



Funded through the Democracy Outreach Program,
U.S. Embassy in Georgia

**The National Security and International Relations Program's
Alumni Leadership Conference
NEWSLETTER**

15 November 2011
Tbilisi



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Funded by:
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Scope of the Conference

On 15 November 2011 GFSIS organized the National Security and International Relations Program's Alumni Leadership Conference. The aim of the conference was to create a unique opportunity for the Program Alumni to share their achievements and to reinvigorate professional networking. The Conference was hosted by Dr. Alexander Rondeli, the President of GFSIS. The

honorary guest of the event was H.E. Mr. John R. Bass, the U.S. Ambassador to Georgia. At the high-level conference, selected graduates holding different high-level positions across the public, private and civil society sectors presented their professional achievements and successful policies. The set-up of the conference allowed all participants to discuss the pressing issues, challenges, and prospects for maximizing the alumni network benefits. The conference was moderated by Dr. Vladimer Papava and Dr. Archil Gegeshidze, Senior Fellows at GFSIS.

The program in National Security and International Relations carried out by GFSIS from 2001 through 2008 with the U.S. government's financial support was the Foundation's one of the most successful capacity building initiatives. Over the course of eight years, the Program has reached out to a critical mass of young, initiative-driven Georgian professionals and has contributed to the creation of a progressive group of new leaders. The program graduates total 133 alumni, of which a considerable number have gone through significant career promotions and attained influential positions across the Georgian public, private, and non-governmental sectors. During the first years of the project's existence, the RAND Corporation assisted GFSIS as its implementing partner.

The Program's Alumni Leadership Conference was funded through the Democracy Outreach Program, U.S. Embassy in Georgia.

This newsletter published under the same scheme compiles the program highlights, success stories, and program findings shared by the Alumni at the conference. The program experts and partners who invested their time and effort in launching this initiative have also contributed to this publication, reflecting on the importance of the program and looking back at its achievements ten years later. The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies expresses its deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to everyone who made this endeavor possible.





Letter from the President GFSIS

Dear Alumni:

One of the greatest and most rewarding pleasures of my work is my constant interaction with our alumni from all years, places, and walks of life. Our graduates are our most valuable asset and we follow their professional achievements with pride.

The establishment of GFSIS directly correlates to the development of Georgia's strategic culture and national security principles. In the late 90's it became apparent that the young Republic of Georgia lacked analysts, experts and professionals on national security issues, policy analysis and policy planning. This proved to be a significant gap and a setback to the development of Georgia, which our Foundation has targeted as its mission goal.

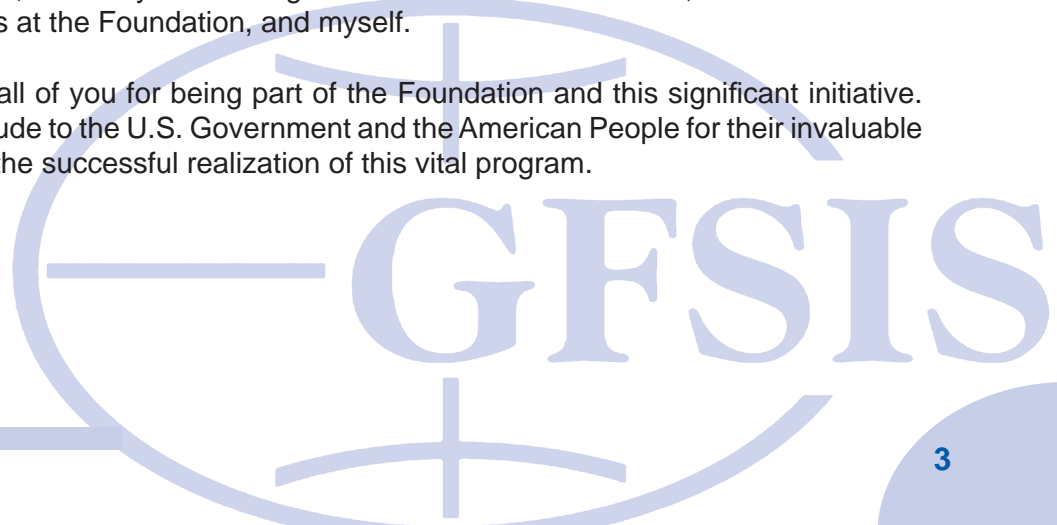
One of our first projects, and probably the most successful one, was the National Security and International Relations Program – this multiyear joint initiative developed and implemented with the support of RAND Corporation. The program was conducted with the U.S. government's financial support from 2001 through 2008.

Among the numerous projects carried out by GFSIS, the National Security and International Relations Program has always been and remains as one of the most pleasant achievements, because it entailed work with the best representatives of the Georgian youth and in many cases plays an integral and formative role in their early professional development. Over the course of eight years, the Program has reached out to a critical mass of young, initiative-driven Georgian professionals and has contributed to the creation of a progressive group of new leaders. Looking back at the program from the current perspective and the number of its graduates totaling 133 alumni, we can see that the efforts and enthusiasm invested in this initiative by both Georgians and Americans have yielded the envisioned results and have immensely contributed to Georgia's human capital growth and institution-building. Our Fellows have earned significant career promotions, and though the majority of them are public servants – a focus area of the program – they have attained influential positions in diverse spheres of government, business, journalism, NGO and non-profit work, et cetera.

We fully understand the importance of keeping the Alumni informed and connected, as well as providing you with the capability to reunite and network with one another for both professional and personal benefit. This was the aim of this conference, which was funded through the Democracy Outreach Program, U.S. Embassy in Georgia. During the conference the selected program graduates shared their professional achievements and successful policies. In order to ensure the project's sustainability and to expand its impact, the conference findings, and the program highlights are compiled and published as a program newsletter. Other contributors to this publication apart from some of the alumni include Ms. Sharon Hudson-Dean, from the U.S. State Department, former executive director of GFSIS, currently the Georgian Ambassador to the U.S., H.E. Mr. Temuri Yakobashvili, Senior Fellows at the Foundation, and myself.

I would like to kindly thank all of you for being part of the Foundation and this significant initiative. Lastly, we owe special gratitude to the U.S. Government and the American People for their invaluable and continuous support for the successful realization of this vital program.

**Alexander Rondeli,
President**





Ms. SHARON HUDSON-DEAN

**Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Harare, Zimbabwe
Former Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Tbilisi, Georgia**

Serving as the Public Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi from 2000-2003 was a unique, historic experience, and being a part of the creation of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) was in many ways the focal point of my assignment. At that time, the United States was investing substantial assistance funding in Georgian institutions and educational exchange programs through the Freedom Support Act (FSA). FSA became law in 1992 to promote free market and democratic reforms in the countries of the former Soviet Union. It was an historic investment in the stability and democratic development of the 15 countries of the “Newly Independent States.” In Georgia, our partnership with several progressive policymakers brought about groundbreaking initiatives, including the drive to establish a think tank that would lead the region in analysis, commentary, and senior civil servant training.

Diplomats rarely get to help start daring institutions - such as GFSIS was envisioned at the time - and see them grow and flourish. In retrospect, I believe the founding institutional principles and the new organization’s leaders represented an ideal mix of intellectual, practical and long-term perspectives that insured GFSIS would be a success. It was an honor to have been a part of this group and to contribute as much as I could to such a forward-leaning and valuable organization.

Think tanks are a vital part of democratic, growth-oriented societies. They push government and the private sector out of their comfort zones, help develop alternatives to modern day problems by stimulating debate, and hold authorities accountable with objective, data-based research and analysis. The media and academia are also better able to do their own jobs of challenging and questioning current practices when assisted by a think tank’s in-depth independent writing and speaking platforms. GFSIS was designed to play this role in Georgia and has worked hard to earn a place among the best research organizations of the world.

GFSIS was also designed at the beginning to go beyond the classic research and publishing activities in order to meet the specific needs of Georgia’s young democracy. Transitioning from a Soviet to a modern bureaucracy required time, training, and a clear national agenda. GFSIS filled a gap left in the existing institutions by setting out to train a new generation of Georgian leaders and bureaucrats in the critical public management and innovative thinking skills necessary to advance national development and growth in the 21st century. As such, the GFSIS fellows program was part of today’s important trend of mentoring and leadership training. In the same years that Temuri Yakobashvili, Alex Rondeli and I interviewed the first groups of GFSIS fellows for the RAND training program, Secretary of State Colin Powell introduced mandatory leadership training for U.S. diplomats. Many other private and public organizations over the last ten years have also recognized and promoted the value of investing in their people in this manner, and the results are concrete and measurable today.

In my further diplomatic assignments, I have seen societal gaps that call out for an independent, critical voice to help government, NGOs and citizens engage in productive debate about real issues and practical solutions. GFSIS embodies the research, critical analysis and technocrat training and interaction that are springboards for national development. I am honored to have been a part of the creation of GFSIS and wish the organization continued success as a leading think tank in Georgia and the Caucasus, as well as serving as a model for similar institutions worldwide.



H.E. Mr. TEMURI YAKOBASHVILI
Ambassador of Georgia to the United States of America
Former Executive Director, GFSIS

National Security and International Relations Program was one of GFSIS's flagship initiatives that largely defined it as one of Georgia's most reputable policy think tanks. By means of this program GFSIS was able to reach one of its foremost objectives: raise the level of expertise among the young professionals involved in the areas of international relations and national security. From 2001 through 2008 with the generous support from the U.S. government, GFSIS provided an unprecedented platform for developing new kind of leaders as it offered a professional training program specifically tailored to develop policy planning and decision making skills among promising professional cadre from various governmental bodies. An indispensable involvement of RAND Corporation in the first years of the program implementation raised its profile and helped GFSIS in building its own institutional capacity as of a policy oriented think tank and a provider of professional training programs promoting an informed public policy decision-making.

Today, as we reflect on the history of this program and its achievements, I can proudly declare that it delivered on its promise – many of 133 professionals that form its outstanding alumni community hold key positions in the Georgian government and play important role in the policy decision making. I am particularly happy to see that they are able to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired by participating in the program to their work as well as watch them go through significant career growth. This is one of the program's most important outcomes and validates much of our initial thinking that shaped the concept of this initiative – to create a community of like-minded, competent professionals coming from different clusters of public sector which would contribute to promotion of a new model for informed policy planning and policy making, thus, breaking away from the old-style practice of arbitrary decision making. As a result, the program responded to the two most urgent needs that Georgian public service faced in that period of time – established a pool of young, capable professionals equipped with appropriate decision-making and policy making skills while contributing to an increasing demand for such professional cadre across the country's public institutions.

There is one particular person without whose commitment, the program would simply not have been possible. Sharon Hudson-Dean's dedication has played a fundamental role for launching this program. A continuous support from the U.S. embassy throughout the program's lifetime has been one of the major factors that we took particular pride in.

Alumni Leadership Conference provides a wonderful opportunity to the program participants to come together and share their professional experiences. It is my hope that the linkages that have been established throughout the eight years of the program will be further cultivated and strengthened.



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Dr. ARCHIL GEGESHIDZE
Program Expert
Senior Fellow
GFSIS

More than a decade has passed since the establishment of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. The impetus for its creation existed even earlier. These were the times in the history of Georgia when the young republic was trying to build an independent state using a trial by error approach. It was a road filled with thorns. In a hostile environment in which the State felt itself surrounded by enemies, foreign and domestic, it proved difficult to plan the country's long-term development. The country was facing a number of challenges while lacking adequate intellectual resources to address them. Accordingly, many reckless mistakes have been made – the cost of which grew year by year. It was apparent that Georgia's decision making needed a strategic culture similar to the world's successful States. Luckily, the Georgian leadership back then acknowledged the importance of creating such a culture, and when the idea of establishing a think tank came up, it provided immediate backing. Apparently, without comprehensive support, however, it would have been impossible to fulfill such an ambitious project. Both financial assistance and the know-how to run such an organization was required for success. Obviously, as Georgia did not have adequate resources, they would have to be sought in a country with the most outstanding achievements in this sphere. It is nobody's guess that the United States of America, which by that time had already become Georgia's stalwart friend, would be the right source. Nevertheless, the realization of this idea and the breaking of bureaucratic barriers proved arduous. One of the key contributors to this process was Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, who at that time was the Head of Georgia's Foreign Service. His great efforts deserve particular recognition. Through Mr. Menagarishvili's continuous work with his American colleagues, namely William Taylor, the coordinator of U.S assistance to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, from U.S. State Department, the decision on providing institutional support to GFSIS was made.

This institutional support entailed two components: institution-building of GFSIS as an organization and simultaneously, the development and setting up of a professional training program in the field of national security and international relations. This program was intended to be a multi-year initiative. The U.S. Embassy in Georgia was selected as a local administrative body, which would oversee this process on the ground. The Embassy played an essential role in launching this educational enterprise. Although this program was concluded a few years ago in 2008, the Embassy's support of the Foundation has carried on and continues in different forms as part of the above mentioned decision on the institution-building of GFSIS. Additionally, special acknowledgements should be afforded to the RAND Corporation for its invaluable contribution to GFSIS' institutional support. The outstanding professionalism, dedication and hard work of Stephen Larrabee, Stephan De Spiegelleire, Robert Hunter, and other American scholars have prompted the desired result. The rapid success has created a new brand in Georgia – the "RAND Program." GFSIS gained instant name recognition and the program became extremely popular. The number of applicants was growing every year raising the degree of competition for every selection. Today the program has over 130 alumni many of whom are very successful in different areas, including the public, private, and non-governmental sectors. The overall success of the program is largely due to their enthusiasm and dedication to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Some would argue that one decade is not a long period of time. We could even recall from our world history textbooks that one decade is equal to one second, perhaps even less. For GFSIS this past decade was an entire era, while for its staff it was an important episode in their lives. Each and every employee of the Foundation has invested great effort and demonstrated exceptional dedication to common objective throughout the decade. Currently, the Foundation is facing new challenges, but its key mission goal has already been reached – GFSIS made its modest contribution in the creation of a new group of Georgian leaders with strategic thinking and analytical skills, which is so much needed in today's Georgia.



Professor VLADIMER PAPA
Program Expert
Senior Fellow
GFSIS

The launching of the National Security and International Relations program coincides with the start of GFSIS' full-fledged functioning as an independent think-tank and a research institution. This program was funded by the U.S. Government and apart from contributing to the human capital development in Georgia, was designed to establish a solid

framework for the institution-building of GFSIS. Although the staff of the Foundation was comprised of scholars with extensive experience of working in the public sector, as well as academic expertise, the RAND Corporation's involvement in this program as GFSIS' implementing partner played the decisive role in this initiative's success.

From the very beginning, the interest toward this program was profound among Georgian youth – so much that the selection process for even the first cohort was highly competitive. During the first years, the American scholars hand-picked by the Rand Corporation offered the majority of the training courses. Georgian experts gradually replaced them, and for the last couple of cohorts, the majority of the lectures were conducted by local scholars. The program ran for eight years and concluded in 2008.

An important segment of the alumni have continued their education abroad. Many have attained remarkable career promotions and high-level positions within the governmental and non-governmental sectors. No matter where they may go in the world, or in what areas they may work, our alumni keep their strong connection to GFSIS. Although the program has been suspended, there is a huge demand and interest among Georgian youth to have it restored. The GFSIS experts on our part are ready to impart our first hand knowledge and experience to the new generation of the Georgian leaders to enhance their qualifications, to expand their understanding and to facilitate their professional growth.





GEORGE TUGUSHI
Public Defender of Georgia
Class of 2001-2002

After graduating from the program, George worked as a Human Rights Officer in the OSCE mission to Georgia. In December 2005 he became a member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). He was elected for four years and re-elected in 2009. In 2009 he was elected as a Public Defender of Georgia for a five year term. In December 2011 he was elected as a member of the UN Committee against Torture for a term of four years. George obtained an LL.M. in International Human Rights Law from the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Lund University, Sweden.

It is my singular pleasure to share experience about my professional growth achieved after graduating from the National Security and International Relations Program run by GFSIS. This program provided an excellent training. The lectures on economics, international relations, security studies and many more opened the door to comprehensive understanding of international affairs. The course was an unwavering path for creating the future stakeholders who now play an important role in development of our country.

I attended the program in 2001 and as one of the first alumni I can attest to the greatest contribution of the lectures to my endeavours throughout the whole decade. Since the graduation I did my best to preserve and build upon the core values acquired during the program.

Being a decision-maker is a remarkable opportunity but it is an enormous responsibility at the same time. Rightful decisions and judgments come from experience and experience sharing with fellow decision makers and leaders is a key for these ends. Establishing important contacts and engaging in networking with alumni of the National Security program played an important role in my career. Thus, not only the training courses but the professional contacts and networking gained through the program played the crucial role in forming me as a leader.

I initiated and carried out range of reforms in Public Defender's Office:

- ✓ Legislative changes to the Organic Law on Public Defender of Georgia have been adopted. Guarantees of independence increased and authority of the Public Defender expanded.
- ✓ Accessibility to the Institution was improved. The number of regional offices increased. Now we have representation in 6 cities of different regions apart from Tbilisi.
- ✓ New Electronic Case Management System was introduced.
- ✓ The office extensively works to increase public awareness on human rights issues. I myself or representatives of different departments conduct different awareness raising activities such as conferences, round tables, trainings or giving the speeches on acute human rights issues.
- ✓ Continued development of specialized centres is one of the priorities: tolerance centre, council of religions, council of minorities, centre for disabled person's rights and centre for child's and woman's rights.
- ✓ The Public Defenders Office was designated as a National Preventive Mechanism, envisaged by the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. National Preventive Mechanism monitors the penitentiary institutions, isolators for temporary detention, military detention isolators, child care and psychiatric institutions, etc.
- ✓ Professional capacity of our staff is also gradually increasing which is one of the main strategies of the Ombudsman's office.

- ✓ Apart from presenting the annual human rights reports to Parliament, several specialized reports have been drafted. They tackle the most problematic human rights spheres such as rights of internally displaced persons and conflict-affected individuals, right to health and problems related to exercise of this right within the penitentiary system of Georgia, human rights of persons with disabilities, etc.

Lastly, I would like to use this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude towards Dr. Alexander Rondeli and the GFSIS team for running the program and facilitating professional growth of more than one hundred leaders in the Georgian public and civil society sectors.



LILY BEGIASHVILI
Deputy Head of the Georgia Revenue Service
Tax and Customs Administration
Class of 2001-2002

After completion of the Program in 2002, Lily was awarded the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Scholarship and went to the US, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Law for her LL.M degree study program. After returning to Georgia she joined the International Foundation of Election Systems (IFES) as

a Legal Advisor. Prior to being appointed as a Deputy Head of the Georgia Revenue Service (2009), she held the following positions: Deputy State Minister on Reforms Coordination (2005), Deputy Minister of Agriculture (2005), Deputy Minister of Economic Development (2004), Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Development (2004)

I was lucky enough to be among the very first participants back in 2001 when the National Security and International Relations Program was launched. The Program, completely different from any other programs offered during that time in our country, has opened real opportunities and exposed us to western knowledge, values and practices. Apart invited scholars and practitioners who shared their knowledge and experience with us, and the involvement of the RAND Corporation, the Program was made possible because of tremendous personal inputs from Dr. Alexander Rondeli, Mr. Temuri Yakobashvili and Dr. Vladimer Papava and many other Georgian professionals. And I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to these great personalities for their initiative, willingness and strengths of moving this Program and GFSIS forward.

Once during one of the sessions at GFSIS while being in the midst of hot discussions about the ongoing situation in Georgia, I was told that I would be given a chance to change what I did not like in our lives. And now, when I look back to that moment, those words sound like a real magic to me: analytical skills and public policy tools gained during the Program are the true pillars I always rely on.

In 2004, I became a Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Development, and later deputy minister of Economic Development and we started to carry out fundamental reforms combating corruption and improving business environment in the country. I served as a Deputy State Minister on reforms coordination, when one of the most significant reforms was implemented – licenses and permit system reform – which gave the new breath to businesses and simplified business activities.

In 2005 I was appointed on a position of a Deputy Minister of Agriculture and I was given a chance to participate in reforming the Ministry of Agriculture from extremely corrupted agency to a modern public institution focusing on food safety, veterinary and phyto-sanitary safety of the country, to revise old-fashioned legislation, and to start improving quality standards and production practices of Georgian wines and wine sector, in order to meet world's market requirements and diversify our market after Russian embargo of 2006.

Since 2009, I serve as a Deputy Head of the Georgia Revenue Service, unified tax and customs administration, and in line with drafting new tax code and revising whole secondary legislation in tax and customs spheres, our administration implemented number of fundamental reforms for full eradication of corruption in customs and tax spheres, for improving infrastructure and offering better services to taxpayers. Our goal is to create fair, simple and reliable tax system in the country – that will be based on mutual trust between taxpayers and the Revenue Service, where Revenue Service is the real partner and friend to business companies. Number of new institutes serve for improving business environment: Personal Tax Agent; Advance Ruling; Tax Agreement; Special Tax Regimes – Micro and Small Businesses; Good Faith Principle; RS Commission for Production Losses; Risk Based Audits and Alternative Tax Audit; Mediation vs. Dispute Resolution; District Tax Officers; Special VAT Regime; Golden List; Unified customs and revenue taxpayer files; Creation of Customs Clearance Zones in Tbilisi, Batumi, and Poti; Electronic Filing and Electronic Tax Administration through new official web-portal www.rs.ge, that allowed business companies to drastically decrease time spend for dealing with business regulations down to only 2 percent; So, according to the *Enterprise Surveys* Georgia ranks number one in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where firms spend only 2 percent of their times dealing with business regulations:

Thanks to these reforms we decreased the average border crossing time down to 5 minutes and average customs clearance time down to 15 minutes, thus creating one of the most competitive customs procedures facilitating international trade. What we are aiming at is to improve taxpayers culture voluntarily to comply with the requirements of the tax legislation, that coupled with simplified and transparent procedures create fair and competitive business environment for all taxpayers where doing a business will be the most attractive and easy among all countries in the world.

To sum up, I would like to say that the main achievement of GFSIS and the Program is that they have managed to create enormous human capital and to establish a solid professional network. I have met many amazing and truly inspirational people at GFSIS, we became real friends, and I can always count on their support and professionalism, and I am really proud to be part of this great and outstanding family!



GEORGE NANOBASHVILI
Economic Development Team Leader, UNDP
Class of 2002-2003

After graduating from this program in 2003 George joined the National Security Council of Georgia as a Policy Analyst. In 2005 he was appointed as the Head of Economic Analysis and Policy Department at the Ministry of Economic Development. In 2009 he moved to UNDP Georgia Country Office to the position of Economic Development Team Leader where he works on poverty reduction, regional, institutional and sector development aspects.

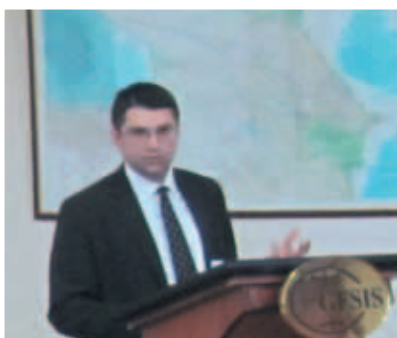
The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies has played a very important role in developing my policy analysis skills, applicable in many aspects and sectors in Georgia. This Foundation is very well positioned to deliver training for perspective and functioning policy analysts, decision-makers and opinion-crafters. It is not only an institution, which enriches its fellows with knowledge and skills, but it also introduces them to a vast network of professionals. And this network is not limited only to Georgia. GFSIS provides an invaluable opportunity to establish professional links and network with Georgian and foreign practitioners, researchers, scholars and academics alike.

GFSIS launched its most popular program in International Security and Policy Analysis (so called *RAND Program*) in early 2000's when there was a serious need for improvements and profound

reform of almost all sectors in Georgia. GFSIS provided the Georgian civil servants, professionals working at different NGOs and international organizations, journalists with an opportunity to develop their public policy skills and elaborate policy papers in relevant areas of their activity.

After a short experience of work in the civil society sector and in research, GFSIS selected me for the program and facilitated my professional development allowing me to engage into national security and economic development policy elaboration processes. Later on, I had a pleasure to be a member of the Policy Analysts group of the National Security Council of Georgia - the project supported by the State Department and the RAND Corporation, which aimed at improving the analytical capacities of the Council. The project gave me the possibility to influence the highest level decision making on strategic aspects of economic security and development issues that helped me immensely later in my career, first at the Department on Economic Analysis and Policy, Ministry of Economy and then at the UNDP's Economic Development Team.

In conclusion I would like to say that GFSIS provided me with a great opportunity to grow as a professional by enhancing my knowledge and skills in applied research and policy making, which proved to be a powerful impetus in my career development.



REVAZ BAKHTADZE
Head of Analysis and Coordination Division
Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
Class of 2002-2003

Revaz holds B.A. and M. A. in International Relations from Tbilisi State University. He is the Head of Analysis and Coordination Division at the Department of Information and Analysis, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, and the Department of Information and Analysis, in particular, have perhaps the highest concentration of the National Security and International Relations program alumni. We started our education at GFSIS before the Revolution of Roses and we could not fully appreciate the scope and depth of the program. However, when we, the small group of enthusiasts, joined the Ministry, which was at the time called the Ministry of State Security, the solution of myriad of problems we faced required the very techniques taught by the outstanding faculty of the program.

The small group of alumni at the Department of Information and Analysis not only worked on analytical problems, but also participated in the reform process of the Ministry that united both police and intelligence sectors. Now, after more than 7 years Georgia is a safe country where serious and petty crimes have decreased tremendously. The Ministry enjoys more than 80 percent of public trust according to various international studies and polls. I believe that no financial and technical aid can match the help to the development of human resources. That's why the Program proved itself so important for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and our leadership appreciates this kind of contribution very much.

While we have many reasons to rejoice our achievements, we understand that the further professional growth is needed and the second stage of reforms are underway. And again, GFSIS and its dedicated team of high caliber researchers provide invaluable advice every time we ask for.

Besides outstanding training the program provided its participants an opportunity to establish professional ties among their peers and the Foundation's vast pool of experts with various backgrounds and specializations. The lasting effect of this program is the network of professionals that continue to interact with one another for many years.



GEORGE KATCHARAVA
Independent expert, International Relations and Security
Class of 2002-2003

George is an independent expert in the field of International Studies and Security. Previously he was the Head of DFID Georgia Programme, responsible for the UK bilateral assistance to Georgia. His career also consists of several years of work within the Georgian Government. As a Senior Policy Manager at the National Security Council of Georgia, George was in charge of the research, policy analysis and development of policy scenarios for the high level officials. He holds an M.A. degree in International Studies and Security from the University of Denver.

I am affiliated with GFSIS as a fellow since 2002. It was a very interesting experience to be part of the group of young bright, motivated, and ambitious people who were eager to learn. For many of us it was really the first experience of truly cutting edge methods of policy analysis, international security architecture, modern understanding of international system, international economy and many other aspects of International Relations and Security Studies as such. The combination of practical exercises, theory and its adjustment to the realities of Georgia, created atmosphere, which on the one hand was very suitable and comfortable, but on the other hand was very demanding. As a result, the program had a significant impact both on my career development, and also helped me to narrow down my personal priorities.

In September of 2004, I enrolled into the International Studies Program at the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver by winning the Edmund S. Muskie Award. My goal was to gain an insight into the decision-making processes of the United States and to study interrelation of multi-ethnic security issues, transitional politics, development of democratic institutions, and emerging markets. I successfully graduated from the International Studies program and obtained a Master of Arts degree in International Studies and Security. I worked at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University as a researcher to supplement my studies at the University of Denver.

My professional experience includes working for different institutional donor organizations such as the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). During this period I was involved in the number of reform programmes related to different fields, such as Rural Development, Public Finance Management (PFM), Conflict Resolution etc.

My career also consists of several years of work within the Georgian Government on issues related to the research, policy analysis and development of policy scenarios for the high level officials. This experience contributed to the formation of my strategic vision regarding internal situation in Georgia as well as regional developments. I have also provided consultations for different think tanks in Georgia (GFSIS) and also in the United States and Europe (RAND Corporation, CACI, Nixon Centre, CITpax) etc.) on problems related to the regional issues in the South Caucasus, Russia, CIS member states, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia.

At the end I would like to stress that the future of Georgia is in the hands of those young individuals who are well-educated, experienced and motivated members of our society. GFSIS in cooperation with the RAND Corporation through the Advanced Policy Analysis (National Security and International Relations) Program and other activities helped this country in advancing towards democratic development and the fellows of the program were the champions of this process.



NODAR KHARSHILADZE
First Deputy Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence of Georgia
Class of 2003-2004

Nodar has over ten years work experience with the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. A graduate of the U.S. National Defense University, prior to becoming the First Deputy Minister, he was the Head of the Coordination Group for Planning, Programming and Budgeting System, Member of the Acquisition Board; the Head of the Defence

Policy and Planning Department; and the Chairman of the Management Team at the Ministry of Defence.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the National Security and International Relations Program and what the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies means to me. Every time I visit this building, and I do come here very often, I always express my appreciation to the GFSIS Team, regardless of the setting or purpose of the meeting. I reiterate my thanks because I fully appreciate how much I owe to this institution. There were very limited opportunities back in early 2000s when I began this program. Of course all professional training conducted by GFSIS remains extremely valuable – although today the window of opportunity is wider for those who aspire to acquire new knowledge and skills.

When I started my work at the Ministry, my monthly salary amounted to US\$9. The fact that I remained with the Ministry and continued my career in this field is indisputably due to this program and to GFSIS. Thus, I owe most of my professional achievements to this institution. In 2003 – at the same time when I was selected for this course – I got an offer from the Turkish Embassy in Georgia for the position of Chief Translator/Interpreter. Definitely, it could have been a very interesting experience. What I want to say though is that I would not be where I am today would I have not gotten into this program.

I have graduated from many different programs since then; however, the “RAND” program was the most rewarding. Unfortunately, not all graduates have equally benefited from this program. This is always the case even for the world’s top universities and institutions. Nevertheless, the fact that the majority of us can gather and share our success stories is already a significant accomplishment of GFSIS. Special thanks should go to the U.S. Government and to the American people for their essential support to make this program possible. We are grateful to the RAND Corporation for their superb cooperation. The quality of the program was remarkable and all involved parties should be credited for that.

Lastly, on behalf of the Ministry of Defense, I would like to add that my agency steadfastly maintains this tradition of cooperation with GFSIS. Within our limited resources we send our military officers for training at GFSIS; and for many of them this training has become a decisive step forward in their career development.





GELA KVASHILAVA
Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Analysis
Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
Class of 2003-2004

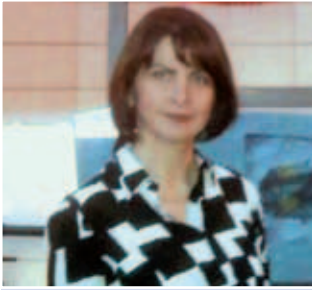
Gela is the Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Analysis. His fields of professional interests include working on regional development and security, organization management and leadership, institutional capacity building and transportation safety issues. In Addition, he is the founder of the Foundation "Partnership for Road Safety," which works in partnership with FIA Foundation and the EASST and other local, international organizations improving road safety.

First of all I would like to note that the training course in International Relations and National Security program offered me an enormous opportunity to meet with successful people from the public, private, NGO, media and from the other sectors. I participated in this program in 2003-2004, when Georgia was starting its fundamental reform process, especially in the public sector. People who I met at the Foundation played a decisive role in this reform process. Afterwards, together we were involved in various issues which dealt with abolishing corruption, increasing effectiveness, and transparency of the state institutions. These reforms have been carried out in Georgia during the last few years. Furthermore, I would like to point out that the successful implementation of these reforms would have not been possible without people who I have met during the course of my participation in the program. In particular, I would like to emphasize the high level of the training, usefulness of the reading material and professionalism of the local and foreign lecturers that played a pivotal role in my intellectual development. Moreover, I got acquainted and broadened my knowledge with cutting edge information which focused on the new challenges and trends in the sphere of international relations and national security.

The knowledge and skills gained here helped me later on in my career as the founder of the Partnership for Road Safety Foundation (www.safedrive.ge), which works on developing the schemes for promoting sustainable transportation to reduce emissions that impact the environment. The organization is involved in respective projects in Georgia and CIS countries. In 2010 the foundation through its rigorous cooperation with the other stakeholders made front seat belts mandatory for every car driver in Georgia. Since then seat belts use has increased tremendously reaching 95 percent. Before this number was around 2 percent. This proves to be a successful case of building a coalition around a critical issue. This initiative has already saved hundreds of lives.

In conclusion, what I would like to say about this program is that it has created a useful platform for me and helped me to view my work from a different perspective and to embrace new opportunities and initiatives, which in return promoted my professional growth.





NATIA KUTIVADZE
Analyst, Transparency International
Class of 2005-2006

Natia has a doctoral degree in Economics, from the University of Milan, Italy. She was a visiting doctoral student in Economics at MIT, Boston, USA. She received her Master's degree in Banking and Finance from the University of Milan, Italy and PhD degree in Physics and Mathematics from Tbilisi State University.

Prior to joining Transparency International, Natia worked for the Georgian Parliament as an Economic Expert at the Economic Policy Committee and for the Georgian Government as a Deputy Head of the Department at Ministry of Economy.

I am pleased to speak about my experience and impressions on the program in National Security and International Relations, which gave me a unique chance to boost my professional development and 'reset' my life. I am an alumna of the class of 2005-2006. Lectures delivered by American and Georgian professors from leading schools gave me a much broader perspective and confidence in my professional growth. Variety of academic options considered in the framework of this program were really amazing: lectures, individual or group desk researches, seminars, discussions, talks, various events closely related to my field of professional interests, which contributed to making my training experience creative and enjoyable. During my course of study at GFSIS I heard many interesting points and was exposed to different views and opinions that helped me to broaden my horizon and become a better professional.

Soon after completing the program I decided to further pursue my academic career. I was granted a fellowship by the Italian Government and obtained a doctoral degree in Economics from the University of Milan. As the top PhD student, I was selected for the exchange program with the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), which helped me to further enjoy the setting of the American academic life. My experience in this new cultural and professional environment was very positive, helping me to fully realize that the strength of the American education system is based on competitiveness, heterogeneity, and hard work. I successfully discussed my PhD thesis in Economics in June of this year and came back to my country with an aspiration to contribute to my country's development and economic growth.

Currently I work at the Transparency International Georgia as an Economic Analyst and I try my best to fully utilize my knowledge and experience.

Finally, on behalf of my friends and fellow students I would like to express my sincere gratitude to GFSIS and the U.S. government for their continuous efforts in providing a unique opportunity to Georgian youth to further develop their professional skills which is greatly needed in our country. I also wish to extend my thanks to my fellow students for their friendship and support I felt during my studies at GFSIS and up till now.





TAMTA KUPRADZE
Head of the United States and Canada Division
Department of the Americas
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Class of 2005-2006

Tamta is the Head of the United States and Canada Division, Department of the Americas at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since October 2010. Prior to her current position she served at the Embassy of Georgia in the United States, Canada and Mexico as a Political Officer and worked as a Third Secretary at the Department of the Americas, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before joining the Foreign Service she worked as a Leading Specialist at the Defense Policy and Planning Department, at the Ministry of Defense. She holds an M.A. in International Affairs (Global Master of Arts Program) from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

The one-year training program in International Relations and National Security with GFSIS marked the start of my diplomatic career, which I have been pursuing to this day. The program specifically addressed my future career goals and research interests by providing a suitable platform for the in-depth concept analysis, deeper understanding of empirical and theoretical issues, and methods for strategic planning. I was privileged to have been able to make the best use of these qualities in my subsequent diplomatic work.

During my professional career in the public service I have dealt with a wide range of Georgia's challenging issues including foreign policy, security, and political-economic problems by mostly relying on tools acquired through my professional and academic experience in international relations. This program was both the foundation and an inspiration in the process of addressing the complexities of Georgia's foreign policy.

My recent four-year assignment as a political officer at the Embassy of Georgia in the U.S. has been invaluable. Throughout this period, I had the opportunity to work on wide range of issues concerning the U.S.-Georgian relations, including pursuing deeper bilateral cooperation under the auspices of the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership signed on January 9, 2009, and other sensitive security, economic and strategic projects. I take some pride in having played a continuing role in advancing relations between our two countries to an unprecedented level of cooperation. One such example was the Russian aggression against Georgia in August of 2008 when, under extreme time pressure, together with my colleagues, I was on 24-hour alert working on various peaceful initiatives for immediate secession of violence and coordinating public outreach.

I have been working as the Head of the United States and Canada section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia since October 2010. My daily work covers all areas related to bilateral relations between the U.S. and Georgia and Canada and Georgia. These unique practical skills in combination with the theoretical knowledge acquired at the academic institutions, including this program, will have a significant effect on my future career development.

The remarkable learning experience offered by the GFSIS program for public leaders provided a solid foundation in stronger leadership and management skills to address this goal and a unique opportunity to share my professional experience both from my posting in Washington D.C. and here in Tbilisi. It was the most helpful way of acquiring enhanced skills to examine international political processes that influence policy formulation and implementation, and tools to advance my research and analysis capabilities.



DAVID SAKHVADZE
Researcher, Regional Security Issues
Class of 2007-2008

David holds Master of Arts degrees in Physics (Tbilisi State University,) in International Politics (Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), and in International Relations (University of Southern California (USC). He is an Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellow (2009). Prior to his fellowship he worked as the Head of Division in the Office of State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. During his studies in America he worked as a

research assistant at the Hudson Institute Center of Military-Political Analysis. His areas of research and interest include national security, regional integration, Euro-Atlantic integration, energy policy, and post-Soviet states' foreign policy.

The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies does not only produces intellectual products like research papers; but also provides training courses tailored to the needs of the Georgian public servants and professionals involved in decision-making.

I have graduated from one of such programs, which was focused on the national security and international relations. This program not only increased my understanding of the key disciplines, such as international politics, governance, economics, policy planning and analysis; but it also became a value added to my future career development and professional growth.

The GFSIS training program in National Security and International Relations bridged the gap between theory and practice, as the courses offered were delivered by exceptional professionals, former or present high-level government officials and key decision makers with an extensive experience and knowledge in their respective fields of expertise. Recent university graduates with good theoretical basis could benefit a lot from them. The training courses and the lectures were not only informative, but also very encouraging as one could have discussions with present or former Ministers, Ambassadors, key officials, or leading political experts.

One of the key benefits of this program is its vast network of GFSIS alumni and experts, which remains long after the training is completed. The possibility to instantaneously and informally contact your fellow GFSIS classmates in almost every governmental agency increased my capabilities and work efficiency during my tenure at the Government of Georgian (The office of State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration (SMR)). Such networks are helpful not only in routine activities, but are even more important in the critical conditions.

Even years after graduation GFSIS provides its alumni not only formal support by inviting them to various conferences, or by sharing with them number of publications or newsletters; but every alumnus can come to GFSIS and have private conversations with the prominent Georgian political experts, ask for an advice, or simply have an informal discussion on different issues. I am positive that each and every one of us who has been part of GFSIS has a potential to bring about a meaningful change and the Foundation continues to influence the Georgian school of political analysis and serves as the center for the extended community of the Georgian and international experts.



GFSIS

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THE GEORGIAN FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

MISSION

The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) is a Georgian non-profit organization and a leading think tank dedicated to promoting democracy and fostering political and economic reforms. GFSIS is based in Tbilisi, Georgia and has a regional office in Akhalkalaki. Since its establishment in 2001, GFSIS effectively promotes better policy implementation, human capital development and institution building through practice-oriented research, analysis, training, and public education, in national security, economic development, state-building, reintegration and European and Euro-Atlantic integration. A widespread network of GFSIS alumni comprises influential policy-decision makers, opinion crafters and opinion-makers.

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