

*Roundtable Summary***U.S.-GEORGIA FORUM****Georgian Security and the NATO Summit***Tuesday May 8, 2012***Opening Remarks**

The US-Georgia Forum encapsulates both the U.S.-Georgia relationship and the NATO-Georgia relationship. The two are intertwined, but they are inseparable. When we speak about the security and development of Georgia, Georgians have a somewhat different understanding of security than a country that does not have a big neighbor next to it. Soft power is an important component for Georgia, and the democratic development of the country is likewise a big security component together with its free market. The EU and NATO are also big components, and value-based perceptions of where Georgia sees itself belonging.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the hard-core security issues are not important. 20 percent of Georgian territory is under occupation. 10,000 foreign troops are stationed in this small region with very advanced military hardware. Considering this situation and Georgia's capabilities in terms of territorial defense and the threats that it is facing, the soft-power component of security warrants a greater proportion of attention.

Georgia is facing parliamentary elections in October, and the preparedness for elections is the number one priority to ensure that the process is as transparent as possible. Georgia now has a different landscape in terms of political composition and election competition. The strategies of some political forces place more emphasis on discrediting the elections. Georgia is trying to redouble its efforts; in April, it invited all monitoring organizations, as a larger number of elections monitors will improve the process.

When we speak of the U.S.-Georgia relationship, it is not only congressional but also other organizations that are authorized to evaluate elections. After hard negotiations with the EU, it has issued a Monitoring mission to make sure that media freedom will be guaranteed. In addition, Georgia has a democratic working group or interagency task force to help strengthen preparedness for the elections. Local organizations are also involved and, working together with NGOs. The umbrella over the election process is formed by responsibility towards the law and the election framework. Georgia has interesting innovations in this field from the OSCE- for the first time there is a legal framework for the financial component of the elections.

In regard to the security-related aspect of the U.S.-Georgia relationship, there is a process involved and we are witnessing the beginning of defense cooperation. Georgia is a very strong partner not only for the U.S. but also for NATO, as seen in the ISAF mission. It is



not only the highest per-capita contributor of troops, but also the highest non-NATO troop contributor. Georgian soldiers are fighting shoulder to shoulder with NATO forces, which has been a tremendous experience for the country's troops.

Georgia is proud of its role in Afghanistan, and despite the fact that it has suffered casualties, there has been no decrease in support for the mission. This is due not only to the motivation of its soldiers but also to Georgian society, which exhibits a high degree of support for NATO. Georgia is trying to be a responsible partner and although support for NATO is lessening in some countries, this is not the case for Georgia.

With regard to Georgia-NATO strategy, Georgia is doing what it takes to improve its performance, so that the special relationship is advanced. Georgia recalls when former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated how the NATO-Georgia Commission leads Georgia to NATO membership. But Georgia is not pressing on the politics of the issue right now, but trying to advance itself and the relationship it has with NATO in terms of procedures and frameworks. These successes are already apparent, as evidenced by Georgia's inclusion in the same basket as the Western Balkans countries in terms of integration. Though there are some who question the Bucharest decision that Georgia will be a NATO member, mainstream acceptance of Bucharest has been reaffirmed at the highest levels.

Georgia has a good outlook for the Chicago summit. It appreciates how helpful the State Department has been in this process. It is using its time effectively right now to expand the acceptance of Georgia's NATO accession. The U.S. has been very helpful in this regard, including through high-level meetings; there have already been two meetings at the level of head of state. As an ISAF partner, this also lends itself as a useful forum to communicate Georgia's intentions.

Overall, the country has a realistic vision, not pessimistic, but not overly optimistic. Whether or not NATO remains a priority- not only a political priority, but also one for the Georgian people- will be seen over time. People understand that it takes effort, as well as the lives of its citizens. The basic problem for any country's foreign policy is consistency. Every single poll taken in Georgia since the NATO membership process began has supported Georgian membership. Even politicians who originally opposed the idea now speak in a different way about it. Georgia is now treated differently, and the country should not shy away from it- Georgia is held to different standards. If we talk about performance, Georgia long ago deserved more than a Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Georgia's membership in NATO will happen sooner than later. We have to understand that the country is located in a very dynamic region. If NATO does not fill the void, such a scenario would encourage more destruction. After 2012, Georgia will have more clarity regarding the future. 35 to 37 percent of countries in the world have elections this year;

some have already taken place, and some will take place, like in Georgia. Meanwhile, sea changes are taking place in Europe and the U.S. faces presidential elections that will give us a glimpse of the future.

Panel One: U.S.-Georgia Security Relations

It is important to demonstrate the deep and bipartisan support for Georgia in the Senate and the House. Congress has always been a supporter of Georgia, regardless of party. For a country of 4.5 million and the size of Louisiana, Georgia punches above its weight. If one looks at program and funding tables in foreign aid bills, Georgia is right up there. The billion-dollar assistance to the country after the 2008 war spanned two administrations. 2009 was not a good time to try and get money for abroad, but the McCain amendment passed unanimously. Last summer, a resolution was introduced on Russia's occupation, and the support there was very deep.

Assistance is also key. This year and last year, Georgia was second only to Ukraine in the region. One of the key issues is Georgia's reform effort, from a fragile and failing state to a model for the region. The World Bank has highlighted Georgia's successful model for fighting corruption and listed it as an easy place to do business.

Georgia deserves a thank-you for its efforts in Afghanistan. It is the biggest non-NATO supporter. At a time when other countries are moving out, Georgia is moving in, and in the south, where fighting it tough. Georgia has lost 16 soldiers, and many more wounded, while the country's domestic support for the ISAF mission remains impressive. The Atlantic Council Task Force on Georgia has given a comprehensive review of U.S.-European policy on the country. There are two areas of interest here. One is the continued Russian occupation, which permeates everything in Georgia. The other is Europe, that is, that more needs to be done with our European allies, to emphasize the importance of moving Georgia forward.

U.S.-Georgia security ties are getting stronger and the NATO statement in Bucharest put Georgia on track for a MAP. Another important factor is how free trade has enhanced cooperation on the security front. Everyone is now focused on the NATO Summit in Chicago, but Secretary of Defense Panetta's visit to Georgia in June will be a key meeting as well. In March, Panetta went to Helmand province and met with Georgian troops. NATO is going to be a big event for Georgia. The "plus 4" is a big step, and a physical demonstration of the importance of Georgia in the NATO alliance. The Lugar bill deserves a lot of credit too.

There is progress in Georgia's air defense and coastal defense. The sale of M4s has been approved over the summer. The emphasis has been on defense modernization. Foreign Ministers and International Military Education and Training (IMET) officials have met at

the highest levels. Aside from the ISAF deployment, hopefully there will be more joint exercises, and the American presence on the ground in Georgia is something the U.S. should be doing more of. At the end of the day, Georgia is and will remain its own best advocate.

Regarding comments on the enlargement agenda in Chicago, in terms of open door policy, the administration has repeatedly said that Chicago will not be an enlargement summit. However, emphasizing what the summit is not, rather than what it is, sends the wrong political message to Georgia and others. Instead, the summit should send the following messages:

- The NATO aspirant countries are closer to membership today than at the Bucharest summit. Signaling is sometimes just as important in U.S. foreign policy as making a direct decision.
- Reiterate the case for membership at the head of state level, where hopefully President Obama can lead the effort.
- A bill called the NATO Enhancement Act is currently being debated by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It reauthorizes security assistance and underscores the importance of fostering inter-operability. Hopefully it will get a vote on the Hill, but one difference now is that it is no longer a consensus decision. Last time, there was no debate on the matter, but such will not be the case this time around.

As the bill lays out, there are five solid arguments for NATO enlargement:

- Entering countries are facing a historically uncertain future.
- Enlargement is an efficient way to incentive reforms in aspirant countries. Foreign assistance will only go down, so it is a bargain for the U.S. to incentivize NATO membership.
- Building partner capacity to deploy foreign soldiers next to U.S. troops is important. There are currently 6,000 foreign troops with NATO forces.
- NATO membership creates solid trading/economic partners. The amendment of the Defense Authorization Act quantifies the cost/benefits analysis of NATO enlargement. There are many economic incentives for U.S. business, notably from the increased ranks of reliable trade partners.
- NATO allies are allies of first resort to work with the U.S. in addressing global challenges.

How does the U.S.-Georgia relationship fit in Chicago?

- Enlargement: Georgia's accession can be made through the U.S.-Georgia Commission, not only through a MAP.
- Chicago is a step for NATO with regard to U.S.-Georgia security normalization. This has already gone through several iterations, such as equipping Georgia and sponsoring training programs. Since 2008, the US has focused on the "brains before brawn" approach, emphasizing training and education, and deploying Georgian troops away from Georgian soil. Some difficulties remain. One is the territorial defense issue, as

Georgia has even had trouble getting some basic military items, whereas Russia gets many items from NATO member states.

There are several keys to implementing the normalization of the US-Georgia defense relationship:

- Transparency with all interested parties.
- Coordination with NATO allies as much as possible; hopefully this will lead to multilateral assistance.
- Place the relationship in the framework of the non use of force pledge, but also in the context of UN Charter Article 51 and the Helsinki Charter; that every nation has the right to self-defense; a system that does not tolerate borders being changed by force, and where every nation can form its own alliances.

We are trying to balance the U.S. leg of the triangle with the Russian leg of triangle. For the last 12 years, Russia has clearly been pursuing its interests in the former Soviet Union. The strategy of the Kremlin is to pressure those countries that do not fall in line and send a strong message to those seen as competitors, including Europe. With the election of Hollande in France and the crisis in Greece, we see Europe as weakening and splintering, and rendering itself more dependent on Russian resources.

U.S. engagement in the South Caucasus is important, and a good indication is the looming confrontation with Iran. The U.S. would be in a better position regarding Iran if it had better relationships with Georgia and Azerbaijan. As seen in Russia's military base in Gyumri, Armenia, Russian influence in the region is growing. Russia said that under certain circumstances it would consider moving troops into Armenia, and the main way to do so is moving them through Georgia, violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia's on-again, off-again threats to start a new war with Georgia, its lack of reciprocation of a visa-free regime with Georgia, and its propaganda attempts to delegitimize Georgian statehood, are all issues of concern. Numerous Russian reports question Georgia's statehood- not just in its present form but also going back to medieval times. Russia is signaling that it is an indispensable power, just like the U.S. The latest quotation from President Putin is that Russia is prepared to go a long way in cooperation with the U.S. if it is treated as an "equal." What we have seen in recent months is incessant attacks on the U.S. Ambassador to Russia and a level of anti-Americanism worse than that seen in the days of Brezhnev. For example, the international Russia Today TV is a means of incessant propaganda against the U.S.

Economic reforms and the fight against corruption also deserve mention. One particular issue that is clear and repeated throughout the former Soviet Union, is how corrosive corruption is and how it upsets both domestic and foreign investors. In Georgia, we have an example of privatization and transparency, which has been recognized by the S&P, Moody's and Fitch. This is changing the age-old patterns of doing business.

Georgia matters; it matters for the U.S. It is the only country in the region that that can speak to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. It has a different view toward the North Caucasus. It also plays a role in making sure that there is no space for Islamist radicals to operate in the region. Outside of the Baltics, Georgia is the only post-Soviet state with a successful lustration process. This should be a more prominent part of its public diplomacy. Lustration comes from the Latin word for “light,” and it means that light is opening on the archives, while banning former communist officials from political office. In Georgia it has become comprehensive legislation.

Panel Two: *NATO-Georgia Relations*

In discussing the framework of the open door policy, we keep hearing that Chicago is not an enlargement summit. We all know the reality, but most NATO summits do not have enlargement on the agenda. The Summit should reinforce all the aspirants who want to join the alliance. There is a point to enlargement; there are reasons why we have the concept of Europe whole and free. NATO is the leading organization to advance this goal of free market-based democracies. Enlargement is a recipe for a more stable Europe. The following three steps are especially important:

- There should be a meeting between leaders of aspirant countries to take place at the foreign minister level.
- There should be a leaders declaration for advancing security and stability in Europe, which would validate the open door policy as a way forward.
- There needs to be a signal of strong language for all aspirants, including Georgia, so it is not treated as separate and distinct, but an integral part of a larger group.

Montenegro and Macedonia have made tremendous progress, so Bucharest is not just seen as rhetoric. Bosnia-Herzegovina has also been welcomed with a MAP. Further, NATO set out a vision, that all nations have a future in the alliance, even Kosova and Serbia, if they meet the responsibilities of membership. Decisions on enlargement may be expected at the next summit in 2014, while there is skepticism that the allies will broach the topic in Chicago. In the coming months following Chicago, NATO should send officials to signal the launch of a campaign to show aspirant countries that real progress is being made. This might include a Washington/Paris/Berlin meeting on Macedonia’s name dispute.

It is important for Georgia to be part of the larger process of enlargement. The emphasis should be on laying the groundwork for keeping this path moving forward. Georgia is already the second largest non-NATO contributor and next year will be the largest. It has made serious progress, and is an “A+” student in regards to the NATO-Georgia commission, doing the work of MAP without the label. In January, President Saakashvili helped normalize Georgia’s defense relationship with the U.S.



This leads to a certain conclusion regarding the big issue of the occupied territories. If you lay down a marker, or even imply, that until this issue is resolved, Georgia will not be able to enter alliance, you basically hand Russia a veto over Georgia's NATO membership. We need to become more comfortable with Georgia in the Alliance, regardless of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. If we do not, we allow Moscow a veto over NATO enlargement. After all, we brought West Germany into the alliance while East Germany was part of the Soviet bloc.