



საქართველოს სტრატეგიული და საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობების კვლევის ფონდი  
GEORGIAN FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# Security Review

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**National Security Policy – Problems and Challenges**

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Discussion on national security matters in Georgia is prevalent. This is not only due to the severe security environment and challenges faced by the country but also because of the developments in recent years concerning the agencies responsible for the policy planning and coordination in this domain.

By the end of 2017, amendments to the Law of Georgia on the Structure, Authority and Rules of Operation of the Government of Georgia brought an end to the State Security and Crisis Management Council.<sup>1</sup> The Emergency Management Agency<sup>2</sup> was formed in its place which, although very important, was an agency with absolutely different functions. In particular, the policy planning and coordination of national security issues were not under its portfolio whereas the State Security and Crisis Management Council was primarily created for these purposes at the beginning of 2014.<sup>3</sup>

The National Security Council has been abolished since December 16, 2018 by the new Constitution of Georgia. It should be noted that for various objective reasons, the performance of the National Security Council was complicated after the 2012 parliamentary elections when the new Constitution<sup>4</sup> partially came into effect. According to the new Constitution, the responsibility for national security policy fell upon the Government of Georgia and, therefore, its head, the Prime Minister of Georgia. Although the president remained the head of the state and the supreme commander, his competence vis-à-vis national security issues was sharply reduced.

At the present moment, when the formation of the new National Security Council in Georgia<sup>5</sup> – as a deliberative body of a Prime Minister – is in its final stage, a correct analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> "Extraordinary Session of the Georgian Parliament," 06/12/2017. [http://parliament.ge/ge/saparlameto-saqmianoba/plenaruli-sxdomebi/plenaruli-sxdomebi\\_news/saqartvelos-parlamentis-riggareshe-sxdoma2.page](http://parliament.ge/ge/saparlameto-saqmianoba/plenaruli-sxdomebi/plenaruli-sxdomebi_news/saqartvelos-parlamentis-riggareshe-sxdoma2.page)

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the Georgian Government № 562 - On the Ratification of Provisions of the Emergency Management Agency, 25/12/2017. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3954233?publication=0>

<sup>3</sup> Decree of the Georgian Government № 38 - On the Creation and Ratification of Provisions of the State Security and Crisis Management Council of Georgia, 06/01/2014. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2186268?publication=0>

<sup>4</sup> The term "new constitution" evokes some misunderstanding because the Constitution of Georgia has changed twice in a short period of time. In particular, the new constitution entered into force in 2012-13; later, more substantial changes were made to it. Accordingly, at the present moment, the new constitution is operating in Georgia. Indeed, the frequent shift of the constitution is not appropriate; however, we share the opinion that the constitution produced by the Constitutional Commission on the Reform of Georgia's Constitution in 2009-2010 had many shortcomings. Therefore, it required some changes.

<sup>5</sup> "The Government is considering two options for the Security Council's model – an alternative agency for the Security Council," 22/11/2018. <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/522214-mtavroba-ushishroebis-sabchos-alternatiuli-organos-usaprtxoebis-sabchos-modeltan-dakavshirebit-or-variants-ganixilavs/>

the previous shortcomings is very important. It should lay the foundation for creating a new and well-functioning system.

The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Rondeli Foundation) devotes considerable attention to this issue. Recently, the Foundation's *Expert Opinion* released an issue written by the Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia entitled [The National Security Policy of Georgia - Planning, Coordination and Practice](#). Earlier, the same topic was the focus of the following publications issued by the Rondeli Foundation: [Dangers Originating from Russia and Georgia's Security System](#) and [Security Sector Reform in Georgia](#).

The goal of this article, developed within the framework of the Security Review, is to examine the previous process of national security policy planning in Georgia and identify its shortcomings. We are hopeful that this might improve the overall process in the future.

### **Process of National Security Policy Planning in Georgia**

The institutionalization of the process of national security policy planning in Georgia started after the Rose Revolution. In October 2004, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a decree demanding the National Security Council produce a National Security Concept within a reasonable timeframe and submit it to the President and the Parliament of Georgia<sup>6</sup>.

On July 8, 2005, the Parliament of Georgia approved the National Security Concept of Georgia<sup>7</sup>. The significance of the National Security Concept for the process of the national security policy planning is evident from the preamble of the document itself. The document states that "The National Security Concept of Georgia is the fundamental document that reflects the vision of the country's secure development, its fundamental national values and interests and describes the threats, risks and challenges to national security and designates the main directions for security policy."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Regulation of the Parliament of Georgia on the Development of the National Security Concept, 12/10/2004. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/42424?publication=0>

<sup>7</sup> The Regulation of the Parliament of Georgia on the Ratification of the National Security Concept of Georgia, 18/07/2005. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/43156?publication=0>

<sup>8</sup> The Regulation of the Parliament of Georgia on the Ratification of the National Security Concept of Georgia, 18/07/2005. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/43156?publication=0>

On September 24, 2007, Georgia's Threat Assessment Document for 2007-2009 was adopted by an order of the President of Georgia.<sup>9</sup> This document, which had a completely classified separate section, identified different types of threats to our country. At that time, the threat assessment document was drafted under the coordination of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia.

In August 2008, Russian military aggression against Georgia, among other disastrous consequences, illuminated the serious deficiencies of national security policy planning and inter-agency coordination in Georgia. After the war, the office of the National Security Council initiated a process to identify and remedy the deficiencies in the national security architecture of Georgia.<sup>10</sup>

That process, in essence, was very important; however, its detailed description is not the purpose of this article.<sup>11</sup> Our goal is to briefly describe the repercussions of that process as it influenced national security policy planning in Georgia, namely:

- The realization of the National Security Review (which, in essence, is equivalent to national security policy planning) was conceived in three stages. The first stage was to adjust the National Security Concept and the Threat Assessment Document. The second stage envisaged the development of strategies at the level of agencies. The third stage focused on the elaboration of a National Security Strategy that would define the main priorities of national security and formulate and implement the overall national strategy.<sup>12</sup>
- The interagency working group, under the coordination of the National Security Council office, developed the Threat Assessment Document of Georgia for 2010-2013 which was approved by the President of Georgia in September 2010.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Order of the President of Georgia № 542 on the Ratification of the Threat Assessment Document of Georgia for 2007-2009, 24/09/2007. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/101386?publication=0>

<sup>10</sup> *The Project of Georgia's Security Sector Review – Final Report*, Atlantic Council of Georgia, 2014, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> A detailed description of this process, known as the Security Review, can be found in *The Project of Georgia's Security Sector Review – Final Report* which is electronically accessible at the following address: <https://www.slideshare.net/Le1ccg/2014-1-40480265>

<sup>12</sup> *The Project of Georgia's Security Sector Review – Final Report*, Atlantic Council of Georgia, 2014, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> The Order of the President of Georgia № 707 on the Ratification of the National Security Concept of Georgia, 23/12/2011. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1555410?publication=0>

- The interagency working group, under the coordination of the National Security Council office, put together the National Security Concept of Georgia which was approved by the Parliament of Georgia in December 2011.<sup>14</sup>

- In 2012, through the format of the interagency working group and under the guidance of the National Security Council office, the work to create the National Security Strategy was initiated. It was conceived to be a public document much like the National Security Concept. However, the strategy was not developed. At this point, a certain fact must be underscored. It is difficult to find a precedent when a country has simultaneously published both a national security concept and a national security strategy. This is natural because it is difficult to comprehend a substantive difference between these two public documents and how can they be of service to the process of national security policy planning.

Essentially, this was the end of the national security review process. Since 2014, after the creation of the State Security and Crisis Management Council, the responsibility for national security policy planning has been transferred to the office of this new body. In this instance, our goal in this article is the same - to briefly describe the progression in national security policy planning in Georgia after 2014 under the coordination of the Office of the State Security and Crisis Management Council, namely:

- The interagency working group, under the coordination of the Office of the State Security and Crisis Management Council, developed/updated the Threat Assessment Document of Georgia for 2015-2018. However, changes applied only to a top-secret section of the document. The public version has not been published which, unfortunately, has disrupted the existing practice.

- The interagency working group, under the coordination of the Office of the State Security and Crisis Management Council, began working on several strategies. Within the framework of this process, the National Cybersecurity Strategy of Georgia for 2017-2018 and its action plan were produced<sup>15</sup> as well as the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2017-2020 and its Action Plan.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Regulation of the Parliament of Georgia on the Ratification of the National Security Concept of Georgia, 23/12/2011. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1555410?publication=0>

<sup>15</sup> Decree of the Georgian Government № 14 - On the Ratification of Georgia's National Cybersecurity Strategy for 2017-2018 and its Action Plan, 13/01/2017. <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/3548407?publication=0>

<sup>16</sup> Decree of the Georgian Government № 4 - on the Ratification of Georgia's Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy for 2017-2020 and its Action Plan, 11/01/2017. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3547798?publication=0>

- With the effort of the State Security and Crisis Management Council, the Law of Georgia on National Security Policy Planning and Coordination Regulation was enacted.<sup>17</sup> This law defines the areas of national security policy as well as the process of the planning and the coordination of this policy and the jurisdictions of the coordinating agencies. This law, which was adopted in March 2015 by the Parliament of Georgia, has regulated issues that were previously not included. Among these are the spheres of national security policy and the categories of national-level conceptual documents.

### Shortcomings of the National Security Policy

The aforementioned review demonstrated that the process of national security policy planning in Georgia has been progressing with varying degrees of success over the last years. However, as we have already noted at the beginning, our main objective is to identify shortcomings in order to subsequently correct them.

Whenever we speak about shortcomings, first and foremost, it should be underscored that the boundaries of the national security policy planning process are blurry. It is difficult to distinguish where it starts and where it ends. More precisely, the discussion about the beginning and the end is conditional since, much like any other policy, national security policy planning also has a "cyclical" nature.

As noted above, the three stage implementation of the national security policy was planned in 2009-2010. However, firstly, the cycle was not defined correctly, since it is hard to comprehend how essential would have been the difference between the National Security Concept and the National Security Strategy (the development of the concept preceded the strategy), and how the separate formulation of these two conceptual documents would make any significant contribution to the national security policy planning. Secondly, the cycle was not over, because the national security strategy was not developed.

There is no strong connection between the conceptual documents at the national level and the conceptual documents developed at the agency level. The process of national security policy planning should have a uniform character. The threat assessment document and the national security concept, according to an already firmly established practice in our country,

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<sup>17</sup> The Law of Georgia on the National Security Policy and Coordination, 04/03/2015.  
<https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2764463?publication=7>

are the main conceptual documents at the national level. Consequently, they should be a kind of guideline for agency level conceptual documents. In practice, unfortunately, this is not so. Often, this or that head of an agency makes the decision to develop a conceptual document at the agency level based on their individual considerations.

The National Security Concept of Georgia has not been renewed since 2011. It should be noted that consequences of the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the military aggression carried out in eastern Ukraine, one way or another, have been reflected in the national security document of all those countries that regarded such action by Russia as either a direct or indirect threat. For example, among others, these events have been reflected in the US National Security Strategy developed during the presidency of Barack Obama in 2015. This is also true for the new national security strategy developed during the administration of President Donald Trump in 2017. In 2016, the EU, for the first time since 2003, decided to change its own national security document where Russia and its aggressive policy are judged quite adequately.

When it comes to Georgia, unlike other large and small states, it had never reflected the events of 2014 in its own national security concept. Generally, for a country like ours where the security environment is changing quite rapidly, seven-to-eight years is more than enough time to revise the national security concept. Therefore, it might be appropriate to set a limiting timeframe through legislation after which the national security concept has to be reviewed.

The unclassified versions of Georgia's threat assessment documents for 2007-2009 and 2010-2013 describe threats of various types which are facing the country. These include military-political, foreign-political, socio-economic and others; however, the threat emanating from vulnerability is missing.

In fact, the reduction of risks facing this or that country is based on two major components. First, it is the identification of threats facing a country and afterwards, developing appropriate policies for their prevention. Secondly, there is the importance of determining the vulnerability of a country and enacting appropriate policies for its elimination. At this juncture, it is important to emphasize the difference between what constitutes a threat and what constitutes a vulnerability. A threat is of an external origin and it can exist regardless of



the effectiveness of the national security policy. Accordingly, it is possible to prevent a threat but not eliminate it.

As for vulnerability, in contrast to a threat, this is internal by nature and, in the case of a proper set of policies, its elimination is possible. Thus, the reduction of vulnerability should be precisely one of the optimal courses for strengthening Georgia's national security.

The new National Security Council set up under the Prime Minister will have to solve numerous serious tasks. First of all, the beginning and the end of the national security policy planning cycle should be determined. The national level conceptual documents – National Threat Assessment Document and the National Security Concept – are due for revision. Agency level conceptual documents have to be brought in line with these national level conceptual documents and this will somewhat complete the national security planning process in Georgia.

In addition, most certainly, a great deal of tasks have to be solved on a daily basis. The security environment of Georgia is so difficult that it requires inter-agency coordination on matters related to the national security domain practically every day. In such conditions, setting working priorities straight is of particular importance.