Chapter 8

Non Governmental Organisations, Domestic and International, and Security Sector Governance in Georgia

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This is an interesting, but in some ways inopportune time to consider the role of non-government organisations (NGOs) in security sector governance in Georgia, as the country continues to undergo huge changes and it is difficult to predict exactly how things will look once the dust has settled. The 'Rose Revolution' of November 2003 and the subsequent election of Mikhail Saakashvili as President on 4th January 2004 have already led to a large number of new appointments at both ministerial and senior official level. Many of those who entered the government have very close links to civil society actors; indeed, a lot of them previously worked for NGOs themselves. On the one hand, this means that the role and influence of civil society actors has suddenly greatly increased; on the other hand, some have already expressed fears that the closeness of many NGOs to the new government will limit their ability to act as a truly independent, constructively critical third sector.

It is too early to say whether these fears are justified, but improved co-operation between the state and civil society is clearly very desirable in a period of large-scale reform. The new administration has initiated reforms to the Ministries of the Interior (MOI), Defence (MOD) and State Security (MSS), significantly altering the form and quality of governance in the security sector. Several NGO representatives have been very active in (both formally and informally) advising those who are designing and implementing the reforms. Some are from organisations that have in some way focused on military and security matters in the past. Others are from organisations that may not have worked specifically on such issues but are concerned to see that reforms promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law apply to the security sector as well.

This Chapter will thus attempt to provide the reader with a brief overview of what local NGOs have so far done in the field of security sector governance. This does not claim to be comprehensive, but to give a general impression of the direction in which the field is moving, and to identify some of those who are currently involved in advising on or monitoring the emerging reforms. Since the national growth in interest in security sector reform is being echoed at the international and donor level, it may be anticipated that the number of organisations wishing to work in this field will increase. This, combined with the current state of

flux in Georgia, means that it is quite possible that there could be a rapid development in the manner of NGO involvement in the security sector, and thus it may be necessary to revisit this topic soon. The focus of this Chapter will be largely on the interaction between the national government and civil society in Tbilisi. However, it will also briefly comment on the situation in three other areas which have specific security dynamics: the autonomous region of Adjaria, and the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tskhinvali region). This is done in order to acquaint the reader with the situation across the territory that is formally recognised as Georgia, and should not be taken to indicate any political views on the part of the author.

NGOs and Security Sector Governance: What Roles can they Play[1]?

Before surveying the field of play in Georgia at the moment, it may be beneficial to clarify the roles which civil society[2] can play in security sector governance. As Heiner Hänggi has noted in his study "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance", there are still no agreed definitions of exactly what constitutes 'security sector governance' or even the 'security sector'[3]. As the concept of security has expanded to include a range of paramilitary and non-military threats, so too has the range of actors deemed to have an influence in security matters. This has led to the identification of three groups of state actors (organisations authorised to use force, civil management and oversight bodies, and justice and law enforcement institutions) and two non-state actors (non-statutory security forces and civil society groups) which together form a wider 'security community'[4]. The recent interest in security sector governance is mostly concerned with how successful these actors are in ensuring 'good' or 'democratic' governance of the security sector. It appears that consensus is gradually forming on certain 'best practices', including the existence of:

> a constitutional and legal framework which…clearly defines the tasks, rights and obligations of the security sector', civilian governmental control and parliamentary control and oversight over the sector. There should also be 'a kind of 'public control'

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1 This topic is considered in more detail in Duncan Hiscock, 'The Role of Civil Society in Security Sector Governance in the South Caucasus', Paper presented at the At the 1st Joint Workshop on "Security Sector Governance in Southern Caucasus – Challenges and Visions", held in Reichenau, Austria 21st-24th November 2003. Available at: http://www.dcaf.ch/news/PfP_Reichenau1103/Papers/Hiscock.pdf

2 Though the phrase 'civil society' is often used interchangeably with 'NGOs', civil society actually comprises a broad range of non-state actors, including the media, academic institutions, political parties and local interest groups. However, for reasons of space this paper will limit its focus to a consideration of the actions of NGOs.

3 Heiner Hänggi, "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance", in Heiner Hänggi and Theodor H. Winkler (eds.), *Challenges of Security Sector Governance*, (Münster: LIT, 2003) p. 17.Available at: http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/e-publications/Sec_Gov/Chapter1.pdf

4 Hänggi, "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance", p 10. See also UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 87; and Nicole Ball, "Democratic Governance in the Security Sector", Paper prepared for UNDP Workshop on "Learning from Experience for Afghanistan", 5th February 2002. Available at: http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/afghanistan-workshop/Nicole_Ball.pdf

> of the security sector through the existence of a security community representing civil society…and nurturing an informed national debate on security issues[5].

Expanding on the notion of 'public control', it may be argued that NGOs have three main functions in regard to the security sector. The first is to act as a public watchdog, monitoring the actions of the government and security developments more broadly. This is likely to be either from a security perspective – analysing whether government actions in a specific field (e.g. defence procurement, military strategy, or gun control policies) are effectively improving national and human security – or from a human rights and rule of law perspective, highlighting cases in which security sector institutions or individuals have violated commitments to national or international law. Secondly, NGOs can act as a pool of resources and expertise which both the government and the public can draw upon. Thirdly, NGOs also provide an alternative source of skilled civilian professionals which the state may be able to draw upon. The latter two functions may be particularly significant in periods of rapid change, as recent developments in Georgia have shown.

It is generally expected that the more effective civil society is in performing its monitoring role, the higher the standard of governance is likely to be. It is thus important to stress that although NGOs may often be critical of governments, they should not automatically be seen as a threat; rather, their aim is usually to ensure that the security sector acts in a transparent and democratic fashion, which would actually boost the legitimacy and strength of the state.

Georgian NGOs working on Security Sector Issues

The potential roles of NGOs outlined above represent an 'ideal type' for good governance of the security sector. To what extent, and with what efficiency, NGOs are able to perform these functions is of course another matter. This is true even in 'developed' Western democracies, which are also in the process of adapting to the post-Cold War (and post-9/11) security agenda. Hence no one should expect to find a strong, sustainable security community in a country like Georgia, which has experienced three violent conflicts, has less than fifteen years of independent statehood, and still suffers from weak government institutions. Indeed, there are few organisations in the country that work expressly on security matters; those that do exist often have their roots in (and continue to focus on) conflict resolution, reflecting both Georgia's legacy of conflict and international donor priorities, which were particularly concerned with boosting 'track two' diplomacy (i.e. outside the formal peace process) once it became clear that official negotiations were stalling.

Nonetheless, there are a number of other organisations whose interests also extend to military and policing affairs. These tend to approach such matters from a human rights or rule of law perspective, in

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[5] Hänggi, "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance", pp. 16-17.

effect responding to the widening of the concept of security to include justice and law-enforcement institutions[6]. Many of these groups are already active in advising the new administration on reforms, and it may be expected that their engagement in the security sector (and co-operation with each other) will deepen as the reform agenda develops. This section seeks to list some of the most well-known and influential of these NGOs, and to outline briefly relevant activities they have so far carried out. It will also consider the involvement of a few international NGOs that work on these issues.

Security and Conflict NGOs

One of the most well-established NGOs in Georgia is the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS)[7], a think tank run by a number of senior academics, most also with experience as government officials. GFSIS's interests span a wide range of issues, from foreign policy analysis through to economic reforms. Alexander Rondeli, Temuri Yakobashvili and Archil Gegeshidze all regularly publish articles on conflict and security issues and are often interviewed by both the national and international media. GFSIS is thus one of the key organisations promoting public awareness of security matters. However, GFSIS also directly contributes to attempts to improve security sector governance through evening training courses for state officials and civil society representatives. Since 2001 over 50 people have been trained in public policy, economics, foreign policy and international security. In February 2004 a two-week course was also held for fifteen young professionals from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia that included work on small states in search of security. A new one-year training programme in international relations and national security, financially supported by the US government, will begin in May 2004.

Another well-known Georgian NGO interested in security issues is the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)[8]. Ghia Nodia and David Darchiashvili are both prominent academics who have published widely and participated in and organised numerous conferences on the armed forces, security, conflict, democracy and other related issues. A subdivision of CIPDD is the Centre for Civil-Military Relations and Security Studies, which has carried out a number of research projects. In addition, the Centre used to release a monthly bulletin (quarterly in Georgian) entitled 'The Army and Society in Georgia', which combined new analytical articles and a summary of relevant stories from the national press. This was funded as part of an EU TACIS project on civil control over military and security policy. Sadly, this bulletin has not been published since late 2001.

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6 Just as many security organisations have a strong affiliation with conflict resolution initiatives, it may be argued that these human rights and rule of law organizations stem from another donor priority throughout the 1990s, democratisation.

7 http://www.gfsis.org

8 http://www.cipdd.org

As there are strict standards of security governance for members of NATO, this is a topic of great interest to Georgia for NATO[9], one of three organisations in Tbilisi working to promote and enhance Georgia-NATO co-operation. It has recently begun a project entitled Civilian Control of the Armed Forces, which aims to develop model legislation for the Georgian Armed Forces in the field of security sector governance.

Other smaller organisations working in the general field of international relations and security include the Centre for Development Cooperation (CDC) and the Centre for Peace and International Relations Studies (CPIRS)[10]. Both of these NGOs have limited organisational capacity but have well-respected and experienced chairmen – Ivliane Khaindrava (CDC) and Irakli Mchedlishvili (CPIRS) – who are well-respected analysts of political and security affairs.

The activities of a couple of other NGOs should be noted that are more focused on conflict resolution and have not so far worked directly on security sector governance. The International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN)[11], run by Giorgi Khutsishvili, is one of the largest and most well-known organisations in the country, and has been working on conflict resolution and peace building since 1994. Projects include peace and conflict management training for young political leaders and an early warning/early response network. The Tbilisi-based South Caucasus Institute for Regional Stability (SCIRS)[12] aims to bring together experts from across the South Caucasus to build confidence between the sides, reduce conflict and ultimately to establish a system of regional security. The SCIRS has close links to the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Georgian National Committee (Ca GNC), the Georgian branch of an umbrella group of organisations working to ensure that the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act are respected. The HCA was involved in the international campaign to ban landmines.

Human Rights and Rule of Law NGOs

In the aftermath of the 'Rose Revolution', Western analysts and journalists highlighted the role that NGOs had played in the overthrow of Eduard Shevardnadze. Attention was focused on radical student movement 'Kmara' and its connections with George Soros's Open Society Georgia Foundation and Serbian resistance movement Otpor. This has obscured the role played by several other organisations, in particular the Liberty Institute and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, in terms of both public criticism of election fraud and behind-the-scenes co-ordination and support of the protests. Though these organisations do not place security affairs at the centre of their work, they have an interest in ensuring that their efforts to improve governance and the rule of law in Georgia also extend to the security sector. Furthermore, being among the most well-known and influential

9 http://www.nato.ge/en/
10 http://www.cpirs.org.ge
11 http://www.iccn.ge
12 http://www.scirs.org.ge

organisations in the country, they may have more impact – being perhaps better connected both with those at the top and with the public at large – than some of the NGOs who come at security sector governance from a security or conflict perspective.

As its name suggests, the Liberty Institute[13] is primarily concerned with the protection of civil liberties across Georgian society. Liberty's programmes are thus very broad in scope, from press freedom and freedom of expression through to public accountability in the energy sector. Liberty's involvement in security affairs began with the case of Amiran Meskheli, who despite being physically unwell found himself suddenly drafted into the army after he published a controversial interview with several soldiers. It then began raising concerns that conscription was a 'tax on the poor' (as anyone who can afford to avoids conscription through bribery), and highlighting other cases where sick or underage people were drafted illegally. The Liberty Institute also receives complaints about police abuse, and has promoted pilot schemes to set up civic oversight councils in a number of cities. It has also assessed laws relating to police and penal reform. The Liberty Institute has been accused on more than one occasion of being too close to Saakashvili[14], but denies that this will weaken its ability to act as an independent monitor of individual liberties. It can be expected, however, that its close links to government will give it significant influence over anticipated reforms to the security and justice sectors wherever it chooses to comment, officially or unofficially.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)[15] has focused on promoting the rule of law, raising public legal awareness, protecting human rights (including in cases of police brutality or corruption) and the development of the legal profession. As such, they currently do little work on governance of the security sector, except where it touches on other wider justice reforms. However, given the GYLA's important public standing and legal expertise, it could also play a key role in campaigning for and advising on reform security sector reform, should it so desire.

One legally-orientated organisation that has worked directly on the security sector is the Association 'Justice and Liberty', which campaigns for the protection of the rights of conscripts and soldiers. Following protracted discussions, it persuaded the military that the public had a legal right to monitor the army, and agreed to let them into certain military facilities. This led to the publication in 2001 of a book entitled 'The Georgian Army between Law and Reality' which looked at the situation in the army and highlighted certain abuses. This was well read within the army and led to the removal of several corrupt officers.

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13 http://www.liberty.ge

14 See for example Subeliani, Sozar, 'NGOs Ready To Tackle Government's Failings', *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Caucasus Reporting Service*, No. 12, 23rd December 99. Available at: http://www.iwpr.net/archive/cau/cau_199912_12_04_eng.txt; and: "IAGJ Protests Against the Liberty Institute Insolently Interfering in the Activities of the Free Press", *IAGJ Press Release*, 3rd April 2003. Available at: http://www.iagj.org.ge/article2.htm

15 http://www.gyla.ge

The Association continues to campaign for the rights of conscripts and soldiers.

Finally, the Association for Legal and Public Education (ALPE) is running an awareness raising campaign to promote behavioural change among the public and the police forces of Georgia, supported by the European Union.

International NGOs working in Georgia

In the field of security sector reform, the most important international organisation working in Georgia is probably the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB). Founded in 1995 under the chairmanship of Gen (ret.) Sir Garry Johnson of the United Kingdom, ISAB initially worked in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (at that time known as the International Defence Advisory Board or IDAB) advising these governments on security sector reform, before setting up a similar programme in 1999 at the request of the Government of Georgia. The Board has gathered together very experienced members from the UK, the US, Germany and the three Baltic States, and provides strategic policy advice directly to the highest levels of government. In particular, it has reported to the National Security Council on the key directions in which reform of the entire security sector should take and advised it on the drafting of a National Security Concept. ISAB expects its project in Georgia to run until early 2005, after which time it will likely continue to liaise with the government as necessary.

There are a number of international NGOs working together with local partners on various conflict and security matters in Georgia. These include International Alert[16], Conciliation Resources[17], the London Information Network on Conflicts and State-Building[18] (LINKS), and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung[19]; International Alert also supports the Caucasus NGO Forum, which brings together non-governmental representatives from across the North and South Caucasus. However, their work has been mostly linked to conflict resolution and other dialogue and peace-building initiatives, and so does not deal directly with security sector governance; thus they will not be considered in detail here. London-based Saferworld[20] published a briefing Chapter on security sector reform in Georgia in September 2002[21], and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance[22] (International IDEA) has also expressed an interest in working on security sector reform.

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16 http://www.international-alert.org
17 http://www.c-r.org
18 http://www.links-london.org
19 http://www.boell.de
20 http://www.saferworld.org.uk
21 Shukuko Koyama, "Security Sector Reform in Georgia", *Saferworld Research Report*, (London: Saferworld, 2002).
22 http://www.idea.int

Opportunities and Challenges for Georgian NGOs

The previous section has listed some of the main organisations that may be said to have an impact over security sector governance in Georgia. This part will look broadly at some of the challenges to their efficiency. Until recently, most observers had been cynical about the strength and sustainability of NGOs in Georgia. Though it was acknowledged, even celebrated, that Tbilisi was a cauldron of activity in comparison to much of the Caucasus, the organisational weakness, donor dependency, and low public awareness of virtually all Georgian NGOs were frequently underlined. The prominent role played by certain organisations in the Rose Revolution has led to a reassessment of civil society, highlighting some of its previously overlooked strengths. Yet how much has really changed? Though this Chapter is specifically about the security sector, this section will consider the state of NGOs more generally, since those NGOs listed above are in no way separate from the broader trends affecting the development of civil society in the country.

Organisational Capacity

Where organisational capacity is concerned it is of course the case that the same problems remain, as structures and resources cannot change that quickly. Though civil society has certainly grown and developed since the early 1990s, it is still a relatively new phenomenon. Not only does it take time for institutions to form, skills to develop and funding streams to be found, it is also a social, political and psychological challenge to understand NGOs for a country that had no real concept of a 'third sector' during Soviet times. This is a challenge for outsiders as well, however, as it is too easy to dismiss those institutions that do not conform to the Western understanding of what an NGO should ideally look like.

There are in fact very few NGOs that resemble established Western organisations with defined boards, management structures, permanent staff, and well-equipped offices. The number of registered NGOs in Georgia apparently stands at over 4,000[23], though estimates of how many of these are genuinely active range from an optimistic 500[24] to a more pessimistic figure of 60 to 70.[25] One of the main reasons is funding. Georgia's economy is in a parlous state, and even those that are wealthy have not been philanthropically inclined. Georgian NGOs are thus overwhelmingly dependent on Western donors for support. The issue, however, is less the lack of money than the fact that donors tend to finance NGOs on a tightly defined project basis, leaving little left over for administrative or organisational costs. Furthermore, few can rely on getting projects regularly enough to commit to hiring regular salaried staff, beyond those that are traditionally trusted and favoured by donors.

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23 Levan Berdzenishvili, 'Networking and Cooperation of NGOs', 28th December 2001, http://www.cipddd.org/gdiscuss/room01/_disc1/00000010.htm

24 "Women NGOs in Georgia", Women's Initiative for Equality, November 1999. Available at: http://www.osgf.ge/wie/2_1.html

25 Interview with Levan Ramishvili, 4th February 2004.

As a result, many NGOs are either made up of several individuals who each have several jobs and co-operate under the umbrella of their NGO when they feel it to be beneficial, or are little more than one-man shows.[26] Many registered NGOs were either set up to work on one specific project (or in the hope of getting funding for a project) or, regretfully, without even the intention of doing much at all.

Perceptions of NGOs

One effect of this situation has been that few NGOs can really claim to have much of a constituency. This is true even of many of the more active ones that are sometimes well-known and respected within the right circles but are not known by the public at large. At times, this has led to public scepticism over the effectiveness and motives of NGOs. Given that money from foreign donors represents a significant source of income in a state with limited opportunities, there are often suspicions that these groups are little more than '*grantichamia*' (grant-eaters, '*grantoyedy*' in Russian) and that they respond more to the needs of the donor hand that feeds them than to the real needs of the public. For example, in a survey of public attitudes towards human rights in 2002, 49.8 per cent of Georgians believed that human rights organisations "engage mostly in self-advertising and receiving foreign grants and their real assistance to people is insignificant"[27].

It seems, however, that attitudes towards NGOs may have changed in the wake of the Rose Revolution. Not only did several organisations campaigning on issues such as fair elections, democracy and the rule of law (including the Liberty Institute and GYLA, as discussed above) gain genuine public support and currently enjoy high recognition, the Revolution has kindled a pride among nearly all Georgians in the relative health of their country's awareness of democratic and civic values.

NGOs and Government

If relations between NGOs and the broader public have altered since the Revolution, this is as nothing in comparison to the changes that are taking place to the relationship between NGOs and the government. Given the sensitive nature of military and security issues, a shift in this relationship is of particular significance to the success or otherwise of attempts to improve security sector governance.

As observed in the introduction, there has been a rapid changeover of staff across government, as many of the new political

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[26] This section echoes much of what is written in Anna Matveeva, "The Conflict Prevention Capacities of Local NGOs in the Caucasus", in EastWest Institute/Forum on Early Warning and Early Response Survey, *Conflict Prevention in the Caucasus: Actors, Response Capacities and Planning Processes*, (London: EWI (New York) & FEWER, December 2001). Available at: http://www.fewer.org/caucasus/studcap.pdf

[27] Regional Project "South Caucasus Network for Civil Accord", 'Situation with Human Rights in Countries of South Caucasus: Results of sociological surveys 2002', Armenian Sociological Association, Yerevan 2003.

leaders have close links to some of the most prominent NGOs, and have invited a number of former NGO members to work for them. Though this process appears at the time of writing to be happening less quickly in the 'power ministries' (Ministry of Defence (MOD), Ministry of Interior (MOI), and Ministry of State Security (MSS)) – perhaps because the new president is particularly careful to ensure that he will have control over them – young but experienced professionals are joining these services and planning sweeping reforms to improve civilian control over these organisations and increase their efficiency.

One particularly positive sign is the establishment of a 'reform group' within the MOI. This is chaired by the Minister of the Interior, and brings together nine non-governmental experts from some of the organisations listed above, as well as other academics and lawyers (it is co-ordinated by a secretary from within the ministry). The group discusses the paths that reforms should take and provides suitable recommendations to the ministry. As the group is headed by the Minister, it can be expected that many of these recommendations already have approval from the top. Furthermore, the group apparently works on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than being an institutionalised consultation process, which may lead to fears that its influence will either diminish or that the group will simply no longer be convened.

In the months after Shevardnadze's resignation, however, informal links and dialogue have been crucial, and are probably of much greater significance than the few formal co-operation mechanisms. Not only do many of the young reformers have close friendships and ideological common ground with prominent civil society leaders, a lot have also been lectured or trained at some point by some of the academics working on security matters for NGOs. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that 'civil society' is not homogeneous and not all NGOs agree on any given issue, nor do they all have equal levels of access to government.

The Security Sector Beyond Tbilisi

This Chapter has so far focused largely on the relationship between Tbilisi-based NGOs and the security sector and central government. This is because security sector governance is primarily a national issue[28]. Furthermore, the topic is specific enough that (as has been shown) there are few NGOs working directly on this matter even in the capital. There are occasional examples of organisations that have touched on security sector governance as part of their other work; for example, Intercultural Bridge (MOST), is planning to hold meetings on civil-police relations in Kvemo Kartli as part of a joint project on small arms in the area. However, there appears to have been no co-ordinated efforts to look at governance of the security sector (particularly the police) across the rest of Georgia.

We will now consider three regions within the boundaries of the internationally recognised territory of the Georgia which have

[28] Heiner Hänggi, "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance", pp. 5-6.

significantly different security dynamics, to the extent that they are in effect different security sectors. As noted in the introduction, this should not be seen to indicate any political views on the part of the author regarding the status of these areas. Firstly, Adjaria. Since the early 1990s, the autonomous region of Adjaria often deliberately isolated itself from Tbilisi rule. It had, until May 2004, its own MOI and MSS, and at times 'closed' the administrative border with the rest of the country. It was run in an authoritarian fashion by Aslan Abashidze, who allowed virtually no political space for anyone else, either in terms of local opposition or in other Georgian parties. There have been few NGOs active in Adjaria, and it has been almost unthinkable that any should try to criticise or even communicate with the security sector.

Secondly, Abkhazia. Since expelling Georgian troops in 1993, Abkhazia has operated as an unrecognised state with its own organs of government. Peace negotiations have not so far succeeded in making any major breakthrough, and there have been sporadic outbreaks of violence around the zone of conflict. As a result, the Army holds a particular place in Abkhaz society, as there is an understanding that it has won them 'independence' and protects them against further violence. This, combined with the small population of Abkhazia, means that security sector governance is not a topic that has received much attention as yet (there are fewer than fifty NGOs, many of which are part-time, though the capacity of civil society is slowly developing) though some NGOs meet regularly with government officials to address areas of concern, and the security sector is probably touched on during other work on human rights and law-enforcement. It is worth noting that the veterans' organisation, Amtsakhara, a strong political force in opposition to the ruling regime, does not have a clear agenda for army reform beyond ensuring that servicemen are well provided for.

Finally, South Ossetia (Tskhinvali region). Like Abkhazia, South Ossetia (often referred to as the Tskhinvali region by Tbilisi), also broke away from Tbilisi's rule, and has also functioned as an unrecognised state since July 1992. Though relations between Tskhinval(i) and Tbilisi are better than those between Tbilisi and Sukhum(i), a final settlement still appears out of reach. The main question for security sector governance in such circumstances is 'who governs?', and joint peacekeeping forces and police co-ordination initiatives, supported by the OSCE (the main international organisation involved in mediating the conflict), have been central to reducing tensions between the sides. There has been little civil society involvement in the security sector, however. South Ossetia has a very small population (well under 100,000), and thus few active NGOs. The main focus has been on poverty reduction, economic development, and support for internally displaced persons and veterans of the conflict, though some of these do effective work on areas such as human rights and democracy. The OSCE supports this work as part of its 'human dimension' activities.

Conclusion

This Chapter has attempted to briefly outline some of the activities that NGOs are doing in the field of security sector governance, as well as discussing some of the social and structural factors that may affect the development of this work. Though ideas of democratic control over the armed forces and civilian oversight of and interaction with the police have a long history, even in more developed countries the crucial role that NGOs can play in improving security sector governance has only recently been recognised. It is thus not surprising that there are few NGOs in Georgia working specifically on this topic.

Yet as has been shown, there are already a number of organisations in the country whose work includes monitoring and advising on the development of the security sector. In the last fifteen years, a core of skilled intellectuals and professionals has developed that has had some success in building understanding on the nature of the post-Soviet security sector and in highlighting certain problems stemming from this. The state can now take advantage of this expertise, both through recruitment of some of these individuals, and by consultation and co-operation with NGOs, helping to boost the quality of the dialogue on reform; it is likely that the Saakashvili government, which understands civil society much better than Shevardnadze ever did, will be more prepared to work with NGOs in order to achieve its aims.

Once the promised large-scale reforms of the security sector gradually get underway, it will be important to ensure that civil society organisations are able to play the bridging and monitoring role that has strengthened security sector governance in most Western countries. From the government, this will require acknowledgement that NGO participation in security matters ultimately strengthens the security of the state, and a commitment to continue this co-operation. Realistically, however, much of the responsibility for supporting and developing civil society in Georgia will continue to fall on international donors. The number of professionals with sufficient knowledge of civilian management of the security sector is low even in government, and donors should not expect to find many skilled or experienced NGOs – though many organisations may be interested in developing these skills. A key issue therefore will be to train NGOs to raise awareness and understanding of security sector governance issues (which could potentially be done alongside government officials). Given the politically sensitive nature of security issues, donors should be careful to support only those who can be trusted to be independent and objective, rather than excessively pro- or anti-government. Efforts should also be made to ensure that this support is spread across the country, rather than being either too capital-city focused or heaping excessive resources on high-profile conflict (or potential conflict) regions, since trust in the security sector is a key issue for citizens all around Georgia.

Lastly, the international community may want to consider the possibility of expanding such activities to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. There are strong arguments to suggest that mistrust of each other's security sector impedes conflict resolution between Tbilisi and

Sukhum(i) and Tskhinval(i) respectively. The populations of both sides would have considerably more trust in reformed, democratically controlled forces. Yet as the international community wishes to avoid being perceived as acknowledging the legality of these unrecognised states, formal support to their governments for security sector reform activities would be highly problematic. It may however be possible to sponsor reform indirectly through building the capacity of civil society in these areas. If this does indeed lead to more accountable security forces, it will be a significant contribution to peace-building across the region.