

Chapter 11

The Georgian Security Sector: Initiatives and Activities

Shorena Lortkipanidze

Introduction

The regime of Shevardnadze met an inescapable end. It suffered from grave economic and social problems, political disappointment in the people. Shevardnadze was a political tactician who thought he could always come up with a stratagem to remain in power with a lasting and unchanged regime. Fraudulent parliamentary elections in 2003 were the last tactic, but it was carried out publicly and society simply did not accept that this is what it wanted. The kind of a regime Shevardnadze had established was the fundamental reason for “the Rose Revolution” in Georgia. Its origin was obvious and discernible, driving force a role of the people and the strong opposition movement was strong, and their demands clear: sweeping, cleansing changes in the country.

The new Georgian leadership understood the challenges facing them in the near future. Politically, the conduct of elections, presidential and parliamentary, must be free, fair and transparent elections; fighting corruption and organized crime is a priority; there must be revamping government institutions and the civil service, which collapsed or withered under Shevardnadze; honest, competent and educated people must be attracted to the government service; pensions, salaries and other social safety payments must be made on the time; restarting economic growth and foreign investment amid deep economic crisis; managing a difficult relationship with Russia; attempting territorial reintegration in the face of Moscow supported separatist opposition.

All these tasks are too difficult to achieve in a short period of time. The new leadership made the first steps initiating structural changes in governance. The Constitution of Georgia was amended in a few weeks. Similarly, within weeks the new government started reforms in the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, and the entire financial administration system. Reforms in education and decentralization of power are currently underway.

A change of leadership cannot resolve Georgia’s deeper systemic problems. Corruption, economic stagnation, energy shortage, uncontrolled borders and the relinquishment of significant territories to separatists movements supported by Russia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, represent great obstacles to the progress of the country. Georgia’s future depends on the new government’s willingness and

ability to have far-reaching improvement of government and the governance beyond the security sector.

There various opinions on the revolution. The subsequent 'Orange Revolution' on the northern shore of the Black Sea emphasized interest in the area and in Georgia. But there are also critical assessments of revolution and its post-revolution implications. An American newspaper commented that "The bloom is not off the Rose Revolution, but Saakashvili has impatient increasingly vocal critics who want to see faster pace in the tedious and often unpopular business of changing Georgia's stagnant economy.

It is hard for Georgia to retain the revolutionary spirit. For the new Government, expectations are high. Saakashvili has remarked that the very size of the vote, 96 per cent, adds to the discontent; 51 per cent would have given him a victory, but lower expectations and less disappointment.

The focus of our interest is the security sector and its governance after the revolution. In many ways the general security situation of Georgia can be said to have improved after the revolution. But the main concern is to have a thorough assessment of security threats and proceed to design the force planning system according to the threat analysis. The security environment is fragile and the requirements to Ministry of Defence to modernize the entire security sector remain an issue of major importance to the stability of Georgia. Piecemeal improvement will not suffice. Currently there is a limited defence planning system because there is no fully-developed National Security Concept. A new planning system, implicit in the IPAP (Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO), will be based on a hierarchy of defence planning documents, which are under development.

The NATO-Georgia relationship is high on the agenda. Integration in NATO has broad public support in Georgia. But the Parliament as well has confirmed that membership in NATO is a high priority of Georgia's policy. On September 13, 2002, the Parliament passed the "Resolution on Beginning of the Process of Accession to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)". The "Interagency Governmental Commission of Euro-Atlantic Integration", established under a Presidential decree, has elaborated a "State Program of Euro-Atlantic Integration." In December 2002, the National Security Council of Georgia approved this program. Political motivation towards integration into the Euro-Atlantic Structures was enhanced with the revolution. But again, political motivation alone is not enough for the transformation of the country in general.

The situation of the security sector is among the most important and challenging issue for the country's well-being. We must ask the question: What had happened since the revolution in Georgia in the security sector? One of the responses could include the willingness of the President to a build strong and large--army, but the reforms intend to downsize Georgian Armed Forces. As we see, there is more than one path towards a reformed security sector.

General Characteristics of the Security Sector in Georgia

The enhanced political will to implement reforms and to transform the whole political system plays a very important role in the creation of a new security environment in Georgia. On the other hand, for the new independent states, having no democratic tradition, the major goal is the formation of security structures, their management and financial support, and the coordination of activities within a framework of democratic control over them. The “Rose Revolution”, followed by constitutional changes and the quick reform of the so-called “power ministries”, recognised the need to amend and to change the laws coordinating security sector.

The democratic framework was altered and strengthened at the same time security sector reform was reoriented and accelerated. According to the law “On Structure and Activity of Executive Bodies” the list of ministries and departments whose norms and regulations stipulate their membership in the security structure are: the Ministry of Defence, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of State Security, the State Department of Border Guards, the Intelligence Department, and the Special Service of State Protection.

Major internal changes have taken place. The State Department of Border Guards was integrated into the Ministry of Interior. The Intelligence Department was incorporated into the Ministry of State Security. The Military Doctrine approved by the Parliament defines military forces of Georgia as follows: the Armed Forces of Georgia, Border forces, Interior Ministry Troops, and other armed formations created according the norms established by legislation. The Armed Forces of Georgia consist of land, air, and naval forces.

According to the Constitution, the tasks of Parliament consist of, firstly, determining the main directions of the country's domestic and foreign policy via standing parliamentary Committees, developing the required legislation, adopting the state Budget, and ensuring control over implementation of current tasks. The Government of Georgia, as the executive authority, bears the responsibility for the activities of state agencies operating in the field of security and defence. It is responsible for providing these agencies with all the necessary material resources and funds in accordance with the decisions of the Parliament or the decrees of the President within the limits of its constitutional power.

The democratic control of the security sector includes the parliamentary oversight of Ministry of Defence budgets, legislative actions regarding soldiers' rights, and the program of civil education in security related matters. Generally, the exercise of democratic control through parliamentary oversight has improved, with the major emphasis on the Ministry of Defence. For better an understanding of the current trends in the security sector it is necessary to review briefly each sector of the security sphere.

Reform in Defence Services

As the post-revolution processes are under our attention, the starting point will be developments in the security sector after the November events in Georgia. After the revolution, the first step towards the reform of the Ministry of Defence was the appointment of the civilian Minister. It was the main recommendation made by the ISAB (International Security Advisory Board) to the Government. A Defence restructuring process was initiated in March 2004 and addressed the manning issues in the Armed Forces. An interim study of personnel numbers and structures is being conducted in the Ministry. The objective is to downsize the Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) from 24000 to 15000. The specific tasks of the restructuring process consist in the identification of missions of structures and substructures in Ministry of Defence and GAF, the definition of manpower requirements, the reorganization of financial management and procurement to meet western standards, establishing anti-corruption measures, the identification of current facility and housing requirements, the making of various recommendations, and the identification of the economic effects of downsizing the Armed Forces.

The Ministry of Defence of Georgia has initiated the elaboration of proposals for legal changes. "Law on Defence", "Law on State Procurement", "Law on Military Service and Military Compulsory Service", and "Law on the Status of Military personnel". The short term restructuring process foresees that the Ministry of Defence will be transformed into a civilian agency, that the Ministry and General Staff are comprised of both civilians and military personnel, that there will a high level of cooperation between the Ministry and the General Staff, and that the Chief of the General Staff becomes a Chief of Defence and takes responsibility over the Armed Forces. All this is very much the Western practice in civilian-military relations and the allocation of responsibilities to the General Staff.

The objectives of reorganization have been identified as the establishment of the civilian control of the Ministry of Defence, the streamlining of the Ministry and General Staff, the clear division of responsibilities of the functions of Ministry of Defence and General Staff, the elimination of duplications, and the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of these services. At this time there are many uncertainties regarding the above mentioned areas. The span of control is too broad. The lines of responsibility, authority and accountability are not clear and well understandable. The system of promotions is very centralized in the Ministry. Georgia now has a mix of Soviet and Western approaches to defence planning and management, creates many obstacles for the reforming process of the Ministry of

Defence and General Staff

The main recommendation to be adopted is to decentralize this system for the efficiency of the service. There are several plans of the reorganization of Ministry of Defence.

According to Western civilian-military relations, the ones that Georgia is attempting to reach, proper, effective work in a Defence Ministry is carried out when the civilians (who, mostly, form the Ministry's staff) and the soldiers (in this case, the General Staff) when the two groups arrive at feasible solutions for what policy makers—the Government--proposes to achieve and the Parliament agrees should be achieved. It requires partnership and co-operation between the General Staff, military members in the Defence Ministry, and the Ministry's civilian body of experts. Defence needs, known to by society, approved by the law givers, and determined by the policy makers are into feasible, optimal objectives; military and civilian defence experts refine them in short, medium and long term plans and bring them to their political masters for approval. This of course is an ideal situation and in reality even the best-organised defence establishment encounters considerable disagreement and friction, and Georgia's defence establishment certainly is not a well organized one.

The difficulties civilians have encountered in the transition states, particularly the ones which once were parts of the Soviet Union like Georgia, have been summarized as follows. Effective support for the Minister requires partnership and co-operation between the General Staff, military members in the Defence Ministry apparatus, and the Ministry's civilian body of experts. These civilian experts need to be knowledgeable enough to address defence and security issues with credibility and confidence. Without such civilian expertise, the Minister and other senior decision-makers cannot take the hard decisions - frequently opposed by an entrenched and conservative military staff - that may be needed to ensure that the Armed Forces' force structure, equipment, training, personnel, and operations are effectively targeted toward meeting society's priority tasks.

Unfortunately, the Soviet heritage has left Georgia without this strong body of civilian expertise needed for of defence and security sector reform. The Ministry of Defence is to develop policy; it is political civilian agency. Its key features include: policy, planning and programming, finance and budget, contracts and purchasing, audit functions, an office of Inspector General, a military legal department and legal adviser. As in Western practice, the civilian staff would consist of political appointees and career civil servants, as well as a mix of civilian and military personnel.

There are key roles for each member of the General Staff. The Chief of Staff is the Commander of the Armed Forces. The Deputy Chief of the General Staff has the principal role as Director of the General Staff. The General Staff includes: Personnel (J-1), Intelligence (J-2), Operations and Readiness (J-3), Logistics (J-4), Doctrine, Force Structures and Planning (J-5), Control, Communications, Computers and Information (J-6), Education and training (J-7), and Infrastructure. This is the customary staff structure of Western armed forces.

Along with the reform processes in the security structure, the post-revolution period is characterized by the rapid changes of high officials in the security sector. This trend is perceived differently by the society, the media, and the political opposition. But post-revolution

mood in Georgia is strong. The chaos caused by political turbulence and appointments and the problems of distributing high state positions by the former revolution activists are two problems which illustrate the issues facing Georgia today. The country's security sector is in desperate need of rapid transformation, but it requires competence in carrying out the required tasks.

Ministry of the Interior

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is in the process of reforming. The objectives of the reform include: the transformation of the Ministry from its police structure into a body responsible for internal policy of the country, the reinforcement of preventive activities of the police, the establishment of a partnership between the police and public, and the assurance of a consistent and a gradual implementation of the reform. The term "power ministries" derives of course from the old Soviet terminology and the Ministry of Internal Affairs was one of the stronger bases of "power regime" during the Soviet period. The influence of Soviet legacy is still very strong today in Georgia. The police are one of the most alienated sectors in the Georgian society. The level of trust felt towards police is very low. The police are the most corrupted service in the security sector due to its very centralized, politicized and paramilitary nature. One of the tasks of the current transformation process is to implement a full de-politization of the police.

After the Rose Revolution the Ministry of Internal affairs, like the Ministry of Defence, became civilian ministries with civil ministers. The reform directions are: a detailed regulation of the police procedures (adoption and implementation of legislation regulating organization and activities of the police); creation of centralized, electronic registration bank aimed at controlling the police units; and the improvement of personnel administration by the technical equipment of the Police Academy. The reforms also include the establishment of a special education system, establishment of fair criteria for service assessment, a transparent system of assessment, promotion and demotion, and the change from a military system to Western-style to police.

Staff optimization is a crucial part of the reforming process. The Ministry is overstaffed. Reduction will take place in the first quarter of 2005 in the following services: transport police (- 50 per cent), Property protection police (- 100 per cent), Ecology police (-100 per cent), Police Academy (- 50 per cent), Special Purpose Police named after G. Gulua (- 33 per cent), traffic police (- 40 per cent), and the Tbilisi police (- 30 per cent). In the first stage the total number of policemen will be reduced by 32 per cent.

The transformation of the Ministry into a civilian body means the demilitarization of Interior Troops and the Border Guard and their conversion into police institutions. The Ministry of Interior, in carrying out internal policy, has gained additional functions such as migration and national minorities. The responsibility of these services has yet to be fully defined. The creation of patrol and criminal police units is one of the forthcoming changes. The functions of the patrol police are: the protection of public order, traffic control, district inspection, juvenile crime police functions, individual prevention, and other preventive

activities. The criminal police unit consists of: criminal investigation, fighting against corruption, operational intelligence, criminal expertise, and Interpol.

The property protection police, fair service, medical units in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the ecology police services are in the process of separating from the Ministry. Some functions will be transferred to local governments. Medical Units will be transferred to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The responsibilities of the ecology police will be shared by the Ministry of Natural resources and the Border Guard Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The functions of the central apparatus of the Ministry of Interior are changing from police functions into analytical administrative centre functions. There is a need to create an effective analytical service of crime investigation, statistics and forecasting. The system of information gathering, distribution and control is to be activated and Ministry of Defence modernized. The main feature of these reforms to bring in western practices is the system of computerization and the creation of computer-based management. Donor organizations are very active in assisting Georgia in this regard.

Organizationally and financially independent, the institution of General Inspection will implement the internal control of the system. The Interior Troops of the Ministry of Interior are transforming from paramilitary units to the gendarmerie. This project is under development.

The integration of the Border Guard Department into the Ministry of Interior is a part of the state reforms in Georgia. The preparation for the reforms was begun in the independent Border Guard Department in 1998-1999. Close relations with partner countries were and still are the main priority for this objective. In a short period, the Department established bilateral relations with Border Guard services of many foreign countries. The relationship with Germany is particularly important and rewarding. The Georgian Border Guard service is reforming into the German and Finish Ministry of Defence type of Border Guard service.

The Coastal Guard Service was created in 2001 with American assistance. In 2003, under the American consultancy, the reform of the Coastal Guard Service was implemented. The representatives of the Border Guard Department say that they have a service fully ensuring European standards. The main tasks of this department include: the transformation of Border Guard Forces from the military structure into the civilian law enforcement body and the creation of Border Police; the creation of decentralized system of border management and the implementation of structural reorganization according to this principle, the creation of professional education system and contact system, the equipment of border guard service with Ministry of Defence technologies, the transformation from tangible protection to the system of operational legal control, and the proper inclusion of the border guard service within the legislative framework.

The integration of the Border Guard Department into the Ministry of Interior is now the major goal of this integration process. This requires clarification and streamlining functions, and the definition

of tasks and responsibilities of each service. The tradition and practice of decentralized governance is weak in the security sector; another example of Georgia's Soviet heritage. The decentralized system of police force management decreases bureaucratic barriers and dilettantism in the system. The functions of Border Guard department in the structure of Ministry of Interior are the following: protection and control of borders by the police, the safety of air and marine traffic routes, and railway safety. These tasks have proven to be difficult to achieve in light of the current stereotypes and economic problems, but the clarification of these functions is, nonetheless, important for the integration of whole system.

The Ministry of State Security

The reforms and the transformation process also concern the Ministry of State Security. The Intelligence Department, hitherto an independent agency, was transferred to the Ministry of State Security. The head of the Department is the Deputy Minister of State Security, is in charge of all matters of intelligence concerning the country. The Ministry is attempting to be more open for the society: one of its deputy ministers is responsible for Public Affairs and relations with Media, but the traditional habits of this service may be difficult to change.

The Special Service of State Protection has only operational functions. The role of the service is the protection of the head of state and other key elements of the state. As the Government places special emphasis on ensuring that the oil pipelines and other vital economic assets in the country remain secure, primary responsibility for protecting the pipeline rested with the Special Service for State Protection. The recommendations of the International Security Advisory Board propose considerable changes. Functions of an essentially police nature are to be transferred to the Ministry of Interior. The Special Service of State Protection is growing in size to include additional responsibility in pipeline protection. Para-military duties of this nature are suited to the gendarmerie force, which will operate under the coordination of Ministry of Interior.

Perhaps the single most politically pleasing step in reform was dismantling the hated traffic police. It was an underpaid, overstaffed force whose members added to their meagre income with a practice of charging automobile drivers for petty or imagined offences. This petty corruption is found in all post-socialist societies and for the same reason—but in Georgia it has been particularly widespread and intensely resented. President Saakashvili said the country passed a major test when Georgia's undisciplined drivers survived two months of virtual roadway anarchy until a better-trained, higher-paid replacement force could be recruited.

New Security Challenges

The state building process took years in Georgia. The security sector governance is one of the biggest challenges facing the country. Realistic assessments of the aspirations of the state and of the threats and

challenges to these aspirations have crucial importance to the whole state building process. The articulation and promulgation of such policy is very important. The National security concept and a military doctrine have yet to be carefully developed. The lack of this kind of document is an obstacle to the development of reforming and transformation processes in the security sector. On the other hand, there have been a few achievements; one of them is that Georgia has expressed its willingness to become full member of NATO.

The assessment of a situation in regards to security sector governance is important. If we judge from the four criteria point of view, we can indicate the main achievements in the security sector. These are: democracy, compatibility, sustainability, and legality. As in post-revolutionary situations, there are many internal and external threats. It is important that the new leadership scale down unrealistic expectations. Reforms in Georgia – with its entrenched corruption, lack of competitive industries, poor work ethic, worn-out Soviet period infrastructure, and widespread poverty – will be difficult, especially in the face of a deep economic crisis and security threats.

Russia holds important cards in the South Caucasus game. Russia views Saakashvili as “too pro-American and too unknown”. Russia commands four military bases in Georgia, including the naval base in the port of Batumi and an army base in the Armenian populated Javakheti region. International, namely American, pressure is high towards a Russian withdrawal from bases in Georgia on the basis of the agreements signed in 1999 at the Istanbul Summit of OSCE. Russia has yet to fulfil this agreement.

Moscow still controls vital energy resources. In 2003, the Russian state-controlled companies of RAO UES and Gazprom acquired the control of these resources. Russian cities are full of repatriated Georgians. Russia has a visa-free agreement with Abkhazia and Tskinali region. The Georgia-Russia challenge is as internal as external. Georgia is a member of the antiterrorist coalition, which on the one hand is the umbrella organization for state security, but on the other hand, enhances the threats and risks, particularly when we have some problems with Chechen terrorists time to time crossing the Georgia's State Borders. Pankisi Gorge was announced as the shelter for terrorists.

Regional factors should be pointed out as part of the many security challenges. The differences in political orientation and foreign policy priorities illustrate security governance in each country. There are two security systems in the South Caucasus. Armenia is a full member of the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS, while Azerbaijan and Georgia want to join NATO. As noted above, Georgia is implementing IPAP, which is the prelude to MAP, the Membership Action Plan of NATO. The region also contains different types of democracy, which leads to different security systems. Armenia has strong executive branch with a relatively weaker parliament. The revolution and constitutional changes in Georgia, however, increased the president's powers.

What role should Georgia play in this political environment? This answer is hard to determine. Georgia has not yet finished security documents or a Strategic Defence Review. It should open the way for

the consideration and approval of a National Security Concept. The Revolution period is not over. We expect a revolution in the governance of the country. The security sector is the priority area on the agenda of the new Government and the Parliament.

Conclusion

President Saakashvili has expressed hope that Georgia could become a candidate for NATO membership by 2006. Since Saakashvili became president in January 2004, NATO-Georgian contacts have expanded rapidly. NATO, of course, makes its decisions over membership based on political as well as defence considerations, and Russia's attitude toward NATO expansion around the Black Sea (presumably, Ukraine's admission might precede that of Georgia's) will weigh in the balance. As to the security and side of the reform, Georgia must first undertake a comprehensive modernization and democratization of its security and defence establishment, including Border Guards, Interior Troops, and the Armed Forces.

In September 2004 the Interior Ministry announced it will transfer its military units the Internal Troops to the Ministry of Defense. Under the Soviet system, and were one of the most instrumental forces of police repression, to be used against the potential internal threats. Following the old Soviet model, the Georgian Interior Troops until now were subordinated to the Interior Ministry. The reform of the Interior Ministry foresees its transformation into a fully civilian organization. This decision was taken by the President Saakashvili and the National Security Council. It was also one of the recommendations of our western advisers, as it would bring Georgia closer to NATO practices. Only a small group of Special Forces are to remain under the Interior Ministry's subordination, in charge of maintaining order in the country.

As part of restructuring in 2004, the State Border Guard Department will be from over 9,000 employees to 5,700 today. "There was a Soviet system and it was nonsense to have some of the departments». "We have started and also concluded the first stage of reform based on the experience of European states and our main aim is for Georgia's border system to meet the requirements of Euro-Atlantic structures. The Border Guard Department, which is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, says salaries have increased markedly but still remain two to three times smaller than what the Ministry of Defense. The only thing that prevents [the Border Guard's] rapid development is the paltry material resources that we have. The entire infrastructure was destroyed. However, they noted, "poor logistical support and insufficient funding are hindering the successful implementation of the reform and future development of the agency».

The defence budget is encouraging. Recently adjusted, the Defense Ministry's budget stands at 317 million Lari, approximately USD 173 million, a sizeable increase from the originally planned 137 million Lari, or \$74 million. The size of Georgia's armed forces is a prime concern. The Chief of the General Staff has said that Georgia is working towards a goal of 23,000 troops. (Currently, there are about

16,000 troops). Some Western observers suggest that the increased funding flow has not encouraged planning for the budget's effective distribution. Among the shortcomings there is an inadequate long-range planning and inattention to budgetary detail. Although the budget increase is remarkable there is no planning, there is no acquisition or procurement process, and no feasibility study."

Defence Minister Okruashvili, who assumed office in December 2004, has already come under criticism for his role in implementing changes. Okruashvili, to give one example, has been accused of reversing earlier progress in establishing civilian control over military institutions. He has also come under fire for reportedly haphazard spending on weapons from bought from former Warsaw Pact countries. There have been turbulent personnel changes among the senior civilians and the military in the Ministry of Defence, particularly in the General Staff. Defence Minister Okruashvili, however, it all comes down to results, and there were no persons who were results-oriented. Okruashvili concedes that the challenges are immense, but nonetheless argues that considerable headway is being made. The greatest problem is time, he believes, because Georgia has lost almost 10 years."

However, defence expenditure without a well conceived reform plan will not advance Western defence advisers argue. Parliament should adopt Georgia's long-awaited National Security Concept, which should streamline the reform process, by the end of April of 2005.

The respective responsibilities of civilians and the military in the customary Western method of coherent security planning are generally done as follows. Successively, there is a threat perception, a national security concept, a defence policy, a military strategy, force development plans, training and doctrine, and so forth, dividing and subdividing into detailed plans and practices. Without a coherent planning process, it is difficult for the military to substantiate manpower requirements, materiel, funds, supplies, technical and other resources, as well as work out plans of training and deployment. Without a clear definition and prioritization of threats, it difficult to calculate the manpower and materiel needed for performing certain missions; types of weapon systems to be equipped with; and indicators for assessment of the level of mission readiness.

An important step would be a Strategic Defense Review is a survey of the existing force structure, weapons, and equipment would give defence officials a clear picture what the Georgia's military has and what are the priority needs. As matters stand, Georgia's difficult security sector situation is well known, various requirements have been recognized, the will to reform is there, but an overall, comprehensive picture of how Georgia will proceed is far from clear. With information on hand, the government could begin a systematic, resource based, long-term military build-up and security. However, it can be done on the basis of a thorough an overall threat assessment, which is presented in a national security concept, the country's security threats.

Georgia has a comprehensive modernization effort for its defence establishment under way. The defence budget received a large increase, from the originally planned 137 million Lari, or USD 74 million to 317

million lari, or USD 173 million. As to the size of Georgia's armed forces, they are being built up. Levan Nikoleishvili, Chief of the General Staff, has said that Georgia will have an overall strength of 23,000 troops. Presently, there are about 16,000 troops, four land forces brigades, an artillery brigade and a special-forces brigade, but that the majority of the units are under strength. Current activities are carried according to the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Once Georgia meets its goals, it hopes to be admitted to the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) as early as 2006. Georgian Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili acknowledged that much remained to be done before a MAP is a real prospect and that the challenges are huge, but he claims that considerable progress is being made.

Western defence experts are more reserved cautious on Georgia's progress and prospects. The concerns are inadequacies in long-range planning, establishing priorities, and resource allocation. The Defence Ministry's large budget increase is being depleted due to inadequate planning, acquisition or procurement process, and no feasibility study. Western advisers believe that money should be first spent on institution-building, officer education, training and doctrine. Without enhancing readiness, Georgia will have a weak defence structure with expensive weapons. Defence Minister Okruashvili asserts that institution-building is a challenge and that it is being addressed, but that he was astonished by the bad conditions when he became Defence Minister in December 2004. Georgian National Security Advisor Gela Bezhuashvili said: "I was in the Ministry of Defence for four years. There was no fuel, no ammunition. The stockpiles were empty. Weapons, machines, tanks—they were all in a disastrous position."

The next step would be a Strategic Defence Review along the lines of reviews done By Western defence establishments, an inventory of the existing forces, weapons and equipment. The Review would tell defence planners what Georgia has, what it requires, and the accurate strength and mission readiness of its forces. With clear and objective information on hand, and with a national security concept that identifies the current and foreseeable security threats, the Government could begin a methodical, prioritized, resource based defence build-up. Without a Strategic Defence Review, the Government might advance in an uncertain direction.