



REGIONAL PROGRAM POLITICAL DIALOGUE SOUTH CAUCASUS



## Four Years of Bilateral Strategic Dialogue: A Review and a Look ahead

**In 2012 the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Atlantic Council of Georgia initiated the annual Georgian-German Strategic Forum. It acts as a non-governmental forum that brings together representatives of government and parliament as well as academia, think tanks and media from Georgia and Germany to discuss Security Policy related issues as well as common strategic opportunities and challenges.**

Main goal of the Forum is to strengthen and deepen bilateral Georgian-German relations through further improving partnership, increasing the mutual understanding and facilitating a better coordination of the foreign and security policies. The Forum is intended to serve as a permanent venue for discussions on important issues of mutual interests. Three meetings of Georgian-German Strategic Forum have been held since May 2012, one meeting each year with the participation representatives of parliaments, governments, civil society and media from both countries. Panel presentations followed by candid and substantial discussions were focused on issues of Georgia-German bilateral relations, European security, Georgia's reform agenda as well as on Georgia's NATO and EU integration perspectives. Joint policy recommendations on the topical issues have been elaborated after each Forum.

**All three Forum meetings underlined the indivisibility of the European Security and an importance of the security and stability of the region for the entire continent. Discussions were focused on bilateral relations, ways of strengthening security and stability in the region as well as on NATO and EU integration and Georgia's internal reform agendas. Issues of discussions included:**

**Perspectives of German-Georgian Bilateral Relations:** Germany underwent a remarkable social, political and economic transformation after World War II, thus having accumulated tremendous experience. Due to its experience and its political and economic strength, Germany is one of the most influential partners who can contribute to Georgia's smooth transformation. German assistance can be crucial in many aspects including democratic reforms and economic development.



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**Bilateral Defense Cooperation:** It was underlined that Permanent Bilateral MoD to MoD consultations will make it easier to understand the rationales and particularities behind the national defense planning and defense requirements, as well as will provide the opportunity to influence each other's' thinking for making a better contribution to European security. Georgia and Germany have already an excellent experience of joint peacekeeping, which can serve as a good basis for a future cooperation. Such cooperation

will be mutually beneficial as it will increase the ability and readiness of Georgian military units to operate with German contingent in current or future peace support operations under EU or NATO. It will also boost the NATO interoperability and help in implementing the obligations taken by Georgia under NATO-Georgian Commission. Georgia's location close to the instable Arab world, to Afghanistan and Central Asia, makes it for German forces a good location for their logistic and common training, as well as training with Georgian forces.

**Independent expertise on Security Policy issues:** As discussions show there is a serious need in each country to further develop independent expertise in academic institutions focusing on security policy issues. Governments and policy makers would also certainly benefit from this initiative. Especially in the German academic society there is a decreasing expertise on the South Caucasus and security issues in the whole wider Caucasus region. The regular exchange of Georgian and German young fellows on security issues would enhance the mutual understanding and would be an excellent instrument of trust building between young elites of both countries.



**Georgia's Democratic and Institutional Reforms:** All agree that the best way for strengthening the security in Georgia is to support further the democratization process and establishment of the state based on rule of law, the citizens of which will be the equal stakeholders in its successes and failures. This is not only beneficial for the internal stability of the country, but will also increase its attractiveness for population residing in occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It will help Georgia to develop its soft power and to speed up its integration into EU structures. In addition to this, Georgian democratic success story will undoubtedly influence positively the developments in countries of the wider region.

**Conflict Resolution in a Changing Environment:** Violation by Russia of a ceasefire agreement brokered and guaranteed by EU, significantly damages EU's credibility and compromises security in Europe. Improvement of European Security requires leadership, and enhancing the security on continental scale requires a continental scale leadership. In Europe, on time being, there is only one country that has enough economic and soft power as well as leverage on Russia to support the solution of the conflicts in Europe. Resolution of these conflicts will result into a win-win security situation in Europe, what will increase the soft power of its user even further and grant its leadership ambitions the political and moral legitimacy in Eastern Europe, as well as in Western Europe. In addition to ongoing positive EU efforts, starting the work on drafting a comprehensive settlement roadmap that goes in parallel with Geneva process will prevent the indefinite stalling

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the conflict resolution process and re-energize the Geneva process itself. At the same time, Germany should raise the ending of the occupation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in interactions with Russian officials.

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**Regional Security:** The annexation of Crimea by Russia and Moscow's continuing efforts to destabilize Ukraine not only violate crucial principles of international law but also pose a serious threat to regional security and stability. Crisis in Ukraine, one more time, underlines the systemic nature of the conflicts that are caused by Russian aggressive policies. In this context supporting democratic developments, fostering economic relations and strengthening security cooperation with the frontline states is essential for the European security.



**Georgia's NATO Integration Process:** At all forums Georgia's NATO integration process was discussed. Participants stressed that the process plays an important role in encouraging and fostering internal reforms. Institutional mechanisms of the integration, such as MAP would re-energize and qualitatively improve Georgia's democratic transformation process and provide an opportunity to significantly increase the involvement of Germany and other allies in planning, monitoring, evaluation and implementation support of this process. It was underlined that Germany has been historically in close relationship with Georgia during both, short-lived Georgian independence after collapse of Tsarist Empire in 1917 and the regained independence since the 1991. Discussions were based on believe that there is a consensus, both, within NATO and EU that democratization of post-Soviet countries is necessary to make Europe as a whole, free and secure, as well as on strong believe that NATO expansion doesn't represent the threat to any other nation and strengthens security and stability of Europe. It was stressed that delaying Georgian membership due to fear of aggravating the leadership of a third country not only gives wrong incentives and invites more intransigence, both, in rhetoric and action, but also undermines a narrative of democratization being the best choice for ensuring national security and, therefore, strengthens autocratic tendencies on post-soviet space. Such position constitutes granting actual de facto veto power to a non-NATO member. This harms NATO's credibility, a critical source feeding its deterrence power, which in its turn is a very important factor for maintaining the peace and stability in Euro-Atlantic region and beyond. After all, such a position contradicts to the recent experience acquired during the NATO accession process of Eastern European and Baltic countries that was successfully carried out notwithstanding equally strong protests by a third country and resulted in significant strengthening of European security. Georgian participants underlined that Georgia is not interested in exporting any insecurity to NATO and becoming the battleground for any purpose. Just to the contrary, its contributions to NATO operations proved that being a caveat free, sizeable contributor, it is one of the most valuable NATO partners and important exporters of security worldwide. To ensure that its membership is viewed as having added value to Euro-Atlantic

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security, Georgia together with NATO could certainly work out mutually acceptable arrangements in case of its accession to NATO.

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**Georgia's EU Agenda:** Implementation of the recently signed Association Agreement (AA) with the EU, which also includes of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), not only brings Georgia closer to Europe in political and economic terms but will also have a positive impact on the consolidation of democracy. The AA aims at deepening political and economic relations between Georgia and the EU, and to gradually integrate Georgia into the EU Internal Market – the largest single market in the world. This includes the setting up of a DCFTA, which is core part of the Agreement. The AA is a concrete way to activate the potential of EU-Georgian relations, focusing on support to core reforms, on economic recovery and growth, governance and sector cooperation. The main focus of sector cooperation are areas such as energy, transport, environment protection, industrial and small and medium enterprise cooperation, social development and protection, equal rights, consumer protection, education, training and youth as well as cultural cooperation.



**Based on the discussions, the forum participants elaborated number of recommendations after each forum. Below is short summary of the recommendations from previous German-Georgian Strategic Forums:**

**1. Strengthening and Deepening of Bilateral Defense Cooperation:** Deepening of German-Georgian defense cooperation and further institutionalizing it through regular permanent Bilateral MoD to MoD consultations. Practical aspects should include: a) enhancement of partnership in international peacekeeping operations conducted under EU or NATO mandate currently as well as in future in the future; b) establishment of Georgian-German military training center in Georgia, which will be used by both sides for their own and joint military training; c) increased German engagement in defense planning and broadening the scale of bilateral military cooperation.

**2. Strengthening and supporting independent expertise on issues of Regional Security in Germany and European Security in Georgia:** Creation of a chair at one of Germany's leading universities dealing with the issues of security policy of Georgia and the Caucasus with visiting fellow positions, and similarly creation of a chair at one of Georgian leading universities dealing with the issues of security policy of Germany and the EU with visiting fellow positions. Furthermore, there should be regularly call for proposals for visiting fellows at the Georgian and the German university for research on EU-security and defense policy and security questions in the wider Caucasus region.

**3. Encouraging and Supporting Democratic and Institutional Reforms as well as Consolidation of Democracy in Georgia:**

The Georgian government should continue democratic reforms and holding the free and fair elections to enhance its added value to Euro-Atlantic security. Georgian government should continue reforms to achieve full independence of judiciary and strengthen role of the legislative branch. Strengthening EU's Eastern Partnership financially and strategically would be instrumental for supporting the consolidation of democracy in Georgia. Germany should increase its support to judiciary system reform, as well as the development of independent media through training programs for journalists. At the same time, the visits of German journalists to Georgia/South Caucasus should be organized regularly to increase the German media's interest in and expertise on the South Caucasus.

**4. Supporting Georgian Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity and Facilitating Settlement:**

The German Government should continue its diplomatic and political efforts on bilateral and multilateral levels to underline the unacceptability of the violation of the EU brokered ceasefire agreement by Russia. The German Government should further support EUMM mission and subsequently strengthen its diplomatic efforts on bilateral and multilateral level to enable EUMM fully implement its mandate through expanding monitoring to the occupied zones. It is necessary that Germany and other EU-partners continue sending qualitative experts to the mission. Germany can and should play a more active role in political efforts of the international community to end Russia's illegal military presence and effective control of Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region. Due to Germany's record as a sponsor of conflict settlement plans (Years 2001 and 2008), the German Government should initiate the creation of a working group for drafting a comprehensive settlement road map for these conflicts, which will include the facilitators of the Geneva process (EU, US, OSCE and UN). Taking into account international peacekeeping and conflict resolution experience, this working group should draft realistic guiding documents for all components/phases of a comprehensive settlement process. At its end Georgian Government should continue policy of peaceful reintegration of the occupied regions. Tbilisi tries to reach progress in this respect through increasing the engagement with and assistance to the population residing in occupied regions. Assistance programs in healthcare, educational scholarships and the prospects of a visa-free regime with the EU are stimulating the increased interest and goodwill towards Georgia in populations of those two occupied regions.

**5. Supporting and Facilitating Georgia's NATO Integration:**

To follow on the decisions taken on NATO Bucharest Summit Germany can play a key role in guiding Georgia through entire integration process, including the implementation of Georgia's obligations taken before the Alliance. To facilitate the integration process without risking compromising the regional security, policy of delinking Georgia's NATO and EU integration processes from the resolution of conflict and withdrawal of Russian occupation forces from Georgia should be adopted and maintained. Acceptable arrangements on the application of Article 5 of Washington Treaty, in case of Georgia's accession to NATO, could also be elaborated to facilitate emergence of NATO consensus on full go ahead with country's accession process.

**6. Supporting and Promoting EU Agenda:**

Germany's support to Georgia is essential for furthering Georgian integration with EU and enabling swift fulfillment of its obligations under the Association Agreement. Fostering sustainable economic development and investments in human development are key priorities. Germany could support their implementation with various projects, investments and a new framework of cooperation between the two countries. German assistance is crucial in many aspects, and as Chancellor Merkel stated, Germany's support for reforms could be directed towards the agricultural sector, and the facilitation of foreign direct investments in Georgia's economy.