DEFENCE WHITE PAPER PROJECT

GEORGIA 2017

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The Georgia 2017 document highlights the organizational and structural changes that the Georgian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) must implement to keep up with the changing security complexes. This document determines the actions that need to be undertaken by Georgia by 2020. To understand the need for the intended changes as highlighted by the document, I will be splitting my paper into three parts. The first part would give an overview of the security challenges and threats faced by Georgia in and around the region, the second part would then emphasize the major changes and reforms within the MoD and the GAF that are necessary to meet the security environment, and lastly the third part would then analyse the relevance of these changes in the current international context of Georgia.

Understanding Georgia's security environment is crucial for the country's military planners as this would highlight the areas on which the GAF and the MoD would have to put their emphasis. To understand Georgia's security threats and challenges, we need to look at the security threats through two lenses, local and global. Due to Georgia's geographical location, Georgia has to circumvent the challenges of an uncertain Russia, while also keeping in check with the global security developments.

First, let us understand the Russian and the local threats to the Georgian security environment. When analysing the local threats, Georgia's most pressing concern is its proximity to the Russians and its military presence in Georgia's occupied regions and occupation of Georgia's territories. The Russian military contingent has mobilized in large numbers in the occupied territories, as well as the increasing militarization process and intense military drills on the ground, pose a large-scale threat that threatens not only Georgia but the entire South Caucasian region. The situation in the occupied regions of Tskhinvali and Abkhazia, which are not under the control of the central government of Georgia, allows the Russian Federation's special services to initiate or stage terrorist activities for its own operational, military, and political purposes. Russian occupation forces and de facto authorities have openly discriminated against ethnic Georgians living in occupied territories, restricting their freedom of movement and access to education in their native language, detaining them for alleged illegal border crossings, and forcing them to pay increased amounts of alleged fines. This illegal process of "borderization" along the occupation line, led by Russian

Federal Security Service representatives, is a very serious challenge to Georgia's security as these actions by Russia are not only violations of international law and fundamental rights but also of Georgia's sovereignty.

Now moving on to the global threats that the Georgian security environment has to comprehend. Globally due to the effects of globalization, there have been many negative aspects which have emerged through this phenomenon. These aspects include climate change, transnational terrorism, cybercrime and migration. These negative aspects of globalization have had a significant negative impact on the security environment of all countries. Thus, these same aspects pose a great threat to the Georgian security environment as well.

One of the most critical aspects which go into planning defensive policy frameworks is identifying potential enemies and allies. Now when analysing Georgia's security document, we can see that according to the document Georgia's defensive policies are based on certain assumptions about the positions of the US, EU and Russia.

Over the decade, Russia has been a very defensively unstable entity in Georgia's security environment. As explained earlier the threat posed by Russia to Georgia remains one of Georgia's biggest security concerns, the defence document for the years 2017-20 is based on certain key assumptions of the position of Russia over time. Thus, the defence recommendations of 2017 are based on the assumption that Russia would act in a negative way toward Georgia's security. It is assumed that Russia would act towards impairing the region; it would do so by undermining Georgia's national unity and attempts to create conflict in form of ethnicity and religion. As opposed to Russia, the United States and the European Union have been close allies to Georgia, especially in the arena of defence. The framework of Georgia's defence recommendations is based on the assumption that the US would act as a strategic partner for Georgia. This would firstly deter Russian aggression, and military cooperation between the US and Georgia would help enhance Georgia's defensive institutions. The European Union on the other hand is assumed to be a regional stabiliser for Georgia. It is assumed that through constant missions with the EU, Georgia can

achieve stability in the form of trade and economics which would also help in stabilizing the region.

As a result of these assumptions, the Ministry of Defence has set the 2017-2020 goals on the basics of creating a defence system that would be capable of preventing any enemies of the Georgian state from invading Georgia's territories. According to the document, achieving this goal will help the country's national security by combining "diplomatic, economic, and informational deterrence factors." The SDR visualizes that the Georgian Armed Forces would adopt a 'Total defence principle'. This approach is based on the strategy that the defence system of the country would be based on defending the entire territory of the country. This defence of the country would be based on employing full "national effort, employing both military and civil resources". The total defence also entails "continuing resistance through both conventional and non-conventional means."

The document also identifies reserve and conscription as critical components of the total defence concept that would help "support the active component of the Armed Forces during a crisis/war situation," emphasizing that the MoD envisions conscription reinstatement specifically within the framework of total defence. The new conscription system, according to the SDR, will include a battle training course for all recruits. The new reserve system will be divided into three parts-army, territorial, and specialist reserves. Another component of the national defence system designated as critical in the SDR is air defence. The document cites the 2008 war as an example of Georgia's inadequacy in air defence and emphasizes the importance of acquiring modern capabilities in this regard to resist potential future aggression.

An important aspect highlighted in the document is Georgia's limited financial resources. The document emphasizes the necessity as well as the need to prioritize defence policies that could aid in battle readiness. In light of this, the document still calls for the prioritizing of the gradual restructuring of the military budget to eventually reach the NATO standard of no more than 50% spending on personnel and at least 20% spending on weapons acquisition.

The document also informs us that Georgia does not expect significant changes in defence spending during the reporting period, predicting that it will remain within 2% of GDP. Simultaneously, the document lists the MoD's new projects for the coming years that can be funded by the military budget, such as air defence, reserve and mobilization systems, transport and attack helicopters, and anti-armour capabilities.

Another priority emphasized by the SDR is cooperation with Georgia's partners. The Georgia Defence Readiness Program (GDRP), which is funded by the United States, is expected to help "strengthen combat capability and increase battle readiness level of the Armed Forces." Georgia will also continue to participate in NATO international missions and military exercises, as well as the NATO Response Force, according to the document (NRF). The document also envisages participation in EU and UN missions. The risks to Georgia's security, according to the MoD, are "somewhat mitigated" by holding international military exercises in Georgia, such as the Agile Spirit, Noble Partner, and NATO-GEO EX 16 exercises. Georgia's priority, according to the document, is to work with NATO members and partners on "issues of security and stability in the Black Sea and South Caucasus region."

As a whole, the challenges faced by Georgia are diverse and, in some cases, originate from regional and worldwide trends, according to the country's security environment. The Russian Federation, on the other hand, is the source of Georgia's main and existential dangers. And with the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis, Georgia's condition too is one of concern due to its Geographical proximity. But when analysing the crisis through the defence recommendations of 2017, we can safely say that Georgia's defence system is well equipped to handle any sort of potential dangers arising from Russian aggression. This is most of the defence recommendations of 2017 are based on the reform of the defence system within the country. Also, a critical part of the recommendations is Georgia's multilateral and bilateral engagement with NATO and EU lead missions. Thus, due to these aspects, the threat posed by the Russian theatre does not put Georgia in a vulnerable position like Ukraine.

But during recent years, Georgia has also been the target of cyber espionage and full-scale cyber-attacks on several occasions. The number of cybercrimes is increasing every day, according to statistics from the Ministry of Internal Affairs[i]. Another security threat to Georgia is terrorism. Now, this is a very big concern for Georgia's security environment. Although the security documents of 2017 highlight the potential threat of cybercrime, it does not have any specific policy recommendations to tackle this problem. Georgia's present cyber strategy and measures are insufficient to assure cyber security and respond to new problems. The mechanisms for coordination, cooperation, and information exchange have not been fully refined, a comprehensive list of critical infrastructure has not been developed, and the entire cyber system is not supported by proper legislative norms because the country does not have strictly separated functions and responsibilities between state agencies.[ii]

Another challenge to Georgia is terrorism. The breakaway areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia pose a threat of terrorism[iii]. Near the de-facto borders separating these regions from Georgia proper, there is a higher risk of kidnappings, shootouts, and low-level IED assaults. There were no hotspots of terrorist ideology identified in Georgia in 2020, according to the latest report on security threats presented to parliament by the State Security Service in April 2021, and there were no cases of Georgian citizens departing for Syria or Iraq to join international terrorist organisations in 2020 which is a silver lining for Georgia's security environment. In light of the threats posed by terrorism, the security document of 2017 does not have any specific policy related to countering terrorism. But this is because the Georgian legislature adopted various changes and policy frameworks during 2013-2015 to combat terrorism[iv]. Apart from this, it has also been working closely with the UN and the European Union in matters relating to combating terror.

End Notes and Bibliography

[i] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, Internet and Innovations Policy Document, 23 September 2020.

[ii] Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, Internet and Innovations Policy Document, 23 September 2020.

[iii] Statement on the Sixth Committee, 76th Session of the UNGA by the delegation of Georgia.

[iv] National CT strategy of Georgia.