Chapter 13

Georgia: An Emerging Governance - Problems and Prospects

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Introduction

Even if the Republic of Georgia has existed independently since 1992, it remains logical to discuss security sector governance as an *emerging* question. For much of the early 1990s, applying the notion of 'security sector governance' to a state at war and barely on its feet stretched the concept too far. The Georgian state embarked on a process of consolidation from 1995 onwards, initiated with the approval of a Constitution, and Georgia experienced thereafter several years of growth and relative political stability. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the main lines of security sector reform were formulated on paper, and limited changes were effected in the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces. However, as a whole, security sector reform remains an emerging concern in so far as most of the work remains ahead for the new Georgian leadership in terms of addressing a distorted legacy, clarifying the scope of problems and prioritising amongst them, sketching out a coherent programme and implementing it.

Two points should be noted from the outset. The first concerns the security sector in Georgia, the number of the agents involved and the nature of their interaction. Many have argued that the notion of 'security sector reform' is useful in drawing attention away from more limited understandings of military reform. Traditional discussions of civil-military relations tended to focus on the dyadic relationship between civilian political structures and a professional military agency. By contrast, reforming the security sector entails a more complex understanding of these two poles and adds new actors to the picture[1]. The concept takes in all of the state bodies that are authorised to use force legitimately, including not only the armed forces but the Border Guards, 'third forces' such as the Gendarmerie, and also the intelligence and security agencies. The concept encompasses all of the civilian management and oversight bodies, the judiciary, as well as relevant sectors of civil society. The concept addresses complex relations between a wide range of agents[2].

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[1] See, for example, the *Security Sector Reform Policy Brief*, put out by the British Government, (jointly by DFID, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence: 2003). Available at: http://www.gfn-ssr.org/edocs/gfn027_ssr_policy_brief.pdf

[2] On general considerations of security sector reform and questions of governance, see Michael Brzoska, *Development Donors and the Concept of Security Sector Reform* (DCAF:

The Georgian security sector is all the more complex. The subject concerns first the security sector of the Republic of Georgia, that is the armed forces, the border services, the interior troops of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry's special purpose forces, the Ministry of Security, the State Intelligence Department, and the State Safety Service, as well as the relevant parliament committees, the structures of executive office and the judiciary. Second, a comprehensive view of the security sector must include the structures under the control of the separatist authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as the force structures of the Autonomous Republic of Adjaria. Third, one should include also the paramilitary forces that have been active on Georgian territory, mostly near and in the Gali region and in limited numbers in the Pankisi Valley. Fourth, a full picture should take account of the presence of foreign security forces that impact on the functioning of Georgia's security sector: the presence of Russian armed forces in bases on Georgian territory, the CIS peacekeeping operation along the Inguri River, the limited presence of US forces in the Georgia Train and Equip Programme (GTEP), and also the deployments by the UN and the OSCE in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and on Georgia's border with Chechnya. Viewed from this perspective, the complexity of the security sector in Georgia seems nightmarish, resembling less a bipolar world and more a shattered universe.

A second point concerns the nature of 'governance' regulating relations between agents in this security sector. It has become accepted that traditional civil-military relations are never fixed once and for all but fluctuate; this is all the more true for governance in a complex and fragmented security sector. Relations resemble more a game, with a set of actors that is more or less clearly defined and regulated by rules that are more implicit than explicit, which may evolve rapidly and in such a way that the nature of the game changes and new actors are included. As will be discussed, Mikheil Saakashvili is struggling with a particularly distorted game that emerged under Shevardnadze, characterised by fragmented and deeply under-funded power agencies, subjective forms of control over these agents, weak civilian oversight, intense corruption, no legitimacy in society at large, and the absence of a concept of overall reform.

Reform is under way, with considerable changes, by the end of 2004. The Interior Forces, a Soviet-type inheritance; are being subordinated to the Defence Ministry; the old domestic Security and Interior ministries are to be merged into a new Ministry of Police and Public Security; a new Counter-Intelligence Service would be set up and the external intelligence service would be removed from the control of

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November 2003); Dylan Hendrickson, *A Review of Security Sector Reform* (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Working Paper, Centre for Defence Studies: London, September 1999) http://csdg.kcl.ac.uk/Publications/assets/PDF%20files/Working%20paper%20number%201.pdf ; and Neil Cooper and Michael Pugh, *Security Sector Transformation in Post-Conflict Societies* (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Working Paper, Centre for Defence Studies: London, February, 2002). http://csdg.kcl.ac.uk/Publications/assets/PDF%20files/Working%20paper%20number%205.pdf

the Security Ministry in Tbilisi and in the future would report directly to President Saakashvili. The defence budget will be considerably increased to reform the Armed Forces. This chapter will not examine the state of each of Georgia's power agencies, nor the role of elites and civil society, as these questions have been addressed in previous chapters. The focus of this chapter is four-fold. First, the chapter will delineate the objective difficulties that affected Georgia's security sector since 1992 in order to clarify general dilemmas. A second part examines the nature of the security sector game as it had crystallised by the last years of the Shevardnadze presidency. Third, the chapter explores the strengths and weaknesses of the first steps taken by the new leadership in 2004 to change the rules of the game. The last section proposes some general principles for reforming the Georgian security sector.

Difficulties and Dilemmas

The new Georgian state, and its leaders, has faced a number of objective obstacles that render security sector reform inherently difficult. It is worth examining these before turning to subjective factors that impacted on security sector governance by the late years of Shevardnadze's leadership.

First, Georgia has been undergoing a process of multiple transformations since 1992. The principal intellectual and policy prism for understanding developments in Georgia (as in the former Soviet Union as a whole) has been that of 'transition'[3]. According to Thomas Carothers, the transition paradigm was based on several core assumptions[4]. The first is that a country is, indeed, in transition from dictatorial rule to democracy. In this approach, the process of transition itself is considered more important for the outcome of change than the structural factors of a particular state – previous experience with democracy, ethnic homogeneity, and level of economic development. In this perspective, *democracy* building – a focus on the nature of ruling regimes – is given more importance than *state* building.

In fact, the notion of transition is too light to characterise the overwhelming process of *transformation* thrust on Georgia after the Soviet collapse[5]. Many of the assumptions underpinning the notion of a transition are misleading in the Georgian case. Georgia's transformation has encompassed the building of new institutions, new state institutions, new borders, new identities, new foreign policies, and new military systems. Change has occurred at the economic, political, external policy and national levels on a scale that is far greater than the 'transitions' that occurred in southern Europe in the 1980s or in Latin America at various periods since the 1960s.

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[3] This idea is developed in the author's 'A Regional Insecurity Dynamic,' in Dov Lynch (ed.), 'The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU', *Chaillot Papers*, No. 65, December 2003), p. 10-12. Available at: http://www.iss-eu.org/chaillot/chai65e.pdf

[4] Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm,' *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002, p. 5-21. Available at:
 http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/Carothers-13-1.pdf

[5] Archie Brown develops this argument in his book *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997).

Moreover, Georgia may not be moving towards democracy. In Carothers' words, states such as Georgia 'have entered a political grey zone. They have some of the attributes of democratic political life […] Yet they suffer from serious democratic deficits, often including poor representation of citizens' interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions and persistently poor institutional performance by the state'[6]. The problems that affect democratic standards in Georgia may not be transitory but enduring features. Georgia has developed bits and pieces of the institutional façade of democracy but its substance is not fully realised.

Viewing developments as 'transformation' and not 'transition,' places the challenge facing the Georgian leadership in the correct perspective. Far more than a simple 'transition,' Georgia has experienced a transformation from its previous embodiment as a Soviet Socialist Republic inside the USSR – in economic terms, from a command economy to a market-led economy; in politics, from one-party authoritarian system to multi-party pluralist politics; in security thinking, from the defence of the proletarian revolution to the defence of an emerging state; and in federal terms, from a multi-national Soviet federation to new relations between Georgia's regions and republics. In these circumstances, security sector reform is but one priority amongst many pressing challenges.

Second, the Georgia that emerged in 1992 inherited a mixed legacy from the Soviet Union with regard to its security sector. In some respects, Georgia started from a blank slate. Tbilisi had no armed forces and, thus, faced the challenge of building forces from scratch, including a General Staff structure and ministerial organisation. The new leadership in Tbilisi was also missing other components of force that would have allowed it to ensure control over its borders and air space – Tbilisi had no border forces and no air defence structures. What's more, the new Georgia lacked indigenous training institutions with which to build a new officer corps. The Georgian economy also only inherited minimal and incomplete parts of the integrated Soviet military-industrial complex.

The new leadership in Tbilisi also inherited a heavy Soviet legacy that continues to weigh over it. The later years of Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership saw the collapse of the prestige and legitimacy of service in the armed forces throughout most of Soviet society. The conditions of service, combined with budding nationalism in many parts of the USSR, eroded the foundations of popular support to what had been a key Soviet institution since the Second World War. There was an initial brief period of nationalist euphoria in Georgia in 1991-1992, during which a number of young Georgian men volunteered for service in the new National Guard structure. Thereafter, very quickly, the lack of prestige and legitimacy associated with military service re-emerged throughout Georgian society. Difficult conditions of service explain

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[6]   *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

much in the high figures of draft evasion and desertion throughout the 1990s. These figures also highlight a more profound de-legitimating process that occurred in Georgian society with regard to the new state as it emerged under Shevardnadze.

In addition, Tbilisi inherited a number of former Soviet structures and large numbers of Soviet-trained personnel. The Georgian Ministry of Interior was created on the basis of the previous Soviet structure, and thereby inherited a bloated, largely inefficient and heavily corrupt staff, as well as the worst of Soviet recruitment practices in terms of nepotism and personal connections[7]. The Ministry of State Security was formed on the basis of the former Soviet KGB staff and structures. These legacies created distorted structures that were resistant to change. The heavy Soviet connection also meant a predominant Russian influence in the Georgian power ministries, especially in the first years of their existence[8].

The third objective factor conditioning the Georgian security sector has been the experience of war in the early 1990s and the enduring possibility of renewed conflict. In the early 1990s, nascent Georgian forces were involved in a small-scale conflict in South Ossetia, a war in Abkhazia and recurrent episodes of civil war. Without established force structures at the time, the government in Tbilisi improvised in a hodgepodge manner. The war in Abkhazia was fought not only by Georgian National Guard units, then led by Tengiz Kitovani, but also by the paramilitary forces of the *Mkhedrioni*, commanded by the convicted criminal Jaba Ioseliani. The chaotic make-up of forces deployed in the conflicts distorted the ends of Georgian policy, undermining in fact the notion there was a 'Georgian' state policy at all in a cocktail of crime, improvisation and confusion.

The experience impacted on the Georgian security sector in a number of ways. Certainly, defeat in the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia has not had a positive or stimulating effect on Georgia's security forces. For the most part, defeats on the battlefield have been attributed to Russian intervention and not to the core weaknesses of Georgia's forces, their tactics and operational doctrines and failings of command and control. As a result, there has been no systematic learning process undertaken within the security sector on the reasons for the failures of the early 1990s and how to address these failings. Moreover, the battlefield defeats have done nothing to increase the prestige of the security forces in the eyes of Georgian society, exacerbating their crisis of legitimacy.

In addition, none of the conflicts has been settled. Throughout his leadership, Shevardnadze was always careful to retain the use of force as a policy option towards settling these conflicts. Tbilisi never

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[7]   See the discussion of David Darchiashvili, 'Georgia: A Hostage to Arms,' in Anna Matveeva and Duncan Hiscock (eds.), *The Caucasus: Armed and Divided: Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Humanitarian Consequences in the Caucasus*, (Saferworld: London, April 2003), p. 69-102.

[8]   Russian influence was especially heavy with the Ministry for State Security led by Igor Gongadze, and with the Ministry of Defence led by Vardiko Nadibaidze, in the early and mid 1990s.

ruled out the choice of renewed war[9]. Even for a well-organised government with the best of intentions, security sector reform in conditions of active or imminent conflict is a challenge. Not least, because Georgian defeats in these conflicts has left large swathes of territory beyond Tbilisi's control.

A last factor impacting on security sector governance concerns Georgia's geopolitical environment and the role of foreign states and the international community. Put bluntly, Georgia's security environment is not conducive to coherent and poised reform. Internally, Tbilisi inherited a weak federal structure that contained ethnic minorities with their own autonomous agencies of representation as well as regions beyond Tbilisi's control, such as the Autonomous Republic of Adjaria. These internal security challenges cross over with porous and weakly controlled borders to render Georgia vulnerable to wider Caucasian security challenges. The spill over of the second conflict in Chechnya into Georgia's Pankisi Valley is a case in point. On a seemingly more positive side, the exploitation and transportation of the energy reserves of the Caspian Sea has also complicated Georgia's security position, by attracting significant and conflicting external attention.

Since 1992, Russian-Georgian relations have gone from bad to worse back to bad again. All governments in Moscow have stressed Russia's interests in Georgia, and many of them have made use of a range of policy tools at their disposal to advance these interests. These tools of leverage include Russian military bases, the Russian peacekeeping operations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as control of strategic sectors of the Georgian economy. At the same time, since 2001, Georgia has welcomed U.S. troops engaged in GTEP and also heavy Turkish military engagement. Shevardnadze's attempt to balance Georgia's *foreign* policy direction through a policy of ambiguity and multiple approaches has become reflected *inside* the country itself, embodied in the presence of foreign troops from states with different, sometimes openly conflicting, interests.

Moreover, the focus of foreign actors engaged in security sector reform in Georgia has been narrow. As Georgia's most important foreign partner, the U.S. has provided assistance since 1998, in its 'Border Security and Law Enforcement Programme,' to the Georgian border and law enforcement agencies. However, Washington has dedicated most of its attention and resources since 2002 to the reform of the Ministry of Defence and armed forces. Patterns of security sector assistance by members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have also concentrated on the traditional military structures. As a result, international assistance has left aside arguably more important security forces, which have not received the same levels of assistance nor benefited from the similar attention to push through reform. These circumstances highlight the point also that security sector reform has

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[9] For example, Shevardnadze's last Minister for State Security, Valeri Khaburdzania declared that Tbilisi had made contingency plans for the use of force to resolve the conflict with Abkhazia if the separatist region exported terrorism and organised crime into Georgia proper; see 'Georgian State Security Minister says Use of Force in Abkhazia "Theoretically Possible"', *Civil Georgia* (26th June 2003). Available at http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=4454

been left to the purview of individual states. Some actors of the international community, such as the United Nations (UN), have no mandate for such activities, whereas others, such as the EU, have been very reluctant to assume such responsibilities. A gap has emerged in international assistance to security sector reform in Georgia.

At a wider level, pressures on Georgia from the international community have been contradictory. Shevardnadze declared a desire to join NATO at some point in the future. In addition to healthy security sector governance, NATO membership requires that a 2% of GDP be devoted to the security sector spending. While Georgian membership of NATO is very far off, Tbilisi has consistently received the message that it would have to increase spending in order to reform its security sector. At the same time, Georgia has faced constant pressure, especially from the late 1990s onwards, to reduce government spending as a whole, and defence expenditure in particular. For good reason, one might argue: defence spending is not a high priority in a country with such levels of poverty and such development needs. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission in July 2003 recommended that Tbilisi cut spending by USD 44 million, of which security expenditure represented USD 4.6 million[10]. While reducing government spending makes sense for economic reasons, the cuts reinforced a vicious circle in already chronically under-financed security agencies.

Three dilemmas stem from the objective challenges affecting security sector reform in Georgia[11]. First, how can a state undertake coherent and fitting security sector reform in circumstances of transformation, when under-financing is a chronic condition? Second, how can security sector reform be undertaken in a state where renewed conflict is a constant possibility? Third, how can security sector reform be pushed through coherently in a state without control over all of its territory? These dilemmas have plagued security sector governance in Georgia since 1992.

Rules of the Game under Shevardnadze

In addition to the objective difficulties, a number of subjective factors came to determine the nature of security sector governance under Shevardnadze. The rules of the security sector game as they emerged under Shevardnadze included both internal and external security actors with the overall implicit objective of retaining the regime in power. The main lines of security sector governance - if the term is appropriate – were determined by the single objective of protecting the Shevardnadze leadership from either internal or external challenges. At periods when the Georgian president was himself associated with the country's future, such as after the civil war in 1992 and during the Abkhaz conflict in 1993, the objective of retaining personal power coincided with the

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[10]   'Government to Cut Defence Funding,' *Civil Georgia*, 9th July 2003. Available at: http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=4535

[11]   See also the discussion of S. Neil MacFarlane, 'Visions of the Caucasus,' in *Security Sector Governance in the South Caucasus: Challenges and Visions* (DCAF Conference Proceedings: Reichenau, 21-24 November 2003).

public good of protecting the Georgian state. By the early 2000s, however, the objectives leading much of government policy and the generic public good of the Georgian state was dis-articulated. There was no explicit agreement between the main actors under Shevardnadze's leadership on rules of conduct. Rather, the game was a diffuse and implicit universe of actors and expectations, which was based by on four unwritten rules.

First, the distinction between formal structures and informal realities must be made. Under Shevardnadze's leadership, Georgia acquired formal structures for security sector governance in terms of the constitutional definition of the roles of the executive and the legislature in determining and monitoring policy. From 2001 onwards, the Georgian government undertook a number of policies to reform different parts of the security sector. For the Ministry of Defence, the process had started earlier in 1999 with the creation of the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) to provide strategic guidance to the reform of the armed forces (but not only)[12]. In late 2001, Shevardnadze sacked the top leadership of the deeply corrupt Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for State Security, and in December decreed the creation of an Inter-Agency Commission, under the National Security Council, for the purpose of formulating reform concepts for the whole security sector, and especially the Ministry of Interior and the state security services[13]. In 2001, the Georgian government also adopted the 'Programme Project Budgeting System' to establish a more clear and transparent defence budgeting process.

In practice, Georgia's security sector remained unreformed. As previous chapters in this volume make clear, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of State Security, despite having new and supposedly reformist ministers, went untouched. The Inter-Agency Commission produced reform concepts by 2003 but they were not officially endorsed[14]. Changes did occur in the Ministry of Defence and the Border Guards service, but mainly at the persistent insistence of foreign states. The result in the armed forces was an institution on two tracks: the great bulk of the armed forces remained largely unreformed, under-financed and untrained, while small parts of the armed forces received specialist attention from foreign states, and started operating on new recruitment standards and operational doctrines. Moreover, despite having recognised the need for a comprehensive Georgian Security Concept since 1996, Shevardnadze never pushed the policy beyond the declarative stage[15]. As discussed in other chapters of this volume, the

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[12] *Report to the National Security Council of the Republic of Georgia*, drafted by Sir Garry Johnson (ISAB: April 1999).

[13] See the discussion by David Darchiashvili and Ghia Nodia, *Power Structures – The Weak State Syndrome and Corruption in Georgia* (Discussion Paper, No. 5, 'Building Democracy in Georgia,' IDEA: May 2003).

[14] See *The Concept of Reform of the Security and Law Enforcement Services of Georgia* http://www.supremecourt.ge/english/Conception.pdf and *The Concept of Reform of the Ministry for State Security for Georgia*, which were made public in 2003. Available at: http://www.supremecourt.ge/english/Annex12.pdf

[15] See the discussion of Robert L. Larsson, *Georgia's Search for Security: An Analysis of Georgia's National Security Structures and International Cooperation* (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Discussion Paper No. 1: Tbilisi, 2003),

Shevardnadze leadership had become a system of rule by the early 2000s that was based on the crossover of public and private interests and the cooption of powerful groups of elites. Serious reform of Georgia's security sector was never envisaged, as it would have challenged the foundations of the ruling order.

Moreover, given multiple assassination attempts on Shevardnadze's life and the political role that bits and pieces of the power ministries had played, President Shevardnadze saw good reason for not challenging the security structures that had emerged and for not seeking to clarify lines of duplication, in order to fragment and divide the security sector. Different parts of the security sector moved in and out of presidential favour over the course of Shevardnadze's rule.

A second implicit rule to the game concerned finances. Under Shevardnadze, the power ministries were consistently under-financed. This under-financing was firstly a response to the needs of transformation, where security spending is not a high priority, and also from the pressures of the IMF. Under-financing also highlighted a decision taken by Shevardnadze not to attribute significant amounts of money to the power ministries to avoid building more coherent and combat-capable structures for fear of the role they may acquire on the domestic stage. The blind eye turned by Shevardnadze to endemic corruption throughout the security sector offset deliberate under-financing. Endemic corruption was a predictable result of these circumstances, as the lower levels of security bodies developed survival tactics to offset pittance salaries that were never paid on time. At the higher level, however, corruption symbolised the cooption of powerful elites into a regime that was itself segmented and corrupt.

A third unwritten rule of the game concerned the settlement of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. After the failure to achieve the restoration of territorial control by force in the early 1990s, the Georgian leadership developed a *non-policy* to the settlement of the conflicts. The non-policy had several dimensions. First, President Shevardnadze was never willing to grasp the nettle of defeat suffered on the battlefield or to entertain the possibilities of serious compromise with Abkhazia or South Ossetia. In addition, Shevardnadze remained fixated on the notion of an external *deus ex machina* to solve the conflicts on Georgian term. The external saviour of choice varied at different points over the 1990s. In 1994, faced with very limited options, Shevardnadze favoured Russia – the Georgian president approved the deployment of Russian peacekeeping operation and allowed Russia to retain four military bases in 1994 with the implicit understanding hat Russia would not only stop providing support to the Abkhaz but help Tbilisi restore control over its lost territory[16]. Later in the 1990s, Shevardnadze's hopes fixed on military assistance by the U.S. and other members of NATO. The launch of GTEP was presented by Tbilisi as a

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and Robert L. Larsson, 'Georgia's Missing Security Compass,' *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst* (July 2, 2003).

[16] On the misunderstood bargain between Moscow and Tbilisi, see the author's *The Conflict in Abkhazia: Dilemmas in Russian 'Peacekeeping' Policy* (Chatham House Discussion Paper No. 77: London, 1998).

first step to the restoration of Georgian territorial integrity. The fixation on an external saviour attenuated any urgency in Tbilisi to accept compromise in order to settle the conflicts.

At the same time, Tbilisi sought to isolate the separatist region of Abkhazia through 1996 trade restrictions by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and to pressure the separatist authorities through tacit support to the activities of the paramilitary groups, the *White Legion* and the *Forest Brothers*. The objective was to delay until the Georgian government was strong enough to restore control by force or until it had secured an external source of support willing to do so. Certainly, comprehensive settlement of the conflict with Abkhazia was never seriously envisaged by Tbilisi, despite years of Georgian participation in the negotiations under the UN-led 'Geneva Process'. Shevardnadze's support to the Abkhaz government-in-exile, led by Tamaz Nadareishvili, was another facet of the non-policy of settlement. These structures were created by Shevardnadze to offset pressures *inside* Georgian politics and not to advance conflict settlement, which their existence in fact undermined.

A fourth rule of the game concerned the absence of the Georgian Security Concept. Despite internal and external pressures to clarify Georgia's main foreign policy direction, the main threats to Georgian security and responses to these, Shevardnadze avoided approving a Georgian Security Concept. A first reason for this avoidance was the former president's desire to avoid clarifying the shape of Georgia's security sector and undertaking comprehensive reform. Secondly, Shevardnadze sought to avoid clarifying definitively Georgia's foreign policy orientation in order to not create external threats that might challenge his domestic hold on political power. As a result, Shevardnadze never fully engaged Georgia either on a pro-Western direction, on the lines followed by the Baltic states, or on a pro-Russian direction, on the lines that Armenia has taken. As analysed in this volume, Shevardnadze's policy towards Russian basing rights fluctuated according to calculations of the need to sustain the foundations of power.

The results of this distorted game were four fold. First, by 2004, Georgia's security sector remained largely unreformed. The sector is fragmented, institutions have overlapping responsibilities, and subjective forms of political control predominate. Second, corruption has become endemic throughout the security sector. Although his words must be understood in the right political context, the description by Saakashvili's new Ministry of Interior, Giorgi Baramidze, of state of affairs he inherited is telling: 'The system was 100 per cent built on corruption. Every single relationship inside this ministry and all relations between the ministry and the public were based on corruption. This ministry was involved in the drug business, weapons smuggling, extortion, and kidnapping'[17]. Third, as a whole, the security agencies had poor legitimacy in Georgian society. The conditions of service were terrible

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[17]   Interview of Baramidze by Ken Stier, *Eurasia Insight* (December 19, 2003) on http://www.eurasianet.org 'Behind a desk, Georgian Official Promises War on Corruption' http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/qanda/articles/eav121903_pr.shtml

for young conscripts, thereby increasing draft evasion, and many security agencies had developed predatory relations with society as a whole. Finally, the ambiguity of Georgia's external direction was being played out internally through the presence of foreign security forces and the non-settlement of Georgia's conflicts.

Saakashvili's First Steps

In January 2004, Mikhail Saakashvili did not inherit a blank slate but an enfeebled state with a distorted, unreformed and heavily corrupt security sector and a disenchanted and impoverished society. The new leadership has sought to redraw the game as it emerged under Shevardnadze. The wave of high-level arrest and the countrywide crackdown on criminal groups has been the most visible sign of new ambitions. With regard to security sector governance, Saakashvili has taken steps at three levels.

First, both Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania, the first Prime Minister, who died in a tragic accident, declared security reform a priority of the new government[18]. Tbilisi has made clear its determination to implement the reform of the security sector, which had remained declaratory under Shevardnadze. Personnel changes have 'civilianised' the leadership of the power ministries, and substantial reductions are planned in each of them. Lines of duplication will be eased through the incorporation of the Border Guard service into the Ministry of Interior and its reform to assume a greater policing role in a Ministry, which is itself moving towards more preventive and policing functions. As such, the Interior Troops will come under the control of the Ministry of Defence. Moreover, the widespread crackdown on illegal groups signals Tbilisi's will to restore a legitimate monopoly on the use of force throughout the country. So far so good.

However, these steps have also raised doubts. The personnel changes occurred quickly and with some fanfare. However, the timeframe for the comprehensive reform of the power ministries is unclear; certainly, it will be a lengthy and painful process. In addition, despite an early pledge by Zhvania to increase security expenditure to 2% of GDP, the 2004 budget saw no increase in defence spending. Even with foreign assistance to support salary and maintenance costs in the security agencies, the new government will face great difficultly in increasing defence spending in a quasi-bankrupt state[19]. Comprehensive reform remains therefore in some doubt, as it is always a costly process. Moreover, the constitutional changes rushed through the previous parliament in early February 2004 muddy the picture in terms of security sector governance. The strengthening of executive power in budgetary questions has weakened the overall place of the parliament in Georgian

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[18] See Mikhail Saakashvili's speech at the Johns Hopkins University, SAIS, Washington DC, February 24, 2004, reproduced by *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst*; and 'Zhvania outlines Cabinet Priorities,' *Civil Georgia* (February 17, 2004), http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=6242

[19] Saakashvili has openly admitted the budgetary constraints on the new government: 'The treasury is absolutely empty. That is why we won't be able to improve the situation in just one day,' *Civil Georgia* (January 24, 2004), www.civil.ge Saakashvili vows improvements with drastic measures http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=6090

politics. The vital role of parliamentary security sector oversight and accountability is certain to be affected.

Second, Saakashvili has made Georgia's external destiny clear: it lies in the closest ties possible with NATO and the EU. The appointment of the former Defence Minister, David Tevzadze, as Ambassador to NATO, presages an increased focus on formulating a credible – however long-term the plan remains at present – Membership Action Plan by the new government. Salome Zourabishvili's designation as Foreign Minister, after a distinguished career in the French Foreign Ministry, is another sign of a heavy European focus in foreign policy, in particular with the aim of developing closer ties to the EU and the possible inclusion of Georgia in the its *New Neighbourhood* Initiative[20].

This new thrust to Georgian foreign policy has not excluded the development of ties with Russia. Saakashvili's first foreign visit was to Russia, and he has made concerted efforts to lay out lines of concord with the Russian leadership. Most visibly, Saakashvili reversed Shevardnadze's policy to protecting the Georgian-Russian border. Shevardnadze's policy to the question of ensuring the non-passage of Chechen fighters across this border and into the Pankisi Valley was a mess; Tbilisi first refused to acknowledge the presence of Chechen fighters in Georgia or to countenance the idea of legitimate Russian concerns; then, it became clear that parts of the Georgian security forces had relations with Chechen groups in Pankisi. Saakashvili is intent on cleaning up the criminal groups active in Pankisi and cutting their links with Georgian law enforcement. Moreover, the new president has accepted the notion of joint Russian-Georgian border patrols to monitor the border, on the basis that 'terrorism is a common threat' to both countries[21]. Addressing a major Russian concern, Saakashvili stated in late January that 'from now on, all armed people who try to get into Georgia will be arrested and handed over to the countries they are citizens of'[22].

Yet, uncertainties remain over key questions affecting Georgian security: how will Saakashvili address the question of the withdrawal of Russia's remaining bases? What policy does the new government have towards Russian peacekeeping in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? Answers to these questions will provide signs as to the future direction of Georgian foreign policy: either towards sustained ambiguity or towards genuine certainty of choice.

This leads to the third dimension: Saakashvili's policy towards the territories and regions that are beyond Tbilisi's control. Thus far, Saakashvili has adopted contradictory approaches to the question of Tbilisi's relationship to South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adjaria. The new president has presented the conflict with South Ossetia as a criminal

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[20]   *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbour* (Commission Communication COM(203) 104 final: Brussels, 11.3.2003). The idea of including the three South Caucasus states in the new initiative in the medium term was given wings by the 'Rose Revolution' and demand from the region itself. The Irish Presidency will deliver an opinion on the question by the end of June 2004.

[21]   Saakashvili cited in 'Georgia, Russia to Sign Border Guard Accord,' *Civil Georgia* (February 11, 2004), http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=6207

[22]   *Agence France Presse*, January 27, 2004.

problem, which can be resolved through law enforcement methods[23]. Tbilisi has ruled out the use of force in Abkhazia, reined in the *Forest Brothers* and the *White Legion*, and forced out the deeply corrupt Tamaz Nadareishvili from Abkhazia-in-exile. While positive, these polices do not alter the essence of Georgia's past policy of delay and non-compromise. Saakashvili hopes that the installation of a more effective blockade against Abkhazia, by cracking down on Georgian criminal groups involved in smuggling in Gali and by enforcing strict control over trade by sea, will alter Sukhumi's policy and force the separatists to compromise. On the central question of political status, the new president has only repeated Shevardnadze's previous offer of the 'broadest possible autonomy' – an offer that the Abkhaz have consistently rejected.

Moreover, Saakashvili has chosen the restoration of central control over the Autonomous Republic of Adjaria as the first major test of his presidency. The government instituted a blockade against region in the run-up to the March 2004 parliamentary elections, with an ultimatum calling for the conduct of free elections and the disarming of Aslan Abashidze's paramilitary forces, including Georgia's 25th Brigade, deployed in the regional capital of Batumi, which refused to obey the president's orders. In May, Saakashvili renewed the ultimatum for disarming forces and returning the region to Georgia's constitutional order, under the threat of dissolving the current leadership and calling for new elections.

On the one hand, Saakashvili is correct in seeking to restore the unity of the Georgia's constitutional space and the central authorities' monopoly of the organised use of violence. Under Abashidze, Adjaria has been independent from the rest of Georgia is almost all dimensions except name. However, the use of ultimatums carrying the implicit threat of military intervention are likely to prove counter-productive not only in Adjaria - where it could backfire - but also in future dealings with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Saakashvili is driven by the notion of unifying the Georgian state and nation: 'I will do my best to strengthen our country and restore its territorial integrity. This is the supreme goal of my life. The Georgian nation deserves a better future'[24], The conflation of the Georgian nation with territorial integrity and of the *state of Georgia* with the *Georgian nation* is worrying. In the traditional sense, Georgia is a multi-national country, with a number of important national minorities, some of which have declared independence from Tbilisi. The insistence on the Georgian nation as the defining attribute of the Georgian state was one of the causes of the conflicts that ravaged Georgia in the early 1990s.

Underlying these considerations resides more profound questions: is Ajar autonomy the greatest priority of the new leadership? Was this the reason for the overwhelming support provided to

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[23] The Georgian government have developed plans to cut off the smuggling routes through South Ossetia and place pressure on the criminal interests that underpin the separatist region.

[24] Cited in 'New Leader Vows to hold next Inauguration in Abkhazia,' *Civil Georgia* (January 24, 2004), http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=6088

Saakashvili in January 2004? Certainly not. The handling of the Ajar crisis raises doubts about the new government's ability to satisfy popular expectations over the short term. It also throws light on the reckless gene at the heart of the new leadership – this may have been a source of strength in that it led to the 'Rose Revolution' but it may also become a fatal weakness.

Principles for Moving Ahead

The principles for moving towards healthy reform of Georgia's security sector may be divided into two categories. They can be summed up as follows. First, there are principles for the Georgian Government

The new government must sustain its push to fashion a more healthy security sector governance and move away from reliance on external support to drive reform. Reform must be comprehensive, taking in all parts of the security sector, and be driven internally. Much more than personnel changes and police arrests, this process must be root and branch in its scope.

The new government should clarify for internal and external audiences its vision of Georgia's future, its interpretation of the main security threats and how to respond to these, in a publicly debated Security Concept[25]. This Concept will eliminate counter-productive ambiguity and make a new universe of expectations for Georgian policy in the future clear for all domestic and external actors.

The new government must pick the right battles for its first year in power in order to sustain popular support and avoid social disenchantment. The main challenges that concern Georgian society are those of welfare, education, healthcare and stability. Settlement of the question of territorial control will be easier when Georgia proper is able to stand on its own.

And, second, there are principles for the International Community. International actors must check and balance the policy directions taken by the new government, in order to retain a focus on reform and the main priority of strengthening the institutions of state.

The international community must rethink the concept of security sector governance to include those elements that are beyond Tbilisi's control – in Abkhazia, Adjaria and South Ossetia. Some consideration must be given to supporting more healthy security sector governance within these regions.

International actors must coordinate their actions amongst themselves in assisting Georgian security sector, in order to achieve a better synergy of effort[26]. In order to push for comprehensive reform, beyond the armed forces, new international actors should be encouraged

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[25] Tbilisi should avoid using the term *national* security, an Americanism that is not appropriate for a multi-national country. Hence, one should refer to Georgia's Security Council and Security Concept.

[26] The US-led 'South Caucasus Clearing House,' launched by EUCOM in December 2003, is a good start towards greater coordination of international security assistance.

to provide assistance to the Georgian internal security bodies. The EU can play a positive role in this respect[27].

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[27] At the level of policy declaration, the EU has recognised the need to play a role in security sector reform: the EU Commission's Communication on Conflict Prevention, of April 2001, attributes importance to security sector reform as a key part of a conflict prevention strategy, see *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention* (COM 2001 211 Final: Brussels, 11.04.2001). However, the EU must move towards acting on these statements.