

# NEXT STEPS IN FORGING A EUROATLANTIC STRATEGY FOR THE WIDER BLACK SEA



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# Georgia's Path to NATO

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Every small nation or nation state, throughout human history and the history of international relations, has sought the best possible mechanisms for survival and the best possible destination toward which to direct its development. Georgia is no exception to this rule and in spite of its 3,000 years of statehood, it is again attempting to build a new, modern state based on its history, heritage and culture and value system. And, in a world where so much is happening and where international relations are dominated by terminology like “globalization”, “multilateral institutions”, “failed states” and “non-state actors”, Georgia is having to determine its own national interests and to learn how to navigate in these new conditions, largely designed for mature nation states.

After the end of the Cold War, having regained its independence, Georgia found itself in a position much like that of the Baltic States in the 1990s. Georgia today must develop a new vision for its place and role in the post-Cold War world. It had to overcome however, three separate eruptions of civil and ethnic conflict caused by time-bombs embedded in the Soviet system, which prevented Georgia's intellectual and political leadership from focusing on anything other than survival.

Meanwhile, the world around Georgia was changing significantly. Now, with the gradual disappearance of the term “post-Soviet”, other geopolitical terms are beginning to take precedence. These include concepts like the “Greater Middle East” or the “New Europe” and they demand that Georgia redefine its political and security identity.

Georgia is on the border between Europe and Asia, between the former Ottoman, Russian and Persian Empires and their contemporary successor states, between democratic, autocratic and theocratic forms of governance and is literally the meat in a sandwich of terrorism, between the North Caucasus and the Middle East. Without a clear orientation, Georgia will find itself quickly relegated to the league of failed states, taking on various features of the countries in its immediate neighborhood.

At the same time, the Euroatlantic community has been busy redefining its role and function. NATO's historic decision to enlarge, to transform itself and to absorb the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has set an encouraging example of transformation for countries like Georgia.

## Why NATO?

NATO represents much to the world. To some, it is a desirable military bloc and political coalition, while to others (many of whom can be said to be unremitting disturbers of the peace themselves) it is an irritant. But, what specifically does NATO membership signify for Georgia? A close examination reveals two views about its perceived importance.

The first view is that NATO membership is a very effective tool for political and security reform. The second is that NATO is a club in which membership can and does favor state building. In this second view NATO membership is seen as a destination, to which a country can arrive only if it has completed a process of state building. The aspiration to join NATO raises the question “Where is Georgia headed”? The answer is toward assimilation with the Euroatlantic family of politically likeminded states.

Georgia is currently seeking to orient itself within a new identity paradigm, that of a wider Black Sea region. No longer willing to be labeled merely as a post-Soviet state nor wishing to be identified with the volatile and fragmented Caucasus region, Georgia sees its ties with the Black Sea community as a way to become affiliated with the rest of Europe. As such, Georgia is following its fellow Western-leaning post-communist states on the path to Euroatlantic integration through NATO.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Georgia has a somewhat different road to travel toward NATO membership than the Baltic Republics or other Eastern European countries had. Although the Baltic States were administered by the USSR, they were perceived internationally as having legitimate claims to statehood throughout the Soviet period. The Warsaw Pact/COMECON countries retained their statehood, albeit under communist rule with Soviet suzerainty. Georgia, in contradistinction to both, had to invent a modern statehood in the context of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rampant conflict and confusion that was left in its wake. As time passed and the designation “post-Soviet” became less and less useful as an explanatory category, Georgia found itself unable or unwilling to align itself to one particular political bloc.

The basic question: “Who are we politically?” had to be answered. During the Shevardnadze period, while Georgia was busy not only defining its identity but also fighting for it, some political leaders began to think about which group of countries and which political or military blocs would provide the best conditions for the development of Georgia's statehood. The spectrum of options available was not very broad. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on Russia's initiative. The CIS is a loose organization with no clear vision or binding values to which to attach oneself. At best, it served as a mechanism for civilized divorce and at worst its creation was an attempt to mark Russia's traditional spheres of influence, fuelling hopes for the future restoration of that empire's lost might. Georgia, together with the Baltic States, initially rejected membership in the CIS, but was later forced to join. However, Georgia never joined the CIS advanced security or economic structures (the Organization for

Collective Security and the Eurasian Economic Union, respectively). It is important to note that none of the active members of the CIS (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan or Armenia) has demonstrated its commitment to forthright political or economic transformation in line with initiatives espoused within or by the CIS.

The only positive and successful examples of transformation in the region of East Central Europe have been those states that joined NATO over the last ten years. These have not only survived various forms of shock therapy, but have reorganized outdated security structures, created sound and effective state institutions and developed their economies. The process was never easy, but incentives were available and solutions to many existing interstate and intrastate conflicts were found through the shared vision of a common future offered by NATO membership. All new NATO members have either joined, or are in the process of joining, the European Union, the most successful regional organization in the modern world.

Georgia has another very solid reason for joining the Euroatlantic family – democracy. It must be underlined that Georgia is a multiethnic and multicultural society. This kind of society can successfully develop its own state only through democratic forms of governance. Hence, democracy is the glue that can consolidate the nation around the state. During the last fifteen years of Georgian history, two authoritarian presidents were ousted from government. This demonstrates that Georgian citizens cannot tolerate autocracy and are not willing to live in a corrupt society. The Rose Revolution proved one thing: to regard certain characteristics like corruption as natural attributes of the Georgian ethnicity is neither accurate nor acceptable.

Georgia has made great strides toward eradicating systemic corruption, proving that under good, or at least better, governance such problems can be addressed. For Georgia, NATO signifies a necessary tool to aid in building not just any state, but a *democratic* state. The standards for joining NATO are different now than they were in the 1950s. Georgia understands that NATO integration requires *real* democratic development, not just lip service to liberal ideals. Therefore, the democratic character of the state is paramount. Any other course of state building will inevitably lead to Georgia's failure and this must not be allowed to happen.

A further reason for Georgia's NATO aspiration is the value system on which the nation is based. The Christian religion, which was adopted in ancient times, is the basis upon which Georgians identify their cultural, emotional and, most importantly, moral identity with that of the West. So, when Western values are referred to, this is a euphemism for Georgian values. Even the terrible years of Red Terror failed to subjugate this enduring system of values. It is high time for the West to understand and acknowledge this. Despite the fact that Georgia has been deprived of its rightful place in the community of nations and may seem somewhat infantile, it has always considered itself part of that community. The challenge is to demonstrate this to others.

Last, but not least, like every liberated part of a former empire and like other ex-Soviet bloc countries, Georgia naturally suffers from an insecurity complex. It seeks a secure environment for its own existence and for the life and development of its citizens. NATO, primarily a security institution, addresses these needs and is considered as an umbrella or safe haven for small and weak countries who alone cannot overcome security threats. Small states have witnessed the general decline in significance of international institutions, from the United Nations (UN) to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Against this backdrop NATO has proved to be the most sustainable, powerful and functional international institution and hence the most desirable one of which to be a member.

Georgia's choice is influenced by and based upon these above-mentioned principles. Euroatlantic institutions provide Georgia with a role and a place in the modern world. The journey toward membership, with its inherent transformative power, represents the best possible state building tool for Georgia.

## New Realities around Georgia

The dynamism with which the world develops generates new realities. These new realities have impacted on Georgia's attitude to, and place in, geopolitics. Georgia is today on the front line of the war on terrorism, geographically close to those regions from which real asymmetric threats emanate, most notably the North Caucasus and the Middle East. Georgia is also an ideal goods-transit corridor. If Georgia were to slip into instability, it would certainly attract a myriad nefarious non-state actors engaged in illegal trafficking of guns, narcotics or humans and seeking to establish a safe haven for organized crime. The war in Chechnya spilled over into Georgia, creating just such a situation in the case of the notorious Pankisi Gorge. With its nests of terrorism and narco-factories, the situation of the Pankisi Gorge raised the specter of state failure in the face of Georgian state weakness. Only the active empowerment of the institutions of state, together with the engagement of American-trained armed forces, enabled Georgia to eradicate this dangerous development.

New realities have also reinforced the importance of an old and generally known factor – energy. The “energy gun”, or inclination to use energy for international political blackmail, is becoming more and more popular. Some, most notably Russia, Iran and Venezuela, are already wielding the energy gun as an effective instrument of foreign policy. Meanwhile, competition on both the supply and demand sides is increasing. The rapidly growing economies of China and India demand more and more energy resources. One need only look at the map of Eurasia to understand that Georgia represents a natural alternative gateway to the energy rich Caspian region that can serve the purpose of securing European energy supplies. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline bringing oil from the Caspian to the Mediterranean and the forthcoming South Caucasus Gas pipeline are both opportunities

for the diversification of energy supply routes. For Europe, a secure, democratic and developed Georgia keeps the door open for energy transport and the movement of other goods. This has important implications for the whole region.

## “Taming” Russia

In Russia, military actors have traditionally had a significant impact on domestic policies. One need only take a cursory glance at Russia’s modern history to confirm that progressive developments took place only during periods when the Russian military leadership was transforming or adjusting to new historic realities. Such were the conditions that enabled Gorbachev to initiate reforms, bringing about the end of the Cold War. Russia gave up Eastern Europe, Central Europe and the Balkans to NATO with difficulty, but no one in Russia seriously argues that this has been all bad. In fact, Russia’s Western flank is probably her most secure neighborhood. Only after depriving the military hotheads of access to the playground of Central and Eastern Europe did Yeltsin’s Russia, like other former empires, engage in the painful but necessary transformation process.

Unfortunately, the war in Chechnya, and its disastrous consequences, has enabled the new Russian leadership to avert reforms, thereby nullifying the achievements of the embryonic Russian democracy. An un-transformed and old-fashioned Russian army still dominates the politics of the Caucasus with obvious results: a Palestinised North Caucasus where daily terrorist attacks take place and where Chechnya remains the calmest place in that region, despite its utter devastation. To the South of the Caucasus Mountains, fester three frozen conflicts: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh.

Georgia is on the fault line of Russia’s Southern flank. Many of Russia’s actions stem from its insecurity about what it considers to be its weak underbelly. If one examines the source of most of Russia’s self-made troubles, many are along the contour of the Caucasus where most of Russia’s conventional forces are deployed. In fact, Russia claims that eighty percent of its available conventional forces are in the Caucasus. While the present situation probably serves to line the pockets of a number of corrupt generals, it deprives an entire group of nationalities to the North and states to the South of normal development. It radicalizes future generations and creates migration flows, contributing to the growth in number of *Jihad* fighters. One should keep in mind that the whole region of the North Caucasus is one of the poorest in the Russian Federation. This situation will not change without some form of external catalyst. After all, Russia is not likely to become self-reflective and critical, especially in the context of oil dollar windfalls.

What can motivate the Russian military to reconsider its currently self-damaging policy? Only a change in the security balance at Russia’s Southern flank, depriving the military of its exclusive right to determine security terms, at least in the South Caucasus. Georgia’s membership in NATO will destroy the hegemony of the Russian military in this area,

forcing it to rethink security arrangements in the entire region. It could force the military to adjust to reality and to assist, rather than continuing to impede, reform inside the Russian Federation. There is no doubt that Russia can and should play an important and constructive role in the development of the Caucasus region. The question remains, though, on what and whose terms?

It is important to keep in mind that Georgia's aspiration to join NATO is neither aimed against Russia, nor will it cause Georgia to take anti-Russian actions. Bulgaria is a good precedent. Bulgaria is a Slavic nation with a similar language and the same religion as Russia. Bulgaria's accession to NATO membership did not transform it into an enemy of Russia. By the same token, the efforts of Central and Eastern European states to gain NATO membership positively impacted the conventional military balance. Similarly, Georgian NATO membership will be an important tool in fostering positive change and will trigger reforms that Russia so desperately needs, particularly in the military sphere. It will give Russia the incentive to rid itself of the perpetual role of "spoiler". A positive Russia, rather than a "spoiler" Russia, can be a great asset and can contribute to world security.

## NATO – An Incentive for Conflict Resolution

One merely needs to point to the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus to find solid evidence for why Georgia's NATO aspirations should be taken seriously. Indeed, this aspiration can become an effective tool in conflict resolution.

As it stands today, the conflicts in the South Caucasus are the subject of much concern and discussion in a variety of international organizations that have so far focused efforts of conflict resolution on negotiation techniques and on the communication process. By default, they do not, and cannot, offer solid incentives to the different parties involved in these conflicts to come to an agreement. These parties' attitudes differ in almost all respects, not least in their visions of final status. They do not share a common vision for the future. Moreover, Russia has consistently attempted to position itself as the sole arbiter between the conflicting parties, and has created the role for itself of guarantor of the rights of secessionists. However, Russia itself is plagued with rising racist intolerance and not only in its Southern territories. For example, no one in Moscow any longer pretends to hide plans to revoke the autonomous status of the Adigea Republic (Adigeans are a kin ethnos to Abkhazians) within the Russian Federation.

In reality, only Western-style democratic institutions can guarantee any sort of rights for minority populations. Therefore, the people of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh should be exposed to incentives for taking on a Western orientation. Now they are disenfranchised from any sort of democratization process or programs. NATO can draw secessionist regions into a Western orientation, instead of their current focus on Georgia or Azerbaijan. As the saying goes, real love is when two people are looking not

to each other, but in the same direction. And for the sake of this common direction, this destination, conflicting parties can find a compromise.

Let us take the South Ossetian case as an example. South Ossetians can choose between two “B’s”: the first “B” is Beslan and the second “B” is Brussels. If the South Ossetians choose the present state of affairs, characterized by Russian patronage, they risk joining the club of Beslan, that unfortunate city in the North South Ossetian Republic in which terrorists seized a school, killing more than three hundred children in 2005. If they choose to join Georgia in its journey toward NATO, they will find far more mechanisms to defend their identity and rights in Brussels. What do they want for their children? Where will they find better security for their minority, within the European family, or within Russia’s family, with its turbulent Northern Caucasus? The NATO drive will transform Georgia into a state where all minorities will have their rights guaranteed by the state and by a larger family of democratic states. This perspective should be attractive to troubled nationalities. If Hungary and Romania found a common language for solving their very serious interstate problems for the sake of European Union and NATO membership, it is plausible that NATO membership could offer similar incentives for Georgia’s secessionist regions.

It is evident that Russia is manipulating secessionist regions and their unfortunate peoples for the sole purpose of maintaining a grasp on vague and undefined interests in the region. Only one of these interests has so far been openly declared and that is to keep NATO away from Russia’s borders. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia has been highly motivated in this regard. Georgia has been unremittingly blackmailed with the instrument of secessionist regions.

To engage Russia positively in the region implies to strip it of its false pretensions. The same was true for the Baltic States. When they could not reach agreement with Russia on border issues, NATO unilaterally declared these resolved. Likewise, Russia should see that the manipulation of secessionist regions will not stop NATO from accepting Georgia as a member. The moment Georgia gains her berth in NATO, Russia will lose a state incentive to perpetuate separatism in these regions. The instant it is clear to Moscow that Georgia will gain NATO membership, relations between Georgia and Russia will begin to normalize. Furthermore, the secessionists themselves will gain significant incentives to move toward conflict resolution.

## Regional Perspectives

Georgia’s NATO membership will inevitably open and widen the path for the membership of the other countries of the South Caucasus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. These countries give increasingly frequent signals of readiness to participate in transatlantic cooperation at a much more advanced level than the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program currently offers.



In private conversation, highly placed officials from these countries do not hide their hope of seeing closer cooperation with NATO develop into actual membership.

For these countries too, NATO can serve as an incentive for conflict resolution. In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, not only would NATO accession impact the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, but also the possibility of military confrontation between these two states would be averted. Later we could see NATO facilitate the resolution of the much older conflict between its member Turkey and potential candidate Armenia.

Georgia does not share most of its borders with Slavic Russia (apart from the xenophobic Krasnodarski Krai) but with Chechens, Ingushetians, South Ossetians and other ethnic groups that inhabit the North Caucasus Mountains. Any development in Georgia is echoed in the North. Such was the case of the Georgian-South Ossetian and the South Ossetian-Ingush conflicts, as well as the Georgian-Abkhazian and Chechnya conflicts. By the same token, a stable and developed Georgia can positively influence developments to the North.

Georgia in NATO will also significantly contribute to security in the Black Sea region as a whole. It may transform it into a kind of NATO Sea, strategically covered by NATO, with members Bulgaria, Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia and Romania, all locked into mutual cooperation contiguous to the Mediterranean. From the Black Sea region, it would be possible to prevent, or at least diminish, illegal flows of arms, human beings, illicit materials, etc. Marine and energy security can head the common agenda of NATO countries in the Black Sea region.

## The Role of Georgia in NATO

The debate on the issue of Georgia's relationship with NATO is similar to that which took place during the process of integrating Central and Eastern Europe into the NATO fold. Despite its very modest capacity, Georgia is now contributing to the dynamic development of world affairs. Georgia participates in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations in Kosovo and Iraq and has also participated in Afghanistan. In fact, in addition to providing Georgian territory, over-flight rights and ports for the supply of those international missions, Georgia is making the largest per capita troop contribution in Iraq of all the participants.

Not yet a member of NATO, Georgia is already contributing forces and resources to foster international peace and stability. As for the question of whether Georgia can find a viable role within NATO, the answer is that that role already exists. Georgia has already assumed the responsibilities that are part and parcel of NATO membership. Georgia does not have to invent a rationale for its membership because it is already self-evident.

It should be underlined that Georgia will not be joining the same NATO that Poland or the Baltic States joined. This is because in the meantime NATO has energetically transformed

itself. Georgia is trying to join a different organization with the same title. The new NATO is mainly focused on “out of area operations”. For the purpose of staging out of area operations it is entirely plausible and beneficial to have members like Georgia, a state that is located in close proximity to the turbulent regions where operations are being carried out. Currently, NATO is engaged in Africa and in Afghanistan and the number of out of area operations is increasing.

## How Quickly Can Georgia Move?

The real march of Georgia toward NATO began right after the Rose Revolution of November 2003. In fact, identification with Europe and fostering Euroatlantic integration was one of the main slogans and promises of the new government. At the same time, it is very important to mention that Georgia’s NATO aspiration is not only on the agenda of the present leadership, but is widely shared across the political and civic spectrum. All independent polls indicate that up to seventy percent of Georgian citizens support it.

It was NATO’s Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) that triggered important reforms in Georgia. Since 2003, and for the first time in its history, Georgia adopted a **National Security Strategy** and a **National Military Strategy**. The security sector is undergoing drastic institutional and infrastructural changes. Instead of the previous nine different branches of the armed forces, there is now one consolidated army. The Soviet-style KGB-based intelligence services have been abolished. The notorious road police, so long a symbol of corruption, has been abolished and substituted with modern and well-equipped patrol police. The Georgian Armed Forces, with the support of individual NATO allies, are now completing a **Strategic Defense Review**. Literally, the entire security sector has been transformed with the aim of becoming compatible with the standards of a democracy, using as examples the valuable transformation experiences of NATO’s newest members.

Pushing toward NATO standards is not just good for NATO. The reforms are vital to the Georgian state. They demonstrate that in a small country like Georgia, the drive to join NATO can dramatically impact the development of statehood. Who would have believed the degree to which the prospect of NATO membership could be employed for fighting internal corruption? In Georgia’s case, however, several of the most corrupt and despised institutions, relics of the past, were abolished. The NATO carrot carries unquestionable transformative power and gives significant impetus to the state-building process.

Some commentators in Western Europe have criticized the current leadership of Georgia for its supposed authoritarian tendencies. The government, however, is new and inexperienced, and its mistakes are often merely a symptom of its desire to implement change. Consolidation of power may look like backsliding on democracy, but democracy cannot function in a failing state. This is where the instruments of NATO integration assume

enormous importance. By providing a clear framework for reform, such instruments can help the Georgian government to avoid making mistakes in the first place.

## If Not NATO, Then What?

How would Georgia look if the incentive of NATO membership were to disappear? First of all, it would directly impact the Georgian reform process. It would show the Georgian leadership (and those of other countries) that even if one performs faster and better than other Membership Action Plan countries one still has no guarantee of anything but sympathy from NATO allies.

That would very likely trigger local military hotheads to reconsider their positions and motivations for engaging with the Georgian state. They would no longer have any incentive not to wage war to repatriate the secessionist territories, which would certainly engage Russian military forces. That would lead to a new war in the Caucasus.

It is not alarmist to suggest that the likelihood of renewed war is very high. This would not only be disastrous for the secessionists, but for Russia and Georgia as well. The Northern Caucasus would be reengaged and the collateral damage would involve Armenians. If the Armenians are involved then the Azerbaijanis will get involved as well. This would be an all-inclusive Caucasus war in which the region would become another hotbed of conflict akin to the Middle East.

Furthermore, if the prospect of NATO membership disappears, Georgia's process of building democratic institutions would stall. Politicians who promote democratic governance will lose credibility and moral ground. This kind of situation will provide an opportunity for populist, autocratic or ultra-nationalist ideas and leaders to gain a foothold. Developments like these will set Georgia back almost a decade, throwing it back into the bad old days of chaos, disorder and being labeled a "country of bribes and tribes". Eventually, it would imply that Georgia would become a failed state.

Throughout the region, Russia's approach to regional relations would be legitimized and the tender grasses of democratic development in Armenia and Azerbaijan would be trampled. If Armenia joins NATO, the improvement of relations between Armenia and Turkey and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, are all foreseeable. If not, the conflicts will continue, entrenching a *status quo* that can only deteriorate further.

As for Russia, it will be given the signal that blackmail works and will try it in other places like Ukraine, especially in Crimea, postponing the prospect of the resolution of several long-standing conflicts. Russia's incentive will be to keep frozen conflicts frozen, rather than to help solve them. They will lose all motivation to make their own positive reforms. Rather, Russia will congratulate itself that the policy of perpetuating conflict works. They

will seek to entrench and exacerbate existing frozen conflicts, in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria and will try to engage in others.

This is a very nasty scenario, to say the least. Further war in the Caucasus would at minimum be a continuous source of instability. An increase in the influence of non-state players, in a region geographically close to nuke-seeking and trouble-making or rogue states, is foreseeable.

## Why Now?

When the next round of NATO enlargement will happen is predictable but further enlargements after that are hard to predict. It is not possible to guess at this time the kind of leaderships that will be in power in the West or how their positions will change toward the idea of the enlargement of NATO. Likewise, we do not know what will happen with the leadership in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The political landscape will certainly change in Russia. Therefore, NATO membership in the next round will avoid leaving Georgia to the mercy of the vicissitudes of unknowable world political developments.

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?”

This is perhaps Hillel’s (30 BC-9AD) most famous quotation. These three questions are very applicable to Georgia now. If Georgia does not transform itself, who will transform it? And, if we are going to transform ourselves only for us and not for regional security and stability, then who are we? And if not now, when?

Is Georgia ready for membership? Does it already fulfill all the criteria? The most likely answer is, not fully. But, through the process itself, Georgia will begin to fulfill them. In countries like Georgia this is possible. Georgia cannot be compared with Bulgaria and Romania, whose readiness for NATO membership has been questioned in some quarters. The idea that they might not be ready does not have to mean that Georgia’s prospects are also put into question. Bulgaria and Romania had huge military sectors and the installations and military production to match. This is not applicable to Georgia, which never had that kind of military-industrial complex. The point is that small countries like Georgia can move ahead very quickly and can make certain transformations relatively easily.

A recent study conducted by the Switzerland based Democratic Control on Armed Forces (DCAF) revealed that the Caucasus is one of the most rapidly militarizing regions in the world. Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis are all arming themselves. Military hardware and other arms are accumulating and building up in the region, which risks becoming a real cauldron of potential problems. Only NATO can divert these guns and prevent them from being pointed at each other.

## NATO Enlargement – Reaching Stability by Other Means

NATO was effective in providing security for the Euroatlantic community during the Cold War. With the emergence of new threats, we have witnessed NATO operations and engagement in the Balkans, Afghanistan and other places. NATO still remains the most effective collective military instrument available to ensure security. New threats also demand new approaches from NATO allies, some of which may be needed not in remote areas, but on NATO's own doorstep. Deliberately or not, it looks like NATO is fighting and winning another war that does not fit traditional and conventional military textbook scenarios. Membership incentives have helped transform a number of states into modern democracies, avoiding traditional or historic clashes and cleavages between different ethnic groups and states. In Georgia's case, the prospect of NATO membership is preventing the creation of yet another failed state and a dangerous neighborhood that could cause a variety of asymmetric threats to NATO allies.

The perspective of more members should not scare NATO. On the contrary, it should view enlargement as an innovative instrument for persuading others of its founding principles as expressed in its basic document,

“The desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments ... to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law”.<sup>1</sup>

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1 From the North Atlantic Treaty: <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm>.