

Conclusions

Georgia, the Black Sea and the Approaching West

Jan Arveds Trapans

Introduction

Georgia is moving toward the West and the West is moving toward Georgia although not for the same reasons. In Georgia the movement got definitely under way with the Rose Revolution-- the political change of 2003 the electoral results of 2004--whereupon domestic reform policy accelerated and foreign policy rapidly oriented westwards. The West has been moving for some time. Bulgaria and Romania, two countries on the western shore of the Black Sea are now NATO members; Turkey has belonged to the Alliance for a long time. Furthermore, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey intend to get into the EU and it is likely that they will accomplish their aim in a few years. When this happens, the Euro-Atlantic community will possess a considerable part of the shoreline of the Black Sea. The eastward movement does not have anything to do directly with revolutions, the Rose Revolution or the more recent one Orange Revolution. Nonetheless, the West has to take them and their consequences into account.

“The West” is NATO and the EU. It includes countries that are members in one or the other or both institutions as well as some individual states. This definition is an imprecise one and it is used for the sake of convenience. It deals with institutions and states which have an active security policy toward the Black Sea area and the Southern Caucasus. It neglects other factors and avoiding analytic definitions. However, nowadays much of Western policy toward the broad area from the Baltic to the Black Sea is made in NATO and the EU, the headquarters of the Euro-Atlantic community, with its capital at Brussels. There of course is more to the West than two organizations.

There are states with their distinct foreign and security policies. Among them, the United States is uniquely important to Georgia because it a particular policy toward the region.

“The West” also says that it is distinguished by shared values--principles, mores, and ways of behaviour. These values are seen in their everyday political and social behaviour--in democracy, civil society, civil and human rights, and so forth. The so-called transition countries like Georgia, which want to be accepted by the Trans-Atlantic community, are expected to assimilate these values fully and demonstrate them in their public and private behaviour. We shall not neglect values in the course of this Chapter. However, geostrategy and geopolitics will be dealt with first.

As the West moves eastward, its attention shifts toward regions and countries, to the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, and Georgia. We can be more certain about which countries are in the South Caucasus; they are Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The Black Sea, meaning the countries that belong to it, is not as easy to describe. There are countries that border on the Black Sea are the obvious choices. But there also are countries in ‘the Black Sea region’, and there is a bigger number of them, because once NATO and the EU stand at the seashore, Greece is certainly a country of ‘the region’. There is the Black Sea littoral, with even more countries, Austria among them. The above descriptions actually indicate various security, political, or economic concerns. However, whatever the definition is and no matter how large or small an area it encompasses, Georgia is in each one of them, often at the centre or close to it.

As NATO and the EU move eastward, their policy makers assess contiguous areas—the Baltic, the Balkans, and the Black Sea--in terms of security problems, that is, potential threats emanating from them. Because Georgia is in the South Caucasus and in the Black Sea area, it will be placed in the context of difficulties and threats arising from one area or the other. This is not necessarily to Georgia’s disadvantage. If threats are to be removed or at least moderated, it cannot be accomplished without a Georgia’s sustained participation. We shall start, therefore, with examining some of the various Western views—those of the international institutions in Brussels and the United States—on

threats, security and reform in the Black Sea area, South Caucasus and Georgia.

Security in the eyes of the West

The West and the Black Sea now touch each other and their contact area will be extended in the future. It is only natural that institutions and countries become concerned with security threats when they begin to loom in the immediate neighbourhood. The ‘frozen conflicts’ in the Black Sea area are a case in point. To Georgia and other regional countries they have been a danger of long standing. But as long as NATO and the EU were separated from them by an area in between, by Romania and Bulgaria, they could be disregarded, to a large extent. As long as they were kept frozen or at least contained, the question whether a solution had to be found could be postponed as well. In areas like South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the OSCE and UN could keep things more or less stifled and contain crises from fomenting across local borders.

Security in the Black Sea area and the South Caucasus has begun to attract more attention among policy makers. Recently, an expert testifying to the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate said that the Black Sea region forms the hub of an evolving geo-strategic and geo-economic system that extends from NATO-Europe to Central Asia and Afghanistan. As such, it is crucial to US-led antiterrorism efforts. It also provides westbound transit routes for Caspian energy supplies, which are a key to the European energy balance in the years ahead. In the American view, the South Caucasus Georgia is close to the centre of the wider Black Sea area and most of the strategic and economic lines of concern move through Georgia¹.

Similarly, a study of the Black Sea meant or the European Union recognizes that what happens in and around the Black Sea region affects European interests. Control over the Caspian Basin energy resources, transport routes through and around the Black Sea, the interaction of many regional conflicts in the South Caucasus and international involvement in these conflicts confer on the region a unique geopolitical interest. The various threats festering in the region can upset international stability. Any state that controls transport and traffic

¹ Vlad Socor, ‘Advancing Euro-Atlantic Security and Democracy in the Black Sea Region’. Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 8, 2005.

movement through it possesses a geostrategic advantage of considerable value, but this prize also increases the likelihood of armed conflicts erupting in the region. There is a plethora of problems emanating from the Black Sea region, ranging from environmental disasters to the smuggling of drugs. Threats could spill over into the EU area, threatening a disruption of the smooth functioning of the EU economy and political stability. With the latest round of enlargement and further enlargements planned in the near future, these issues acquire ever-greater urgency for the EU, which must find ways to avoid an escalation of various problems before they affect member countries².

Addressing the Council of Foreign Relations in Washington, Romania's President—expressing the policy views of a freshly-accepted NATO member—emphasized that much of the reality of the Black Sea basin is shaped by economic stagnation, insecure and unsecured borders, organized crime activities, and frozen conflicts. NATO cannot leave the countries of this region as victims of European history, as unstable borderlands outside Eastern Europe, he said. Renewed energy should be devoted to finding lasting solutions for the "frozen conflicts" in Trans-Dniestr, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. The persistence of such lawless "black holes" threatens the security of Europe by spilling over organized crime, human and arms trafficking, and transnational terrorism. Romania would build bridges--not defensive shields--by promoting freedom, democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Black Sea region³.

We have here three views, voiced in the United States, at a NATO gathering, and a study for the EU, recognize regional threats although sometimes the region is described more narrowly as "the South Caucasus", sometimes more generally as "the Black Sea area". The threats are listed in a different sequence of priority. To America, global terrorism certainly is more dangerous than, for example, to Denmark,

² Mustafa Ayadiev, *Europe's next shore: the Black Sea Region after EU enlargement*, Institute for Security Studies, Occasional Paper No 53, June 2004.

³ Traian Basescu, 'The Black Sea Area: Advancing Freedom, Democracy, and Regional Stability,' Council on Foreign Relations, March 10, 2005. Also see Dov Lynch, 'Security Sector Governance in the Southern Caucasus, Towards an EU Strategy' in Anja H. Ebnöther and Gustav E. Gustenau, eds. *Security Sector Governance in Southern Caucasus—Challenges and Visions* (Vienna and Geneva: DCAF, 2004), pp. 34-57.

although both are NATO members. New threats, like trafficking in drugs and human beings generated in the fragment states, are of greater concern to Germany than Al- Qaeda conspiracies or terrorist activists circling Georgia and intruding across its borders. The new threats generate ethnic and religious conflict, produce illegal migration, and live from trade in human beings, drugs, money, weapons and materials for weapons of mass destruction. They not only facilitate criminal activity, but also infest, undermine, and even influence state institutions. Criminal conglomerates operate regionally and have international tentacles, reaching westwards, into NATO and the EU area. The new threats cannot be detached from each other and dealt with piecemeal.

Terrorists and drug smugglers alike find a refuge and in fragment states, the staging areas for criminal conglomerates. Their activities flow from one fragment state to the other, across the Black Sea, penetrate borders, and infiltrate larger, contiguous countries, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The fragment state closest to the West is the Trans-Dniestr Republic between Ukraine and Moldova. The other fragments with the frozen conflicts are Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. They are remnants of the collapsed Soviet Union and, for political and strategic reasons, Russia has sustained stalemated conflicts with political stratagems. “Russia’s policy consists of freezing not only the conflicts as such, but rather the negotiating process, which Russia itself dominates”⁴.

Of course more needs to be said about security concerns in the Southern Caucasus and Georgia because there are other major issues of great concern. We used the example of the frozen conflicts in order to underscore the fact that events have pushed them from a periphery of Western attention toward its centre and the recognition that the Black Sea region is the most conflict ridden area along the expanding Euro-Atlantic perimeter. But today the West lacks a coherent and meaningful strategy *vis-à-vis* this region.

⁴ Socor, *op cit.*

The Guarded Approach of NATO

Georgia's new security policy was outlined by Gela Bezhuashvili, the Secretary of the National Security Council, speaking at a seminar of the Harvard Black Sea Security Program held at Batumi in September 2004. Georgia is inseparable part of the Black Sea region, he said, and together with other nations plays an important role in enhancing the security of this region. Particularly after the "Rose Revolution" the security of the region became a priority for the new government of Georgia, which seeks to develop and enhance moderation among the Black Sea nations and all other parties having interests in the Black Sea Security. At the same time, with the recognition of the Black Sea identity as an important aspect of global security, Georgia strives to achieve full membership in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. In this respect, Georgia tries to follow examples of Bulgaria and Romania, which already enjoy NATO membership and stand close to full integration in the European Union⁵.

Georgia aspires to get into NATO and NATO has told all hopeful aspirants what it expects them to do. The Study on NATO Enlargement issued in 1995 was the first major statement. Programs, like the Partnership for Peace, followed and the Membership Action Plan was introduced in 1999. A country that hopes to join NATO has to observe definite rules of behaviour in its domestic policy and in relations with its neighbours. It has to have demonstrable civilian control over the military and provide economic wherewithal to reform and sustain its armed forces. States which have ethnic disputes and conflicting territorial claims have to settle their disagreements peacefully. It should participate in Partnership for Peace exercises, contribute to regional security, and engage in international peacekeeping missions.

The Membership Action Plan of 1999 has many requirements. It aims at improving defence planning for prospective members. A candidate submits annual national defence plans to NATO which set out in clear detail defence reform activities. These include force development plans, defence resource management, economic policy, and improvement of interoperability of armed forces so that they can carry out missions identified in the NATO Strategic Concept. NATO provides

⁵ Gela Bezshuashvili, Speech at Batumi Seminar, September 11, 2004, Harvard Black Sea Program.

evaluation of a country's progress, gives technical and political guidance, and supplies defence planning expertise. The MAP is meant to overcome a lack of experience among civilians and the military in defence planning and bolster the sectors where civilian and military expertise is thin in some areas. It is based on experience with the enlargement process from 1994 to 1999. Defence reform in the three countries which were accepted at the Washington Summit had been much more problematic than had been anticipated, and the results, at best, passable. Therefore NATO came up with the MAP which, among other things, investigated what the aspirant countries were actually accomplishing.

Although informally there is talk of 'NATO criteria', officially none have been declared. Neither the Study of 1995 nor subsequent documents have a fixed set, a definite inventory of them (unlike the EU, which has issued specific criteria--many of them). NATO does not want to find itself in a situation where an applicant brings to Brussels a neatly checked off list of actions taken and says: 'It all has been accomplished'. Thus the title 'Membership Action Plan' is something of a misnomer. Fulfilling all requirements plans does not guarantee membership. When the MAP was given out, NATO reiterated that there were no fixed criteria. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The Alliance's members resolve, by private consensus, whether accepting an applicant will contribute to security and stability in the North Atlantic area at the time the decision is made. The escape clause—that is what it is—was devised largely with Russia in mind. The Alliance can make an internal decision for which it does not have to give a public explanation.

In 1995 when NATO turned eastwards it was not certain how far and how fast it would move and how confident its progress would be. The first cooperation programme of cooperation in defence, the Partnership for Peace, was initially called, somewhat sardonically, a Partnership for Procrastination. It was meant to provide a defence programme to Central and East European countries so that they would start on reforms while NATO attempted to make up its mind on what to do. Partnership for Peace has expanded and other programmes have appeared, of which the Membership Action Plan is the best known but not the only one. Over the years, NATO has established a web of relationships, like a bow wave moving ahead of a slowly advancing

security ship, in the area where it is heading. On occasions, some countries for whom membership is a somewhat distant prospect have developed more active and intense cooperation and defence reform programmes than those who already are close to the NATO entranceway.

Initially, NATO working programs were geared for the military. The Partnership for Peace was developed by NATO's military side, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, SHAPE, and naturally it had a military bent. Gradually the programs have been reoriented toward economic and political issues. NATO programmes pay attention to establishing a proper division power between the Parliaments and the Executive, strengthening democratic and electoral institutions, the rule of law, human rights, and development of civil society. But defence programmes still weigh in the balance and much of the program development will be done in target country Defence Ministries and General Staff offices.

A state that does not anticipate getting into NATO soon, if at all, can get more concrete benefits by developing a set of working programmes with NATO than countries close to EU membership from their relationship with the EU. NATO has established and elaborated a rich menu of offerings. The Partnership for Peace has managed to diminish the distinct barrier between membership of the Alliance and partnership with it. The EU's first priority, on the other hand, has not been to diminish barriers between members and non-members, but to deepen the integration of its members inside the organisation.

The approach that NATO has elaborated in Central and Eastern Europe would work to Georgia's advantage. Georgia could plan and implement out defence and security reform programmes in tandem with NATO although actual membership could be far away. But in doing so, Tbilisi will have to ascertain Georgia's needs and priorities. Some years ago, a Defence Minister of one of the Baltic countries observed that in the past, people waited for instructions from comrades in Moscow on what to do; now they look to Brussels. Georgia has to determine and fix its future security arrangements itself.

The Circumspect European Union

Thus there is a fundamental difference between how NATO and the EU propose to deal with transformation in the areas next to them. NATO has an abundance of programmes that help a country ‘meet NATO standards’. But the recipient country can never be quite certain whether it will get in NATO or not. The EU starts with the question whether a country is slated to be a member or not. If membership is in clear sight, then there is an association agreement, which is generally seen as a precursor to accession. EU has a detailed list for what the candidate have to accomplish and develops an intense engagement with the particular country.

There have been some recent changes. The European Commission’s communication on *Wider Europe Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* of March 2003 launched a debate about EU policy toward the neighbours in the periphery. Security sector reform figured prominently in it. The European Security Concept, written under the guidance of High Representative Javier Solana (who, previously, served as the Secretary General of NATO), envisaged the creation of a zone well-governed states next to the Union’s perimeter. They would be stable, institutionally strong, and amenable to EU concerns. The Wider Europe initiative led to a Neighbourhood Policy. There are Action Plans concluded with the neighbouring states but these plans are not, however, steps toward accession.

In the Wider Europe Communication of 2003, the South Caucasus got short shrift: “Given their location, the Southern Caucasus therefore also falls outside the geographic scope of this initiative for the time being.” EU does have a Country Strategy Paper for Georgia. It goes back to 2001 when it was adopted by its Commission. It included a project, an in-depth study on how to reform Georgia’s Border Guards, and one million Euros was provided for it. Nonetheless, for some time, EU pursuits have remained at ‘the declamatory level, and concrete actions in this field are piece-meal and limited’. It was said that ‘The European Union’s new Neighbourhood Policy comes as close as

Brussels could be expected to get to asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” As Genesis informs us, opinion on this question varies⁶.

But the tide is beginning to run the other way, pushed by two fortuitously converging movements. First, there is the EU’s cautious eastward progression which, presumably, is to culminate with the admission of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey. Second, there are the sudden, unexpected Rose and Orange Revolutions which have shifted Georgia and Ukraine westwards; they are carrying Moldova with them. As the two movements converge, they raise the question of security and stability around the Black Sea and Southern Caucasus to a prominent and visible elevation. Studies on security studies on the Caucasus region and the Black Sea area are initiated by Western institutions--the think tanks; there are seminars convoked for specialists from the academia, attended by government policy makers as well; these are well-known straws indicating a coming shift in the policy wind.

Georgia and the West

As EU views of the area and Georgia’s significance are changing, so has Georgia’s policy toward the EU. Georgia has been accepted in the European Neighbourhood policy but it does not, as yet, have an Action Plan, although such plans have been negotiated and approved for Ukraine and Moldova. Tbilisi has publicly made known that it will not be satisfied with a partnership status in a neighbourhood outside the EU; membership is the long term objective.

Membership of countries in the Black Sea region was the question put to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Ukraine’s President Yuschenko in January 2005. He announced that his country is making a strong drive toward EU. Ukraine signed a three-year Action Plan with the EU that sets out the chief areas where Ukraine needs to reform to meet EU standards, but Yushchenko wants a guarantee that once the action plan ends, then negotiations toward membership would begin, possibly in 2008. But the EU states are reluctant to admit new members from the Black Sea area.

There is a debate among those who want to ‘deepen’ the EU and those who want to ‘broaden’ it; those who want to bring in Turkey and those who hesitate; those who weigh the relative merits of building the

⁶ Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, ‘The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,’ *Policy Review*, p. 5.

weight of the EU as a security organization vis-à-vis NATO; and those who claim that with taking in ten new members and adopting a new Constitution the EU has more than enough on its plate. EU members in southern Europe are reluctant about a shift toward the Black Sea; they do not want attention turning away from the Mediterranean area. ‘Whether Ukraine should be allowed to set foot on the path that leads to membership is a question diplomats try hard to avoid’, writes *The Times* of London. No doubt, they would avoid Georgia’s steps on the path just as much or more.

Nonetheless, Georgia has requested that it would like to see the kind of attention that Brussels is giving to Ukraine. Georgia sees its course linked to that of Ukraine as Kyiv attempts to move beyond the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy and attain membership. Georgia also wants more engagement of the EU in attempts to settle the frozen conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where the EU has given assistance for economic rehabilitation. Georgia has begun discussions with the EU whether it could replace the OSCE in a border monitoring mission on Georgia’s borders with Russia. However, the anticipated Action Plan would provide assistance for transforming the police, penitentiary, and judiciary systems—three important parts of Georgia’s security sector.

Tbilisi expects positive responses from Brussels—both from the EU and NATO—but the two are giving reluctant and ambiguous responses. The problem with the EU is that, as already noted, unlike NATO it has not elaborated assorted and multiple assistance programmes where a partnership relation can provide as much external assistance as action plans promising membership. Georgia’s approach to Brussels could be the development of an inclusive security governance reform programme aligned with what NATO and the EU could offer to support such a programme.

Security Sector Reform

The first issue on Georgia’s work agenda should be the development of a set clear, coherent, and realistic security and defence plans. A National Security Concept, the basic policy document, has been long in the making. Presumably, the one being developed will provide adequate policy guidance. The relevant questions as to the Concept’s adequacy

are: Does it give a realistic interpretation of Georgia's security needs and establish feasible objectives? Does it provide clear policy guidance to Georgia's Defence and other Ministries? If not, then it is not much more than a statement of good intentions, with limited impact on what actually will take place in the short, medium, and long terms. The accepted method of coherent security planning is generally accepted as follows. Successively, there is a threat perception, a national security concept, a defence policy, a national strategy, and a military doctrine which is determines a force structure design, a force development plan, training, and so forth. This is the military part of security planning, and Georgia's national security concept should set in motion related planning processes in other security sectors.

We cannot expect to have a neat and precise sequence fall into place right away. The orderly planning procedure described above has been worked out in Western countries over a number of years. In Georgia, as in every other transition state, defence and security policy makers have had to respond to problematical, rapidly altering conditions. Nonetheless, Georgia has now decided on a definite orientation for its security policy. It is finalizing a National Security Concept and should work on a Strategic Defence Review. The security Ministries are being reorganized and--not the least important--the defence budget has been significantly increased. It will be very challenging to simultaneously develop a set of plans for NATO and the EU and put everything in a coherent framework.

In doing so, Georgia's security policy makers should not lose sight of the cardinal principle: it is the security of their country that they are working toward; they are not exerting themselves simply in order to get into NATO and the EU. The fact is that in the end Georgia might not be accepted by the one or the other or its entry could be interminably postponed. In a study on Georgia's security, General Sir Garry Johnson, the Chair of the International Security Advisory Board, reminds the Georgians that all three Baltic countries declared their strong desire to join NATO as the prime security guarantor and followed this closely, but more quietly, with a declaration of intent to join the EU. 'A decade later both those intentions [have been] fulfilled, but there were times in the

early days when... it seemed that the Western European nations would, without the urging of the United States, still be dragging their feet'⁷.

According to ISAB, the major lessons coming from the Baltic which should be observed in Georgia are the following. From the outset, the political and security framework within which reform is to take place should be clearly established; there needs to be an overall strategic plan for the whole security sector; Government has to approve, at the highest level, the major issues of the reform process; Government control and political support of and for the process is necessary and must be sustained; and external assistance should be well coordinated and this assistance should be direct linked to the development of the overall reform process. Finally, there is a lesson for the local reformers and the external advisers: "Be patient, and seek a good and workable outcome, rather than strive for a swift and unobtainable perfection"⁸.

Georgia's policy makers have reached the stage of the reform process where are consolidating a National Security Concept, trying to come to grips with an overall framework plan, and they hope to get into the in NATO Membership Action Plan or MAP. Realistically, Georgia should not anticipate being admitted to the Membership Action Plan for some years. But it could get what Ukraine got in 2002, a surrogate, a NATO-Ukraine Action Plan. Its purpose of this plan is to identify Ukraine's strategic objectives and priorities in pursuit of its aspirations towards full integration into Euro-Atlantic security structures. It is formulated to provide a strategic framework for existing and future NATO-Ukraine relations. Until Ukraine is accepted into the MAP, it will use the extant Action Plan. However, there is not that much difference in the substance of the two plans. Georgia could 'seek good and workable outcome' today which will bring a Membership Action Plan in due time.

Moreover, when various Action Plans are reviewed—developed for NATO or for the EU--many of their objectives are very much the same. NATO--like the EU--wants to strengthen efficient public administration, democratic institutions, and civil society. The EU--like NATO--wants a 'good neighbourhood' particularly as it approaches the Black Sea and the vicinity of Georgia. The Action Plans would not be

⁷ Sir Garry Johnson, 'Security Sector Reform in the Southern Caucasus,' in Ebnöther and Gustenau, p. 4.

⁸ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

identical ones but they would not be very far apart. NATO is entering the third phase of its post–Cold War adaptation. The first involved the strategic enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic space by inclusion in NATO of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. The second phase moved NATO to the Baltic and the Black Sea and brought a degree of fusion in the security objectives of NATO and the EU as their almost simultaneous and overlapping enlargement to the East took place. The third phase involves both of them looking at and across the Black Sea.

Plans become implementation programmes. The number of Western advisers in Georgia is increasing and so are assistance programmes. There will be more of them; they will be multilateral, bilateral, and sometimes come into view as initiatives of independent Western institutes. All this Western assistance is well-meant, most of it can be useful, but it seldom is well co-ordinated. According to the International Security Advisory Board, which came to Georgia having worked in the Baltic states until 1999, the Baltic defence reformers ‘were not [always] helped in their work by the plethora of advice and assistance, often uncoordinated and short-term in nature, offered by supporting nations and organisations, nor by the stream of visitors who have to be looked after, and of external meetings which have to be attended’⁹.

Many of the assistance programmes will come from or be finalised in Brussels that is, NATO and the EU. Both of these large institutions are huge bureaucracies, by nature and by necessity. They have a maze of directorates, divisions and offices. During the next years there will be an encounter of bureaucracies, one of them headquartered in Tbilisi, two in Brussels. They have different mentalities and ways of behaviour. One can be critical about bureaucracies, but they are the institutions in which and through which business is conducted. Georgia needs knowledgeable guides in order to find its way through the habits and procedures and confusing policy hallways in Brussels. Nowadays, we often hear about strategies, the grand frameworks for achieving far-reaching domestic or international change. Tactics, seldom mentioned, are just as important, if not more.

⁹ International Defence Advisory Board to the Baltic States, *Final Report*, February 10, 1999, p. 5.

Expert Western advice is necessary and helpful. The leading expert group in the Baltic was the ISAB established in 1995 at the request of the Baltic Defence Ministers. It worked with presidential offices, foreign and defence ministers, chiefs of defence, parliamentarians, senior officials and military officers. Among other things, it helped the Baltic States to understand how NATO works and, just as importantly, ISAB representations at NATO and SHAPE helped these two establishments to understand Baltic capabilities and identify what kind of assistance would be of immediate value to the Baltic States.

Strategic Calculations and Moral Considerations

Georgia has declared its intent to join NATO and the EU and we have described some of the responses of these organisations on Georgia's membership and their views on the stability and threats in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea region. In the main, Western thinking revolves around politics, economy, and security, the facts of geostrategy or geopolitics. They are based in Western security needs. They have less to do with Georgia and the Georgians and more with Western interests in the area. The area can be designated as the Southern Caucasus or the Black Sea area--according to what specific issue is being looked through the eyes of which particular state or institution. States formulate their policies by prioritising threats or benefits, that is, tangible things. But there are intangibles as well, among them, moral factors. Moral arguments are vaguer than strategic ones, they have no relevance to state interests, and they cannot be bolstered with statistical underpinnings as, say, the data on annual oil transport. Nonetheless, they do exist and they are not ineffective. The West speaks of 'Euro-Atlantic values'. A moral case can be made why Georgia and other countries of the region should be included in the "Euro-Atlantic community".

Reflecting on the levels of motivation in the actual decisions that made over the 'why-and-how' of NATO and the EU moving eastwards, a former American Government official Ronald Asmus wrote on the importance of moral factors. From 1997 to 2000 Asmus served in the US Department of State as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, responsible for NATO and European security. There would be few people in Government affairs more familiar with the

convoluted geopolitical and geostrategic thinking that was a part of the internal, official, multi-nation discussions on enlargement. Looking back at what had taken place, he concluded “After all, it was precisely the combination of moral and strategic factors that made the case for enlarging NATO and the European Union to Central and Eastern Europe so compelling and which eventually carried both elite and public opinion. In a nutshell, that argument was based on the premise that the West had a moral obligation to undo the damage of a half-century of partition and communism and to make Europe’s eastern half as safe, democratic, and secure as the continent’s western half. Today that same argument must be extended to the wider Black Sea region”¹⁰.

What moral arguments do the nations of the region as a whole and Georgia in particular have? There are two main ones: why the two revolutions—Rose and Orange—took place and how the revolutionaries conducted themselves. Revolutions swept away ill-functioning and corrupt governing structures which had been set up by political leaders who were mainly interested in power, privilege, and profit. The sweep was done quickly, without bloodshed. The great, contentious issue that brought things to a head was democracy--fair and honest elections. Shevardnadze and Kuchma were toppled because they attempted to hold onto power with palpably fraudulent tactics. In Georgia, the parliamentary and presidential elections demonstrated a remarkable amount of civic awareness and initiative. Many voters went to the polls and they insisted that the results must be recorded fairly and accurately. In the end, power passed peacefully to the opposition. Of course, all the events in Georgia or in Ukraine cannot be seen simply as the forces of light contesting the forces of darkness. There are murky spots on the record of those who took over power in both countries and more have appeared since they attained power. However, as Asmus notes, both elite and public opinion are influenced by moral arguments and public opinion in the West matters considerably.

The aspirations of societies of Georgia and Ukraine were brought to the attention of Western societies—not just to the elites, the Western policy makers--with dramatic immediacy by unfolding revolutionary events shown by Western media, above all by television. A very

¹⁰ Asmus and Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

knowledgeable observer of the Black Sea area, speaking to Ukraine's parliamentarians in September 2002--that is, before the Rose and Orange Revolutions took place--reminded his listeners that 'A Western parliament is only one institution of civic, public and democratic control. On Sunday 22 September, 400,000 people marched through London in protest against the policies of the British government.... These people arrived from all parts of the country and demonstrated their grievances without hindrance or impediment. [S]till, this was a demonstration of what we mean by civil society and what we mean by respect for it'¹¹. Civil society in Georgia and in Ukraine from all parts of their countries demonstrated what they hoped to attain. Georgia and Ukraine can build their case on that.

NATO does not specifically list public opinion among the requirements and achievements of the countries aspiring for membership. But, less formally, Brussels has conveyed how important it is. Asmus writes about the recently admitted countries that: 'The first and undoubtedly most important of these ingredients was the will and drive of these countries--from both the leaders and their populations---to become part of Europe and the trans-Atlantic community. It is impossible to overstate just how important this factor was. The doors of NATO and the EU would never have been opened to these countries had the leaders of Central and Eastern Europe not knocked--and at times pounded on them'. The Baltic states, formerly Soviet republics, had to dig themselves out from the economic and political rubble of a collapsed economy. However, 'Absent their remarkable success in reforming and reorienting themselves to the West, the Baltic states would never have been taken seriously as candidates for either NATO or the EU'¹².

If the policy makers of Georgia and Ukraine are going to knock insistently on institutional doors in Brussels, and they have started doing that, they will have to bring with them evidence of determination and achievement. The first proof would be a serious attempt at mitigating corruption. No one can reasonably expect that it could be eradicated in a short order. It has infested Georgia's politics and society very deeply.

¹¹ James Sherr, 'Parliamentary Control of the Security Sector,' September 27, 2002, DCAF-RADA Seminar, Kyiv, Ukraine, p. 4.

¹² Ronald D. Asmus, *Strategy for Integrating Ukraine into the West*, Conflict Studies Research Centre. Central and Eastern Europe Series (April 2004), p. 3.

However, it will be evident in a relatively short time whether the Government is determined to deal with the problem or whether it is sliding back to the behaviour of Shevardnadze, who publicly lamented corruption in Georgia and privately enjoyed it. There must be evidence of a real determination to deal with the thorny and difficult security and defence issues, step by step. Large, vague, optimistic announcements will not carry the day. Proclamations that Georgia will have accomplished everything required to get into the Membership Action Plan in a short order belong in the rubric of unfounded optimism. They are quite similar to the practice of the Soviet times—the announcement of a plan followed in due course by assertions that the plan had been fulfilled and exceeded, although little of substance had been accomplished. Georgia will be much better served by bringing to Brussels short, concise lists of concrete, demonstrable accomplishments.

We will conclude with views of Western experts who have been deeply immersed in Western policy making and security and defence transformation in the former socialist countries. The first one is that of Ron Asmus. ‘Reaching out to the Black Sea countries is the natural next step in completing our vision of a Europe whole and free,’ he writes. ‘Today there are growing numbers of voices in the region articulating their aspiration to anchor themselves to, and eventually become full members of, the Euro-Atlantic community through membership in NATO and the European Union... Once again, the West is struggling to define what constitutes “Europe” and the “Euro-Atlantic community.” At several points in the 1990s debate over NATO and EU enlargement, we faced the issue of how far membership in these institutions could or should extend. At each and every step there were Western voices calling for a pause or a cap on the process. The proponents of an open-ended approach prevailed with the moral argument that countries which had suffered longer under communism or were simply less developed should not be discriminated against or punished, but should instead have the prospect of one day walking through the open doors of our institutions once they have embraced our values and met the criteria for membership. We must press that case again today’¹³.

¹³ Asmus and Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

The second view is that of the International Security Advisory Board. Written at an earlier time, when the Board was concluding its work in the Baltic States, it comes from its *Final Report*, and the particular section quoted here is addressed to NATO. ‘We believe that it is in the interests of no party for there to remain a zone of uncertainty in the Eastern Baltic. We would, therefore, welcome a clearer statement of the vision of the Western political leadership clarifying their intentions in this matter. We believe that a continuing reluctance to articulate such a vision could have a cumulatively debilitating effect on military development in the three States and, given the political capital which has been expended internally on a successful outcome, that continuing obfuscation could lead to a draining of public support for the general objectives of integration, with attendant adverse effects on the steady democratic development of the States. We believe, and hope, that the forthcoming Washington Summit will provide the opportunity for positive movement, for we see it as only reasonable and natural that the path of enlargement upon which NATO has embarked with its partners and aspirant members should, in the case of the Baltic States, be carried to its logical conclusion as soon as is sensibly possible’¹⁴. Similar sentiments might be expressed in the case of Georgia some years from now. If so, the one cited above actually would need only minor alterations, some phrases, replacing the words ‘the Eastern Baltic’ with ‘Southern Caucasus’.

¹⁴ *Final Report*, p. 3.