

Threat Assessment for 2010-2013

Introduction

Providing for the security of Georgia means creation and sustainment of positive environment for the nation's peaceful democratic development and the best possible realization of the national interests, as well as guaranteeing physical security, rights, freedoms and equal opportunity for each citizen.

"Threat Assessment for 2010-2013" is a fundamental conceptual document, which identifies currently recognizable threats to Georgia, presents possible scenarios of their realization, and provides analysis of their probability and impact.

"Threat Assessment for 2010-2013" is based on the broad understanding of security and besides the military and political threats the document evaluates socio-economic and terrorist threats, as well as natural and man-made disasters. Taking these threats into account is necessary while implementing the national policies in response to the challenges facing Georgia.

This document is the adapted non-classified version of "Threat Assessment for 2010-2013".

I. Military Threats

In the modern globalized world, which is characterized by rapid growth of intensity of political, economic, social and cultural interactions between nations, organizations, individuals and the groups, founding of international relations on the principle of power politics is endangering the fundamental principles and norms of the international order.

In August 2008 the full-scale military aggression committed by Russia against Georgia and occupation of Georgian territories made clear that Russian Federation, pursuing realization of its own interests, is ready to openly oppose the fundamental norms and principles of international law that constitute the basis of the modern international relations.

Occupation of large parts of Georgian territory by Russia is putting in danger the sovereignty and statehood of Georgia, and is the major factor of political, economic and social instability. Failure to fulfill the international commitments accepted by the Russian Federation in the ceasefire agreements of August and September 2008, lack of international peacekeeper presence on the occupied territories, and rapid and intense militarization of the occupied territories, all increase the risk of provocations and possibility of new military aggression.

The primary goal of the Russian Federation is to hinder realization of the Euro-Atlantic choice of Georgia and to forcefully bring Georgia back into the Russian sphere of influence. The final goal of the military aggression of August 2008 was not occupation of Georgian territories or international recognition of the proxy regimes, but the change of the pro-Western government of Georgia, because existence of an independent and democratic Georgia is seen by the Russian ruling political elite as a threat.

Despite the large-scale military aggression, Russia did not manage to accomplish its goals; not being able to stop either Georgia's movement towards the European and Euro-Atlantic space, or the nation's development and the process of democratic consolidation. The reality that is in place after the Russian military aggression is not acceptable for Russia's ruling political elite. This increases Russian-borne threats and risks for Georgia.

From this point of view, the situation currently existing in the occupied regions also implies considerable risks. Lawlessness that dominates those regions, and existence of criminal groups and illegal armed units of the proxy regimes, negatively influences the national security of Georgia and increases the risks related to possible provocations and incidents, especially in areas adjacent to the line of occupation.

At the same time, an important risk for the stable and secure development of Georgia and the whole region is the existence of conflict zones in the countries neighboring Georgia. Possible spillover of such conflicts to the territory of Georgia is a challenge to Georgian national security. Besides the possible spillover, intensification of conflicts that exist in the region and possible launch of military operations would, together with other negative effects, cause a large number of refugees moving towards Georgia and the danger of armed groups entering the country together with the stream of refugees. Besides, it would cause an increase of smuggling and other transnational organized crime. It would also worsen the security environment of the region and endanger Caucasian transport and energy transit projects.

II. Foreign Political Threats

The Russian Federation openly opposes Georgia's goal to continue development of a state based on Western values, and spends considerable resources on the international stage to conduct an anti-Georgian informational and diplomatic campaign. The goal of this campaign is to create an image of Georgia as a non-democratic, unstable and aggressive nation and to hinder realization of Georgia's sovereign choice. It must be expected that the Russian Federation will continue its intensive and large-scale anti-Georgian informational and diplomatic campaign to hinder Georgia's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic organizations.

With the aim of destabilizing the Georgian state and destroying Georgia's territorial integrity, the Russian government is also taking active measures and spending considerable resources – both political and financial – to achieve international recognition of the so called independence of Georgia's occupied regions. Despite this, “independence” of these regions has been recognized only by Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru. Russia continues its active campaign on the international stage to legitimize its occupation of Georgian territories, and undermine these regions' status as parts of Georgia's sovereign territory through international recognition of the proxy regimes.

Another danger for Georgian national security is presented by demographic manipulations, including setting conditions for the settlement of Russian citizens, which would aim at prolonging the occupation and hampering the deoccupation process. From this point of view, of particular importance are the “legal” steps made by the proxy regimes, which are aimed at giving the rights of residence and buying property in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region to foreign citizens, as well as construction of military bases and infrastructure, enabling Russian troops to bring to and settle their families in the occupied regions.

Besides the anti-Georgian campaign and attempts to achieve international recognition of the occupied regions, the Russian Federation is making particular efforts not to allow international involvement on the occupied territories, because only international involvement is a sufficient mechanism for achieving practical results of security and stability on the occupied territories. An important danger from this point of view is the blocking of the activity of international monitoring and humanitarian missions in the occupied regions, which hinders verification by these organizations of the human rights violations and other illegal activities there. Lack of international involvement in the occupied regions endangers Georgia's national interests, because it hinders both launch of the deoccupation process, and adequate reaction to the systematic violations of human rights in these regions.

III. Transnational Threats

The globalized world provides both opportunities and a number of threats and risks. After the end of the Cold War, threats coming from non-state actors have become an important concern for many nations and for general international security. International terrorism and transnational crime are the major challenges from this point of view. Events that have lately taken place on the international stage have made obvious how difficult it is to fight these threats. Additionally, as one of the results of technological progress, issues like defense of the national cyberspace and cyber security have grown in importance.

During the August 2008 War the Russian Federation used concentrated and massive cyber attacks against Georgia in parallel with the use of ground, air, and naval forces. These cyber attacks demonstrated that defense of cyber space is as important for national security as defense of land, sea, and aerial spaces. The experience of 2008 shows that attacks employing information technologies present a realistic threat in the modern globalized world.

Another important threat for Georgia's national security is the level of crime on the occupied territories, which creates there a fertile soil for transnational crime. Particular risk is presented by crimes like smuggling of components of weapons of mass destruction, weapons and illicit drugs trade, production and smuggling of counterfeit money, human trafficking, trade with stolen automobiles, and the like.

IV. Socio-Economic Threats

For the national security and general welfare of Georgia it is very important to continue stable economic development. For this purpose it is crucial for Georgia to acquire its own decent place in the international economic system. The latest world financial and economic crisis has underlined the risks that accompany the globalized and interdependent world.

The possible deepening or repetition of the world economic crisis is a serious threat to the economic development of Georgia which would have a negative impact on the development of various sectors of economy and seriously hamper the nation's economic growth. In the case that the crisis worsens, it could hit especially hard the financial markets, which would have a negative impact on the Georgia's rapidly developing banking sector.

The possible deepening of the world financial crisis would also negatively influence the volume of the foreign investments. Flow of private foreign capital into Georgia and productive capacities created by this capital are very important for the economic development of Georgia.

Generally in the case of a deepening or a repetition of the crisis, economic threats would emerge, such as a decrease of overall demand for goods and services, decrease of foreign investment, a crisis in the banking sector, a lower national budget and income and the like.

Effective management of energy threats is also important for national security. During the last several years Georgia has achieved considerable progress in establishing stable energy supplies. Despite this success, diversification of sources of energy is still a priority for the national security policy of Georgia. Importance of such diversification is underlined by incidents of use of energy resources for political pressure and blackmail that are becoming more frequent.

Demography is another important factor for national development. In comparison with the tendencies of the last period, currently the birth rate and the number of Georgian nationals returning to the country are growing. However, it is very important to make sure that these positive trends remain in the long-term. Of particular importance is the depopulation process that is going on in some of the mountainous regions of Georgia. This process represents not only a social, cultural and demographic problem, but also an important challenge for the national security of Georgia.

Besides the economic, energy and demographic challenges, an important issue is protection from various contagious diseases that could cause epidemics. As a consequence of global interdependence and the intensive communication between various states that characterizes the modern world, it is extremely difficult to localize the spread of highly contagious diseases. Such diseases spread very quickly, which even more developed nations than Georgia find hard to prevent. Considering the position of Georgia as a transit state, such threats must always be taken into account.

V. Natural and Industrial Threats and Risks

The worsening of the natural environment, disasters caused both by natural reasons and human activity, can threaten the environment and biological diversity of Georgia, as well as the welfare of its residents.

Particularly grave is the ecological situation in the occupied regions, which is largely caused by illegal exploitation of these regions' natural resources. This process is most intensive in Abkhazia from which river channel materials, wood, fish, and coal are illegally exported. Oil drilling is planned as well. These activities not only create problems for the sea coast of Abkhazia and lower its potential as a tourist region, but also cause long-term ecological damage.

An important natural risk is caused by Georgia's position in a seismically active zone, rising the probability of earthquakes. Other natural risks in Georgia are floods, landslides, avalanches, forest fires, draughts, hails and erosion.

Besides the natural risks, there are risks related to the nation's industrial development. Technically sound and safe functioning of plants, factories, energy pipelines and lines of communication is particularly important for minimizing these risks. Leaks of chemical substances, hydro-dynamic disasters and disasters on the major pipelines are among the risks related to industrial disasters in Georgia.