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# One Step Forward – One Step Back: the Dilemma of State Resilience in the Absence of Coordinated Policy

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The following work is an attempt to provide a detailed review and assessment of Georgia's security system in the context of resilience – a concept that has become highly prominent lately. The importance of this concept derives not only from objective circumstances (noticeably the worsened military-political (security) environment), but also the recognition of this principle as a cornerstone of security and defense capabilities by the EU and the North-Atlantic Alliance. Therefore, the level of resilience in Georgia as a country is subject to coordinated and timely actions by relevant agencies, as well as the participation of society in the context of increased resilience. As a result of this analysis, it is hard to identify one specific area which has made significant progress. A typical problem is the lack of policy coordination and, therefore, the lack of agreed long-term objectives and this noticeably weakens the allocation of required resources and the elaboration and application of implementation plans.

**Key Words:** security, resilience, Georgia, EU, NATO, policy coordination.

## INTRODUCTION

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The war in 2008, ongoing Russian occupation and numerous hybrid threats and natural disasters (floods and forest fires), have demonstrated the existing challenges for state and public readiness in a crisis situation. The challenge is particularly grave in relation to crises and natural disasters. This phenomenon is expressed by the term – Resilience. In addition to objective circumstances, two primary targets of Georgia's foreign policy – NATO and the EU – have increasingly put forward the requirement towards the member states that they should increase their resilience in response to military crises or natural disasters (NATO 2014).

Since the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit and arising from the 2017 EU Brussel Summit decision, Georgia as a candidate country and an Eastern Partnership member, has been required to increase its defense capabilities and military resilience. Additional requirements entail enhancing the coordination and potential of state entities in response to economic, ecological or manmade disasters (NATO 2016; European Commission n.d.). Given the significantly increased cyber-attack possibilities and their damaging impact, cyber security and the state's ability to limit and successfully neutralize such incidents have been included in the field of resilience. The state's ability to respond to crises (military or non-military) and overcome them have thus become even more important than before. On the one hand, the significantly worsened security situation since 2008 requires prompt and adequate measures to increase the country's defense and resistance capabilities, which also implies preparing and communicating with the public and private sectors. On the other hand, the EU and NATO clearly emphasize the importance of state institutions' resilience and their capability to overcome crises as a precondition for membership. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the measures implemented since 2008 and especially in 2016-2017. First and foremost, this will enable us to determine the country's readiness to respond to military, hybrid and manmade or natural disasters. Moreover, the analysis would illustrate the extent to which Georgia is fulfilling its commitment to NATO and the EU to increase resilience, which in turn would reflect:

- On Georgia's desire and ability to fulfill its commitments and therefore speed up the membership process;
- On Georgia's realistic membership opportunity – therefore, the readiness of the EU and NATO to agree on Georgia's membership based on the results achieved.

## AREAS OF RESILIENCE AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

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In general, the concept of state resilience is not new and has its roots in military strategic thinking that implies subduing the enemy's will and capability to fight. The total and industrial nature of the World War II clearly illustrated the importance of not only the technical, but also the moral-psychological nature of resilience. Therefore, the third article of the founding treaty of the North-Atlantic Alliance already included the following statement:

*"In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." (NATO 2019)*

During the Cold War, due to comparative advantage of the Warsaw Pact military forces this capacity implied a strong civil defense system, which in Scandinavian countries evolved into the so-called Total Defense concept (Von Sydow 2018; The Swedish Defence Commission secretariat 2017). After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the disappearance of the threat of global military confrontation in favor of non-traditional military threats and other natural or manmade disasters led to a review of the principles of resilience. However, the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and especially Russia's military intervention in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014, once again altered the existing views and highlighted the importance of military resilience for effective functioning of state institutions and the civil domain. Therefore, a comprehensive approach was elaborated uniting the following areas (Pape 2016):

- Societal
- Ecological
- Political
- Economic
- Security

This paper does not intend to focus on the economic domain, however a set of indicators (Dzebisashvili 2020, 49), which, together with the close linkages between ecological, political, security or societal domains, point to the need to examine the level of resilience of a country in the following areas:

- (Nonmilitary) threats to security: organized crime and cyber area
- Natural and manmade disasters
- Military threats and defense capabilities

This categorization simplifies the assessment of activities of state agencies and institutions, as well as the degree of coordination, communication with the public and the effectiveness of the measures implemented to enhance resilience in line with specific threats. A similar approach is shared by the Eastern Partnership (EAP) 2020 Deliverables initiative. Within the framework of this initiative, Georgia made a commitment to achieving specific deliverables in the areas of security and risk management (Deliverable 12) (European Commission n.d.). More specifically, this covered capacity building in the fight against organized crime (illicit firearms trafficking); increasing resilience to hybrid threats and cybersecurity; mitigating the risks of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats and other disasters (natural and manmade), as well as risk prevention and management.

Out of four platforms established as a result of the 2017 Eastern Partnership revision, the “first platform – strengthening institutions and good governance” focuses on disaster risk management capabilities and potential growth (EU4Digital 2018; European Commission n.d.). Moreover, measures implemented for these ends must fully comply with the Budapest Convention, and more specifically with the principles and objectives on combating cybercrime (European Commission 2019; Council of Europe 2001). The same holds for the EU-Georgia Joint Staff Working Document, which states that measures implemented in these specific areas are preconditions for citizens' trust in the state, long-term stability and an investment-safe climate (European Commission 2017). Finally, strong cybersecurity and disaster response potential and capability are an integral part of understanding NATO's military resilience, which further amplifies its importance in setting Georgia's political agenda (NATO 2020; Roepke & Thankey 2019).

## (NONMILITARY) RISKS OF SECURITY: CRIME AND CYBERSPACE

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It should be noted upfront that vague formulation of content and the outcomes of planned or implemented activities that feature in publicly available sources, was striking while collecting the information for the analysis. Therefore, to establish progress in the areas relevant to the research, it was often necessary to conduct cross-source comparisons. Some important topics still require additional research, due to the absence of documented sources or the lack of updates to information provided by individual state entities. The National Security Council, created in 2019, and the Ministry of Defense of Georgia represent rare and positive exception in these regards.

According to the 2020 deliverables, in its fight against organized crime Georgia had to improve mechanisms of control over illicit firearms and information-sharing with EU investigative structures. Additionally, the country was supposed to participate intensively in joint multinational events. From today's perspective, it can be concluded that Georgia displayed its most significant progress in this area, having signed an agreement on the fight against organized crime with the EU and various Schengen zone states. In addition, cooperation continues with EU member states on establishing joint investigation teams to combat organized crime (Government of Georgia 2020; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2018). In 2017, Georgia joined EUROPOL's two analytical projects to enhance cooperation within the framework of the agreement signed with EUROPOL that year (Government of Georgia 2017).

In 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and EUROPOL signed a Memorandum of Understanding on establishing a secure communication line, as well as a Liaison Agreement between Georgia and the EU (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2018). Additionally, bilateral agreements were signed with EU member states on investigative information sharing, and training was held for personnel to ensure secure communication with EUROPOL ("SIENA" – secure communication channel launched in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2019) (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2019). As for the control of illicit arms trafficking, despite several important reports published by Georgia, the quality of implementation of Council of Europe's decision (2013/768/CFSP) on proliferation, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), is still unclear. Implementation of the supportive measures of the decision 2015/2309/CFSP on an arms-related P2P export control program is likewise uncertain. Therefore, it is impossible to assess the implementation of European standards on the control of arms export and illicit trade in firearms.

Additionally, it is challenging to conclude anything specific in other areas as well (for instance, implementation of arms trade guidelines or dual use [item] export control), which is the result of lack of any detailed and specific description of the goals to be achieved or the desired outcomes. Under these circumstances, assessing progress is particularly complicated, as is noted separately in the report of State Audit Office of Georgia (State Audit Office of Georgia 2019).

As for cybersecurity, the principal problem remains the formulation of a new normative basis and approval of the new draft (third) version of Cybersecurity Strategy in order to ensure the private sector's compatibility with the new standards (Ministry of Finance of Georgia 2020). The document has not yet been through an interagency review but is expected to be approved by the government (National Security Council of Georgia 2020). Adoption of the strategy and elaborating its action plan are the major objectives of the Eastern Partnership Deliverables 2020. Therefore, the reason behind the delay in approval of such an important document and then later its action plan is unclear. It is especially noteworthy as in technical terms a set of measures – namely those related to the launch of Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) – has already been implemented by different agencies (National Security Council of Georgia 2020).

Notwithstanding the critical importance of the Budapest Convention, the fulfilling of obligations assumed by this document is reflected in just one small paragraph of the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2017-2018 and is absent in other governmental documents (Government of Georgia 2017b, 14:13). Yet, despite the fact that relevant procedures have been elaborated by commercial banks and various state agencies to alleviate the risks of "phishing" and other types of cyber-attacks and measures to further improve cybersecurity have also been established, the approval and implementation of a cybersecurity policy at national level is still problematic (Ministry of Finance of Georgia 2020, 62). For instance, sensors have not been installed in the 2019 program network and this was postponed for 2020 (Ministry of Finance of Georgia 2020, 146). In 2019, the Ministry of Defense of Georgia was planning to join the Multinational Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) and established a Secure Operation Center (SOC) (Ministry of Defense of Georgia 2020b, 17). However, according to the Minister's Directives document, resources allocated for cybersecurity remains the same for 2020-2021, which (due to a combination of insufficient funds and currency inflation) means a gradual decrease in funding and blocking of expansion of cybersecurity capacity (Ministry of Defense of Georgia 2019, 12,22). Therefore, as of now, it is impossible to determine what the government perceives to be major threats, risks, priority objectives, action plans and development directions in the area of cyber security, which on its part, would enable us to determine the compatibility of these measures with the principles of Budapest Convention.

## NATURAL AND MANMADE DISASTERS

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Emphasis in this area, due to a clear overlap of priorities with the EU and NATO, is on uninterrupted functioning of critical infrastructure on the one hand, and elaboration and implementation of disaster management policy by Georgia on the other (at central and regional levels). The latter envisages the adoption of a relevant strategic document as the first step. Clearly, these objectives cannot be achieved at government level without the coordination of various state agencies. Therefore, the National Security Council, established in 2019 after a long period of ambiguity, is the leading agency ensuring elaboration, updating and coordination of national efforts for the development of a critical infrastructure regulatory framework. In December 2019, before assigning the coordinating function to the Council, systemic gap analysis of the existing legislative framework and practice was conducted, based on work led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Despite this, a critical infrastructure strategy and its action plan are still not completed (approved). Additionally, the work on the national list of critical infrastructure facilities, relevant risk assessment methods and security standards. has not yet been finalized either (National Security Council of Georgia 2020).

Despite a whole set of technical progress, such as fire safety standards and electronic system incident registration and operation management, the 2020 state budget does not provide sufficient information on the Government's planned course of action on disaster management (Ministry of Finance of Georgia 2019, 80-81; Ministry of Finance of Georgia 2020, 77). Additionally, the documents do not provide data on when a unified system for the management of emergency situations will be established; implementation of this unified system at local (regional and municipal) levels so as to be able to respond to crises effectively is even more uncertain (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2018; Government of Georgia 2018, 9). It is noteworthy that in 2018 Georgia and the EU signed an administrative agreement on civil protection and disaster risk management (National Security Council of Georgia 2020). Based on the recommendations of the EU civil protection assessment team, a 5-year plan for institutional development was elaborated. However, structural changes and a significant reduction of funds from the state budget have practically halted the approval process of the plan. Likewise, despite the fact that in 2017 the Governmental decree, the "National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy of Georgia 2017-2020" was approved, a disaster risk management action plan has yet to be approved and therefore has not been implemented even though the draft document has been sent to the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection DG (ECHO) for review and subsequent recommendations (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2019, 32).

The improvement of the potential response to Chemical, Bacteriological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats and the fight against terrorism follows a similar pattern. Even though state agencies implemented certain measures to improve technical control, none of the mid-term documents of national importance, or even budget-related documents (for instance "Basic Data and Directions 2020-2023") provide any information on already planned or additional funds to be allocated for improving CBRN threat management systems (Government of Georgia 2020, 24). Overall, the country's ability to resist massive disasters, and hence its level of resilience, becomes questionable and may be assessed as unsatisfactory or low, due to important documents being stuck at state policy level, and the indications are that this clearly excludes the possibility of implementing effective measures to improve the disaster management system.

## MILITARY THREATS AND DEFENSE CAPABILITY

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The security environment created after 2008 (increased threat and the scale of Russian military aggression) naturally indicates for Georgia the need for increased defense capability and hence, enhancing the resilience of state institutions and the public and private sectors in a timely and comprehensive manner. This was, in fact, the requirement of NATO and the EU set before Georgia in 2008 and increasingly since 2014. It is evident that before Georgia becomes a member of the EU, the country would only prioritize the objectives of interoperability to be achieved under the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP/CSFP) (a requirement, which is already met) (Ministry of Defense of Georgia 2020a). However, the major challenge remains the inadequate perception of threat at national level, which is expressed in the gradual decline in the defense budget since 2008 (three times less than in 2008), as well as the issue of approving the defense strategy (National Defense Strategy) at government level, which is an even greater problem. In terms of practical implementation of the policy, the latter issue excludes any possibilities of identifying defense-related goals and ways to achieve them, as well as the allocation of needed resources.

The "National Defense Strategy 2020-2030", which was completed in the beginning of 2019, is yet to be approved. This impedes the elaboration of a "National Defense Readiness Plan" and the assignment of specific tasks and responsibilities [to the relevant stakeholders] during any war and national crisis/emergency situations. The State of War requires high readiness in the civilian domain and preparation of a set of actions to prepare the civilian infrastructure, ensuring the population's moral and psychological readiness and close communication and cooperation with the private sector. Unfortunately, no progress is evident in these regards either, which casts doubt over the country's ability to effectively resist an enemy and show any high level of resilience in case of war, particularly given the chronic underfunding of the Armed Forces. The importance of comprehensive understanding of this conclusion becomes even more pressing as NATO has been openly requesting Georgia to increase its resilience since the Warsaw Summit of 2016. The requirement implies the country's ability to ensure continuity of governance in a number of areas (mostly in terms of critical infrastructure, i.e. provision of food, water, medicine, energy resources and transportation and communication capabilities), despite the challenges caused by war (Shea 2016). In the light of this requirement, Georgia's ability to successfully accomplish this mission in its narrow and objective sense becomes questionable. The prospect of Georgia's membership to NATO also becomes a target because of the country's inability to meet one of the most important requirements introduced by the Alliance since 2016.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Georgia is a typical example of a country that actively tries to take on all kinds of commitments with international partners to highlight its importance and exemplary role. Meanwhile, the common logic of these commitments requires the implementation of fundamental reforms and rapid execution of coordinated measures at central, as well as local levels. This is the major factor which, unfortunately, was not necessarily embraced by the government, as evidenced by the protracted or delayed plans that precariously decrease the level of resilience. Therefore, recommendations should clearly outline the measures to be implemented by responsible agencies in order to improve the existing situation rapidly and radically:

- **Government of Georgia** – first of all, it is important to increase the capabilities and authorities of the coordinating agencies at central (National Security Council), as well as at local (regional and municipal) levels and provide them with adequate resources.
- **Government of Georgia/National Security Council** – A set of important documents (e.g., Critical Infrastructure Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Defense Readiness Plan, Cybersecurity Strategy and action plan, etc.) are still under review and their approval is delayed, which impedes the implementation of a number of important measures and plans at national or agency levels. This is caused most frequently by bureaucratic procedures and structural changes. Therefore, it is important that the processes for coordination and interagency discussion are improved. This could be made possible by assigning the controlling authority to a coordinating agency and expanding it, more specifically to the National Security Council whose work on these objectives is currently limited. Any attempt to respond to crisis situations or disasters, as well as to retaining critical functions during the state of war, cannot be successful if the Armed Forces are not able and do not have the resources to resist foreign military aggression. Moreover, it would become impossible if society, as well as civilian infrastructure and the private sector (business), are not morally and resource wise ready to contribute to national resistance efforts. Regardless of any set of activities that should be implemented by all state entities, including in coordination with the civil and private sectors, neither a common policy direction nor coordination efforts seem to be in place. Instead, all that is visible is a technical aggregation effort in various areas. This points to a lack of any internal discussions or common approach, which is further exacerbated by the lack of allocation of sufficient funds in the state budget. The latter, for its part, obstructs the implementation of required measures. Therefore, rapid implementation of the following recommendations should be prioritized:
- **Ministry of Defense of Georgia** – It is advisable to approve the National Defense Strategy and its implementation plan as soon as possible and in the longer term, the allocation of the required budgetary resources. In the light of financial/resource guarantees, it is also important to rapidly implement all necessary measures to increase readiness through close coordination with other agencies (with the help of the National Security Council) with regards to military, as well as civil defense and especially critical infrastructure.
- **All other relevant agencies** – Meanwhile, in order to inform the wider public about the future direction and plans on actions to be implemented, it is important to specify and detail the objectives to be achieved to simplify the measurement of success. This will facilitate the assessment of progress during the implementation process and help set out future courses of action. At this stage, objectives to be achieved are rather general, which makes it impossible to define any specific outcomes. Therefore, in order to avoid going round in circles, it is important to change the existing patterns and tendencies, which should guarantee accurate assessment of clearly defined outcomes.

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