwanted Russian troops in Georgia and officials of the MSS although all links of this kind are denied by the Minister, Valerian Khaburdzania.¹⁰ One phase of reform has already been carried out. In 1998, the State Department of Intelligence (SDI) became an independent body for foreign military intelligence. According to the Head of the SDI, Avtandil Ioseliani, this reform improved the efficiency of the SDI as it could focus on pure intelligence issues: further reform is not planned.¹¹ Yet, this increase in efficiency is strongly questioned, even by Khaburdzania, who sees the change as costly with doubtful result. The only gain was a small improvement of the democratic situation, he states.¹²

⁶ Press Digest, *Army and Society in Georgia* (Centre for Civil-Military Relations and Security Studies, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development,) January-February, 2001

⁷ Darchiashvili op. cit. p 85

⁸ ibid p 84

⁹ ibid, p 78f

¹⁰ interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

¹¹ interview with Avtandil Ioseliani, Head of Georgia State Department of Intelligence, Tbilisi, 24 June, 2003

¹² interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

Naturally, there are many civil security actors that are subject to reform in Georgia. The Ministry of Justice has, for example, some 3000 staff armed with light weapons while in 2001, the Minister of Justice, Mikhail Saakashvili, created a Special Task Force of 60 (with an aim of having 300) given the responsibilities of riot control and dealing with hostage crises in prisons.¹³ In addition, the Ministry of Finance has an armed Special Legion of 370 men. The Special State Guard Service and the Presidential Guard force of some 3000 is concerned with the protection of pipelines, governmental agencies and embassies in addition to protecting the President.¹⁴ Another security aspect that is given no attention by officials and policymakers in Georgia is the growing need for a policy on information security and information and technologies development.¹⁵ However, this will be given a subsidiary role in this article.

The new *perestroika* of restructuring and separation of powers

The most fundamental problem of Georgian security structures is the overlapping of responsibilities. This is a two-faced problem where inter-organizational clashes lead to problems for which no one is willing to take responsibility. By contrast, the various bodies will fight for attention when a mission has been successful. Giving up responsibility can also mean that powers, funding and opportunities for both legal and illegal activities are lost. This is yet another key obstacle to reform.

One striking example of how complicated the situation can be was demonstrated when the Georgian TV-program *60-minutes* staged a fake smuggling in the summer of 2003. The TV crew labeled a box, containing fake items, as ‘weapons and drugs’, and sent it over the Turkish-Georgian border without any problems. The organizations and units that are supposed to handle this are the border guards, the customs department, the sixth police department for economic crimes, the security service and the legion.¹⁶ The action brought attention not only to holes in the security web, but also to the urgent need for reform. Indeed, change have been initiated, but not even the reform-minded newly appointed head of the

¹³ Press Digest, *Army and Society in Georgia*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Darchiashvili op. cit. p 83-85

¹⁵ Robert L. Larsson and Gela Kvashilava, ‘Information Security in Georgia: ICT Development and a New Agenda?’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus: Journal of Political and Social Studies*, no. 5, 2003 (forthcoming)

¹⁶ ‘Sunday on *60-minutes*’, *Georgian Messenger*, 27 May, 2003, p. 4

Customs Department, Tarkhan Mouravi, is expected to be able to change the situation, according to some observers.¹⁷

Despite the complex situation, there are visions for reform. Khaburdzania was appointed Minister of State Security two years ago and can be said to be one of the most eager reformists. His grand vision for reform is one where the MSS would be totally abolished and replaced with a new, civil organization. However, as this is utopian thinking, the second best option is the German model where the Security Service, *Verfassungschutz*, has the mission to protect and uphold the constitution.

Concerning a change of responsibilities, Khaburdzania has argued that the police or the Ministry of Finance should handle tax crimes and economic crimes by individuals. However, when it comes to organized crimes and crimes of greater scale (for example contraband crimes), these should come within the responsibilities of the MSS.¹⁸ This is now the case and the rearrangement seemingly works. Furthermore, the ISAB suggested in 1998 that it would be best if the Interior Troops were put under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and the Border Guards under the MOI. Georgian authorities agreed to this suggestion, but there are no signs of the will to implement the idea. Strangely enough, the current situation is unconstitutional.¹⁹

In order to tackle the general problems of unclear distinction of responsibilities, the National Security Council is developing a long-term strategy for handling potential problems²⁰, and new laws are expected in 2004 that will facilitate this reform process. On this point, there are reasons to be skeptical. Most analysts agree that Georgia has most of the laws it needs and that the *real* problem lies in forming a culture based on the rule of law, whereby politics and financial matters are subjugated to juridical considerations.

Having many security organizations can also pose a problem in itself. This is acknowledged by Khaburdzania: when asked how to solve this problem, he states that some of them, such as the Legion of the Ministry of Finance, are of little use as their level of professionalism is very low.²¹ There is no major discussion in Georgia on whether, indeed, it

¹⁷ Nana Bakashvili, 'Controlling Corruption', *Georgian Messenger*, 9 July, 2000

¹⁸ interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

¹⁹ 'Report to the National Security Council of the Republic of Georgia', *International Security Advisory Board*, 1998, especially pp. 4-6

²⁰ interview with Gela Suladze, Head of Department of Inspection and Personnel Security of the Georgian Ministry for State Security, Tbilisi, 30 June, 2003

²¹ interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

would not be better to abolish some organizations. One reason is that from the government's point of view, it would not necessarily solve any problems or save any money. Most security staff are employed by the state and redundancies would either lead to staff being employed by other departments, and in that case, no money would be saved. The other option is to turn to sometimes dubious security companies in the private sector, which often pose a problem for the governmental bodies that use them..

The new *glasnost* of democracy and transparency

By and large, the democratic features and institutions that Georgia actually has managed to create can be seen as just a façade, as argued by Anna Matveeva when pointing out that it is no leverage on the security development.²² This problem is evident in many states as the special nature of security services is connected with elements of secrecy and operations in a gray-zone where the distinction between democracy and pragmatism is non-existent. Nevertheless, democracy has many dimensions and transparency is one of its cores. As far as security and defence are concerned, there is no openness whatsoever, which stands in contrast to recent development in the western hemisphere. In fact, not even the Georgian Parliament has the right to review the internal budgets of the power ministries. This causes a distancing between civil and military security institutions in which trust and legitimacy are sacrificed on the altar of secrecy. If the level of openness and transparency is so low that the not even the parliament, the bastion of democracy, can control and affect other official branches of the state, a democratic deficit will emerge that will infringe on Georgia's striving for EU and NATO membership.

As one of the only major security institutions, the MSS has reached the conclusion that the old KGB-aura must be removed and replaced. An improvement in the public conception of the organization would lead to greater faith in its undertaking and facilitate further reform. The way to do this, initially, has been a PR-campaign in which the main elements have been greater public exposure of the minister and the launching of a new internet site²³ as one step towards greater communication with citizens. The budget will also be more transparent than before.²⁴ It would be naïve to believe that these actions would

²² Anna Matveeva, 'Arms and Security in the Caucasus', in Matveeva and Hiscock op. cit., p 27

²³ Georgian Ministry for State Security: <http://www.sus.ge> (in Georgian)

²⁴ interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

change things overnight, however. Only a small percent of the population has internet access and communication and exposure for its sake is insufficient. However, if the content and not only the form of this campaign have substance, the outcome can be positive. At least it shows the awareness of needs, even among old KGB minds.

Another question key on the security horizon is civil-military relations. Georgian politicians and officials frequently state that all military structures should, unquestionably, be subjugated to political ones. Within the armed forces, this process has started with the replacement of officers by civil officials from the Ministry of Defence, but 'political' structures are not necessarily the same thing as 'civil and democratic' ones. This can prove to be a conceptual challenge when it comes to seeing the MSS and MOI as civil *but armed* institutions. The question thereby arises: what really is military and what is civil? Is the issue to be judged according to the question of who should take responsibility for a particular issue, or by tasks or by form and content? Military or police officers are today not allowed to serve as MPs or as civil bureaucrats at the same time as their ordinary job, but there is an ongoing discussion on whether this prohibition should be lifted. The general opinion points toward 'not allowing' but no decisions have been made. In practise, this may have little impact, but symbolically it is of great importance. This also incorporates another dimension, one of loyalty. Many MPs have businesses alongside their official duties, which creates a situation of double and occasionally conflicting loyalties. As wages are extremely low, it is hard to discourage MPs and officials from having other incomes: the official salary can be as low as US\$20-40 per month. Rumor has it that mid-level officials have the opportunity to earn as much as US\$1000 month through illegal activities within the security sector. Consequently, an increase in wages must be 25-50 times in order to reach such levels. That is unlikely to be feasible in the near future. It is difficult to estimate how much a wage increase must be in order to have a positive impact on the level of corruption, but it is clear that alternative ways must be found if this problem is to be reduced in any other way than waiting for economic development to catch up. This problem also exists within the Parliament.

Currently, MPs are immune from prosecution, which infringes on their abilities to tackle problems in Parliament. Indeed, there are methods for expelling MPs from office by voting in Parliament. Voting has occurred, but no MP has been dismissed in this way. The reasons are blurry laws and regulations and, in addition, most people have been

involved in some kind of illegal activity during the turbulent years of the 1990s.²⁵ This has created a situation where MPs are afraid of accusing other MP for what they have done, as their background may raise doubts about their own history of living within the law. Besides, as the distinction in many cases is unclear, few politicians would be willing to bet political capital on such issues. A few years ago, the Minister of Justice, Mikhail Saakhashvili, accused other politicians of corruption and presented evidence of assets and possessions while asking how funds for such superfluous lifestyles were acquired. He had to leave office in the aftermath of the scandal.

Corruption as a barrier to political and economic development

Corruption is a problem on a mammoth scale for Georgia's development. Polls from beginning of the new century show that 90 per cent of Georgians believe that bribing an official is the only way to solve the problems they have.²⁶ Another poll indicates that up to 92 per cent of all officials are involved in some kind of illegal activities.²⁷

The problems of corruption within the MOI are very serious. Narchemashvili, the Minister of the Interior, has admitted in public that the MOI has been involved in criminal activities, including smuggling and the upsurge of rebel activities in the Pankisi Gorge. Additionally, the issues related to the Property Protection Department indicated above are a difficult task to solve. Removing the department from the area of responsibility would be a start, but might not be a sustainable solution, as the task must be taken care of by some organization. The result is also that a strong power base for the MOI disappears.²⁸ It can thus be assumed that many employees of the organization would object to this kind of reform, especially since they would lose from it, either financially or in terms of power.

The problems within the MSS are allegedly smaller, and there exists, therefore, no action-plan for reducing corruption within the ministry. However, the MSS has a program for fighting general criminality within the ministry, and it investigates and analyses these issues on a regular basis in order to increase efficiency.²⁹ Unlike non-security branches of the

²⁵ interview with David Darchiashvili, President of CIPDD and Head of R&D Department concerning civil-military relations of the Parliament of Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 July, 2003

²⁶ see 'People dissatisfied with government', *Georgian Times*, 13 July, 2001, p 2

²⁷ *Corruption Survey in Georgia – Second Wave* (GORBI, June 2002) p. 20

²⁸ Darchiashvili op. cit. p 77

²⁹ interview with Gela Suladze, Head of Department of Inspection and Personnel Security of the Georgian Ministry for State Security, Tbilisi, 30 June, 2003

government, the inspectors of the Ministry of Finance have no authority to assess the actions and situation of the MSS. These powers are exclusive to the President and the Parliament, but they rarely use them.³⁰ So far, this dimension of reform has been neglected and if greater transparency and democracy is on the agenda, one could expect some future efforts.

Generally speaking, the International Security Advisory Board has been cooperating with the Anticorruption Bureau of Georgia on issues of transparency and anticorruption. It has presented some general recommendations to President Shevardnadze. These include points on reducing totalitarian lags from Soviet days and how the focus of state activities should be individuals, society and state and not the regime. This is especially important in the aspect of security and removing some old responsibilities of the security structures, such as social control, which have no place in a modern society.³¹ Seemingly, this is an easy aspect of reform, as most would agree on the need for such actions, and the amount of money involved is not as great as that concerning property protection. However, much energy is devoted to discussions and meetings where the outcome often is no more than a list of general and vague points to be tackled. What is needed is a comprehensive action agenda for both the long and the short term, along with a system of evaluation and follow-up. There are no specific targets or goals to be reached and no polls are planned.³² Andro Gotsiridze at the Anticorruption Bureau states that the best way of measuring the result is the passive way. When people do not complain, he knows that the bureau has done a good job.³³ It can thus be concluded that the system of evaluation is still underdeveloped.

Finally, it can be noted that the notion of 'statehood' is a key factor in the reform process. Without an improvement of the general functions and features of the state, such as infrastructure and control over territory and even of government branches, many elements of the security reform will have no impact. Fining of drivers is one example. In some states, fining for speeding is made by giving a ticket to the driver, who must pay the fine within a defined number of days. If he/she does not pay, reminder letters are delivered by mail. Finally the case may go to court. However, as Georgia's infrastructure and communication system is outdated and often impossible to utilize, such procedures are not

³⁰ interview with Valerian Khaburdzania, Minister of State Security in Georgia, Tbilisi 30 June, 2003

³¹ interview with Andro Gotsiridze, Expert on Power and Law Enforcement Policy at the Anticorruption Bureau of Georgia, Tbilisi, 3 July, 2003

³² interview with Gela Suladze, Head of Department of Inspection and Personnel Security of the Georgian Ministry for State Security, Tbilisi, 30 June, 2003

³³ interview with Andro Gotsiridze, Expert on Power and Law Enforcement Policy at the Anticorruption Bureau of Georgia, Tbilisi, 3 July, 2003

feasible. Thus, there are some embedded problems that infringe on reform that exist outside of the actual security community. Indeed, there are many attempts, especially by NGOs, to improve the situation, but a dependence on donors' will is a limitation. In addition, in areas where impact is most needed, as in Abkhazia or South Ossetia, many actors are unwilling to compromise on their political objectives even if they are positive on questions of cooperation and reform as such.³⁴ There is a dilemma in this regard as the governmental structures are in urgent need of reform, but it is *de facto* impossible for the civil society to support this process.

The latest development contains the launching of an action plan on 19 September by the Anticorruption Bureau. It has been developed and funded through the assistance of international experts and NGOs, among them the COE, UNDP, OECD and Transparency International. By and large the plan contains three major elements. The first relates to forming a transparent and effective system for civil services. Secondly, there are harsh penalties for bribery and promotion of integrity. Finally, support for public involvement in reform is emphasised. This includes legislative measures against bribery and greater transparency in party financing.³⁵

Further judicial aspects of reform

In addition to what has been stated above, there is also a juridical aspect of reform, which is aimed at promoting democracy and increasing efficiency. From a democratic point of view, it is a problem when the Parliament only has the right to approve the number of staff of the security institutions, while the President has the exclusive power of creating the institutions in the first place. This leaves out the power to decide on the tasks, mandate and structure of the organizations. The Parliament cannot amend the state budget without approval of the President and budgets for the various security branches often consist of only two pages, which make monitoring difficult.³⁶ The powers granted the President of Georgia are, as shown, extensive, especially concerning security. This is not a problem in itself and similar systems exist elsewhere. Discussions are going on about increasing the powers of Parliament relative to those of the President. One argument is that reforms become dependent on the

³⁴ Jonathan Cohen, 'Struggling to Find Peace', in Paul von Tongeren, Hanbs van de Veeb and Juliette Verhoeven eds., *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: an Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities* (Lynne Rienner, London, 2002) p 407f

³⁵ Maka Makharashvili, 'New hope for fighting corruption', *Georgian Messenger*, 22 September, p 1

³⁶ Darchiashvili op. cit., p 86

will and priorities of one person. However, current tendencies point towards increased powers for the presidency. These relate to appointments for the elections committees and the fact that the current National Security Council reports to the President, while its predecessor (the National Security and Defense Council – NSDC) reported to the Parliament.³⁷ These constitutional questions also incorporate reforms of the procedures for presidential elections. Edward Shevardnadze has stated that when his second term in office expires in 2005, he will not attempt to run again, as this would mean altering the existing constitution. His opponents are not convinced, but it would be wrong to draw any conclusions from this at this point. In the meantime, a new office of the Prime Minister is being created.

Two of the most difficult aspects of reform concern the replacement of staff who are either involved in illegal activities or are otherwise obstacles to reform and, second, change of mentality. First and foremost, the unofficial system of appointment by nepotism or political/personal loyalty makes the situation complex and difficult to solve. Even if personnel are employed on other grounds than professional ones, it is in reality impossible to dismiss some of them, even if the awaited laws are adopted. The reason is that there might be a political or economic dependence on either them or on their contacts for protection or on equipment provided by them, direct or indirect. When it comes to appointments on political contra professional grounds for bureaucrats, within the security structures or outside, Georgia's way is the professional one. Yet, elements of parochialism or clan-based loyalties have infringed on the process towards greater professionalism. Khaburdzania's vision in this aspect incorporates several elements. As indicated, moving towards a fully civil structure with greater transparency is one. The second concerns general problems with inefficient, incompetent or corrupted staff within the MSS. Gela Suladze states that the best way of tackling this issue is by dismissing people who do not perform. In addition, wages should be raised so that the ministry attracts the best people and so that the incentives for corruption decrease, which has been mentioned above. Funds are also needed to investigate internal problems and illegal activities. Under the current laws and regulations redundancies are difficult, but new laws are currently under way and are expected to be adopted in early 2004.³⁸

³⁷ Feinberg op. cit. p 19

³⁸ interview with Gela Suladze, Head of Department of Inspection and Personnel Security of the Georgian Ministry for State Security, Tbilisi, 30 June, 2003

An even more complex problem is one of mentality. It is generally believed that mental ‘lags’ from the Soviet era infringe on the possibilities of strengthening Georgia’s statehood. As staff cannot be replaced overnight, other measures must be taken. The Anticorruption Bureau acknowledges the problem, and adheres to a long-term preventive agenda that encompasses three parts. The first part is related to legal action concerning crimes of corruption. The second point is education and awareness, and the third is general anticorruption propaganda. As this has proven to be a successful approach in Lithuania and in Hong Kong, Gotsiridze believes that these models can be applied to Georgia.³⁹ However, clearly the model must be modified to suit the system in Georgia today. To a great extent, mentality problems relate to what has been stated above about professionalism. It is generally believed that most political parties today have elements of parochialism and clannishness within them, if to a lesser extent in Zhurab Zvania’s and Mikhail Saakhashvili’s parties. This makes the system similar to the old Soviet *nomenklatura* structure, and partly explains why current reform is slow and lacks real momentum. A change of power in an election would not necessarily bring improvement, as the opposition would run the risk on coming into government of either failing or falling into the existing system. Thus nothing would change.⁴⁰

An underlying problem, which also relate to mental approaches to reform and security concepts; is the current lack of coherent system thinking. There are no common guidelines or a common notion of what security or institution building really is. In reality, this has the effect that all executives interpret and implement decisions while acting according to their own beliefs, in what Niko Melikadze calls a ‘conceptual cacophony’. The result has been that Georgia, under both presidents Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, carries out system reform, or tries to, without systematic thinking. Accordingly, institution building has become organization building, which in reality is just an enlargement of the bureaucratic apparatus. Thus institutions can be established that also turn into opponents of further reform, once they have become entrenched.⁴¹

³⁹ interview with Andro Gotsiridze, Expert on Power and Law Enforcement Policy at the Anticorruption Bureau of Georgia, Tbilisi, 3 July, 2003

⁴⁰ interview with David Darchiashvili, President of CIPDD and Head of R&D Department concerning civil-military relations of the Parliament of Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 July, 2003

⁴¹ Niko Melikadze, ‘Strengthening Policy-Making Capacities – National Security and Development Challenge for Georgia’, Presentation at the Fourth Annual Conference of the American-Georgia Business Council on Development Strategies for Georgia, Washington D.C., December, 2001

The helping hand of Uncle Sam

Given Georgia's sensitive geopolitical position, it is well placed to attract international assistance for reform. Such assistance comes mostly from the US but with contributions also being made by the EU and the OSCE. By and large, the US Agency for International Development (USIAD) is in charge of civil aid to Georgia. This aid consists of five main parts. Private sector and market reform – 35 per cent; health, humanitarian assistance and community development – 22 per cent; democracy and governance – 16 per cent ; energy and environment – 14 per cent and, finally, cross-sectoral activities – 13 per cent. The total sum reached \$50,650,000 as of the fiscal year 2001.⁴² By American standards, this is not much in real money, but it has a great impact in Georgia, which has a debt of \$1,684,528,816.⁴³ In addition, if the aid is seen in the context of population, Georgia (and Armenia) is given the most aid by the US after Israel and Egypt.⁴⁴ It is beyond the scope of this article to detail all projects undertaken, but it is clear that this support has two major advantages. First, if Georgia is to continue on its long road towards NATO and the EU, the the process of democratisation must continue. Foreign support provides the financial means, advice and personnel to facilitate reform. Second, if the cooperation with the US is to be of a long-term nature and is to be based on foundations other than geopolitics, such as mutual trust, predictability and joint efforts for reaching a common goal, change must occur. This makes US aid both a stick and a carrot for Georgia.

Democratic development in Georgia is in the interests of the US, but its patience is not eternal. Georgia has to make progress on the road to democratic development. It does not have to be perfect, but a somewhat free and fair election would be a start. On the topic of US foreign policy, François Heisbourg has argued that from the Bosphorus to the Indus there seems to be a zone in which the 'need' for democracy and attention to human rights is 'less urgent than in places like China'.⁴⁵ Criticism of the US is heard about support for authoritarian and corrupt regimes, but in the case of Georgia such criticism has only been modest. This can partly be explained by the fact that authoritarianism in Georgia is not as strong as in Central Asia. For example, Georgia is 'party free' when it comes to civil and

⁴² *USAID in Georgia – Monthly Newsletter*, vol 1, no 1, 2001, p. 1

⁴³ M. Alkhazashvili, 'United States can rescue Georgia from default', *Georgian Messenger*, 7 July, 2003

⁴⁴ *US Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union*, FY 2000, annual report, January 2001. See also John Wright, 'America in Georgia', *AmCham*, no 4, 2002, p 30

⁴⁵ François Heisbourg, 'American Hegemony? Perceptions of the US Abroad', *Survival*, no 41 vol 4, 1999-2000, p. 12

political freedoms and liberties and receives a '4' on a seven-graded scale, according to Freedomhouse.⁴⁶ This is one indication of the level of democracy in the state; it means that the situation is so bad that it would discourage any state from interacting with Georgia, but at the same times problems may infringe on the effectiveness of the interaction. The question thus arises as to whether no aid should be given until problems of corruption are already solved. It is clear that such a situation would be bizarre.

Nonetheless, the aid, although positive, finds itself in a dilemma. The intention is, naturally, to reduce corruption, but economic support for this may be misdirected if corrupt elements interfere.⁴⁷ Due to this problem, the US directs much aid to the civil sector instead of the governmental, which may be most cost-effective, but at the 'cost' also of neglecting governmental structures. David Darchiashvili argues that the US has to choose between two approaches when it comes to giving aid to Georgia. It can pursue strict conditionality or it can ignore the 'hollowness of Georgian democracy'. The problem is that the US has labelled the government political forces in Georgia as the only ones that are progressive. This has locked in the situation.⁴⁸ The pro-western stand of the Shevardnadze regime is one reason for this. The consequence of its aid program, in addition to military training of local forces, is that the US secures influence in the region, financially and politically. This is a long-term strategy that brings risks and opportunities to the entire region.⁴⁹ Through this approach, the US ties Georgia to the Western 'value community' and supports its efforts to move towards the EU and NATO. At the same time, the US increases its space for political manoeuvring in the region and is thus better able to withstand Russian or Iranian attempts to gain influence. Currently, there is not much evidence of short-term tactical gains from its cooperation agenda - even if Georgia opened up its air space for the American air campaign in Afghanistan in 2001.⁵⁰

However, not all criticism is misdirected, just because it is incoherent. Archil Gegeshidze, former National Security Adviser to President Shevardnadze, states that as long as American interests in cooperation with Georgia are of a geopolitical nature, democratic

⁴⁶ Freedomhouse, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/table.pdf>, 2003-09-04

⁴⁷ Koba Kikabidze and Losa beridze, 'Institutionalism and Clientelism in Georgia', *UNDP Discussion Papers Series*, no 3

⁴⁸ David Darchiashvili, 'Dilemmas for the Future of Georgia', *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 21 May, 2003

⁴⁹ Robert L. Larsson, *Venue of Venture: A Strategic Security Analysis of the US Engagement in the Caucasus*, (EKI, Linköping University, 2002)

⁵⁰ Press Digest, *Army and Society in Georgia*, Center for Civil-Military Relations and Security Studies; Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, September-October, 2001
<http://www.cipdd.org/cipdd/a&s/a&s2001/m0501.htm>, 2003-5-01

aspects will be neglected. Consequently, this means that corrupt forces may lay their hands on financial aid, but will not worry on implementation of the designated policies of democratisation.⁵¹ Indeed, it can be seen as imperialism and ideological blackmail to demand democracy and capitalism before any cheques are signed in Washington, but if the support given has anti-corruption, transparency and improvement of civil-society as prioritised elements, and not only military security, few would argue that it is wrong. By contrast, there is another question: does spending money on democratic reform require that urgent security needs must be met first?

Georgia has many security threats, both internal and external, so this is not merely an academic question. As the US and Georgia are cooperating on both civil and military security issues, the problem is being assessed continuously. The problem is that Washington and Georgia have different conceptions on what security actually is. Is security first and foremost an issue related to society, territory or the regime? It is no news that the discrepancy between ‘traditional threats’ to states, and threats towards regimes can be vague or even blurred on purpose. As a state is not a single unit, the regime can define threats toward the regime as threat to the state or society and make them a prioritised goal of the state. If international actors and donors fail to recognise this discrepancy, they might direct most of their aid and resources to regime-related problems. Thereby, the support for democratic development is wasted. This point underscores what has been said about a need of concepts and doctrines. Therefore, the US and Georgia should opt for a form of cooperation where this problem is reduced.

Prospects for the future

First, putting too much faith in the international community poses a risk for Georgia. Currently, there is a consensus across the whole political spectrum, apart from the communists, on the benefits of cooperating with the US and striving for membership of the EU and NATO. Consensus in politics is often good, but brings the risk of internal actors putting too much faith in external actors and not taking enough responsibility on their own shoulders. Additionally, the faith in NATO and the EU as guarantors of security is a misconception. Albert Menteshashvili’s standpoint is that Georgian entry into the European

⁵¹ Julie George, ‘Georgia’s Strategic Balancing Act: Has Increased US Presence in Georgia affected Georgian-Russian Relations?’, *AmCham News*, no 3, 2003, p 10ff

Council, along with its position as a prospective member of NATO, will help to create security and stability for the Caucasus.⁵² Georgia believes membership of these organisations will solve its security situation as it is given funding and military support. However, this will not be realized in the near future, due to the issues discussed above. Consequently, Georgia needs to regain control over its territory, stabilize the country, develop economically and enhance the democratic situation. Once this is done, the need for the EU and NATO will decrease to such an extent that all the gains sought will be of little importance. In addition, there is not much evidence that regional relations would improve upon NATO membership. Greece's entry into NATO increased the tension between itself and Turkey, not decreased it, some argue.⁵³ Nevertheless, this striving for NATO membership can serve as a catalyst for security reform, which legitimises its existence. As Rajan Menon has pointed out, it must also be remembered that the development towards a market-economy and democracy took almost a century in the West.⁵⁴

Second, the public image of Georgia's development is extremely negative. In 1995, 50 per cent of the interviewees in a GORBI poll believed that Georgia was moving in the right direction. In August 2003, the figure had dropped to five per cent and only six per cent are happy with the current standard of living. Even if 66 per cent have a positive conception of democracy, 53 per cent miss communism. Against the background of reform discussed hitherto, it is interesting to note that only four per cent hold transparency and democracy as acute problems for the government to tackle.⁵⁵

Finally, democracy indeed lays the foundation for stability and security in the long-term perspective, but there is a risk of military issues overshadowing the situation and undermining the process of democracy.⁵⁶ This is something for Georgia to consider when undertaking further reform. Entrenching democracy is a slow process, which often is reduced to second priority when resources are distributed. However, incorporating the search for democracy into the sphere of national security could lift democracy to a prioritised level.

⁵² Albert Menteshashvili, *Security and Foreign Policy in Central Asia and Caucasian Republics*, (NATO, 1999).

⁵³ Ronald R. Krebs, 'Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict', *International Organization*, Spring 1999, vol 53, no 2, 1999 pp. 343-377

⁵⁴ Rajan Menon, *Treacherous Terrain: The Political and Security Dimensions of Energy Development in the Caspian Sea Zone*. National Bureau of Asian Research, vol 9, no 1, p 8f

⁵⁵ See 'Anatomy of pre-election in Georgia', *Georgian Messenger*, 12 September, p 2

⁵⁶ Stephen J. Blank, *US Military Engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2000) p. 7 This risk was further highlighted in UNDP's *Human Development Report 2002*, chapter 4, p 14, web edition

Final remarks

First and foremost, Georgia's turbulent past, plagued by civil war and political turmoil, has since its newly gained independence proved to be a challenge in terms of security. The Soviet legacy has left embedded lags, both mental and structural ones. The objects of reform are often the very same as the obstacles to reform. Political and economic aspects overlap and Georgia's weak situation makes it vulnerable to internal and external pressure and cohesion. The problem also exists at individual level when dependence on persons or equipment does not facilitate attempts to solve the embedded problems of corruption and inertia.

Second, there is a fundamental problem with reform. A lack of security concept and doctrine is clearly visible in an incoherent and unpredictable security policy, resulting in structural chaos. Consequently, Georgia has initiated reform without a clear idea of what the means and goals really are. Working on different premises and conceptions further complicates the situation.

Third, there are ideas on what to do within the structures discussed hitherto, but wills or capabilities to implement them are missing. Vision and plans for the MSS include restructuring towards a civil Security Service; reform of areas of responsibilities such as economic crimes; and new laws on redundancies and tackling internal criminal activities. For the MOI, the priorities are instead directed towards removing some responsibilities, such as property protection. Fighting corruption is also on the agenda. Constitutional changes and enhanced democratic elements along with improvements of public image are key features.

Finally, few results have seen daylight. As Georgia's security reform is still in its initial phase, it is too early to draw any definite conclusion on what the results will be. However, drawing upon findings related to the ongoing process, momentum must be gained if any results are to be seen.

