

The Importance of Support of Newly Independent State at an Early Stage and Development of Strategic Partnership between the U.S. and Georgia

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Abstract

The following paper aims to examine the U.S foreign policy to Georgia carried out by the Democrat Presidents – Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. Foreign Policy of the United States was changeable across the decades and due to different presidents, sometimes the interest and cooperations' rank was low, and sometimes was on the high level. At present the cooperation between two countries is developing in various direction and at different levels, including mutual security and counterterrorism interests which aims to provide Georgia with bilateral security assistance.

Preliminary studies of the US assistance to Georgia which aimed to promote the democracy in the country carried out during the Democrat presidents have revealed some alterations. The finances invested education and restructuring of state institutions helped Georgia to make rapid advancement in building democracy in the country.

Keywords: Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush, contribution to NATO missions, Georgian presidents, International Republican Institute, NDI in Georgia, Sovereignty of Georgia, strategic partnership, support of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, The Open Society Georgia Foundation, USAID operating in Georgia

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the former Soviet Republics gained independence, and one of them was Georgia. Soon after, the country faced both internal and external problems. Georgian - Russian wars in Abkhazia and Ossetia, civil war and political unrest led the country to deep social and economic crises. There was a strong need of reliable partner that would help Georgia to move from socialism to democracy and market economy. The United States actively supported Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and its full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions to support sustainable development of a young democratic country. In 1992, the United States opened its Embassy in Georgia and the first ambassador Kent N. Brown served from September 9, 1992 to August 19, 1995. Since Georgia became a sovereign country, the government of the United States has invested more than \$3 billion, and the big amount of this sum was programmed through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The most difficult problem with which Georgia had to deal with by 1992 were miserable consequences of the Civil War, which resulted than 250,000 Internally displaced person.

The Importance of Support of Newly Independent State at an Early Stage

After Georgia's first democratically elected President Zviad Gamsakhurdia was removed from the office in 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Foreign Minister of the USSR, became the head of state. First official visit of Chairman of state Mr. Shevardnadze to Washington was on March 6-8, 1994. He met President Clinton and it was their first personal meeting. They discussed

Those people needed extensive assistance from Georgian government and of international community. From the very beginning, the USAID was mainly focused on humanitarian assistance, which was very important especially after Civil War in Georgia.

The importance of the U.S.-Georgia relations is codified in the 2009 U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. The **U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission** comprises four bilateral working groups on priority areas identified in the Charter, such as: democracy; defense and security; economy, trade, and energy issues; also people-to-people diplomacy and cultural exchanges. In addition to holding a high-level plenary session of the Commission each year, senior-level U.S. and Georgian policymakers lead yearly meetings of each working group to review commitments, update activities, and establish future objectives. Since signing of the Charter, the United States and Georgia have significantly enhanced their cooperation based on U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its commitment to further democratic and economic reforms.

many issues such as: Political and economic problems and of course the role of the United States to help Georgia to meet the challenges. The most important for Georgia was that President Clinton, once again expressed that the U.S fully supported Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. At a joint news conference, **President Clinton** declared that the U.S was planning to send \$70 million by the end of the year, as a humanitarian aid for Georgia. Mr.

Shevardnadze added that assistance from outside was very important for Georgia's future development as a democratic country. *"If it were not for the assistance of the American people, the Georgian people in the full sense of the world would be starving."* Said Mr. Shevardnadze (Greenhouse, 1994). He also announced that Georgia was planning to join the NATO Partnership for Peace program.

During the news conference the two presidents had discussed situation in Abkhazia. One journalist's question was about Abkhazia and the role of the United States in the settlement of this crisis. President Clinton's answer to this question was:

"The U.S should support Georgia's efforts to secure a United Nations peacemaking effort and to have the kinds of conditions that will permit the peacemaking to succeed, for example, a clear strategy for returning the refugees to their homes. The United States would not call upon to provide troops but would want to see that the troop force was a good, balanced U.N. troop force mix, and I think we should be prepared to contribute some of the cost of operating the peacemaking mission.

I have already opened conversations with the Congress about that. And as I said, the Chairman is going to talk to Members of Congress and because of his long and distinguished relationship with the U.S, going back to his days as foreign minister of the former Soviet Union, he has a lot of friends in the Congress and he might will be able to have a very positive impact. He might be able to get more money out of them than I can. But together we are going to do our best to get the support (Clinton, 1994).

With this statement Mr. Clinton had made it clear, that no American troops would be involved in this conflict. On 14 May 1994, Georgia and Russia signed an agreement in Moscow. Under this agreement, the Commonwealth of

Independent States' troops under Russian command was stationed along the Abkhazian border, which was not welcomed by Georgia. The UN Observer Mission in Georgia was established in August 1993 by the Security Council to monitor the Moscow Agreement, which included CIS peacemaking forces' operation in Abkhazia. By that time there were eighty-eight military observers and by July 1994, this number increased to 136.

President Bill Clinton and Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze signed the U.S-Georgian Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) on March 7, 1994. The treaty was based on the idea to strengthen economic relations between the U.S and Georgia, to create an open market for international investment, and to increase investment in order to encourage economic growth. It was beneficial for both parties, more foreign direct investment in Georgia could increase jobs and for the U.S it could *promote the U.S exports as well* (International Republican Institute, n.d.).

USAID began operating in Georgia in 1991. Since that period Georgia has already received more than \$1.5 billion, in order to encourage economic growth, improve education system, develop democratic institutions and make changes in other fields. In 1995, there were only four NGOs in Georgia, but with the help of USAID the number has increased significantly. Since 1992, the international democracy assistance programs have been operating very actively in Georgia, but the most productive work has been carried out by the USAID and the Open Society-Georgia Foundation. They opened their offices in Georgia to promote democratic institutions.

Democracy implies multiparty system, but newly independent Georgia had serious problems in this direction as well as, there was no experience with democratic institutions. Thus, USAID started to support Georgian political

parties. The most programs of USAID have been carried out by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The main goal of the International Republican Institute is to promote multi-party-political system:

Among political parties, we develop capacity to identify and understand issues of real concern to voters, develop policy alternatives, run effective campaigns and mobilize voters and focus over the long term on the health of internal party institutions.

Among governments, we strengthen the ability of elected leaders to communicate policy proposals and include public input policy and decision making, as well as to manage the complex process of delivering effective democratic governance (International Republican Institute, n.d.)

Therefore, the International Republican Institute is working to promote the multi-party system by helping parties to focus on addressing citizens' needs and to be more transparent. One way to understand real needs of people is public opinion polls, which are successfully applied by IRI. The Second goal set out by our government is to help women and young generation to be more actively involved in political processes. Each of these issues was very important for development of political life and promote democratic principles in Georgia.

The National Democratic Institute has been working rather productively in Georgia since 1994. This organization has supported the development of civil society in Georgia, safeguarded elections and helped women to be involved in political processes. In 1995, a non-governmental organization, International Society for fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) was created with the help of NDI. Since that time, NDI

has provided both financial and technical assistance in order to help the workers of the ISFED to develop the skills which are very important to monitor elections.

The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) was established in 1994, by the Open Society Institute in New York. The founder of the Open Society Institute is American businessman George Soros. The main goal of this organization was to help countries to become democratic. Newly independent Georgia definitely needed such international organization's help. From the very beginning, OSGF started to work on good governance and transparency, to promote civil society, to improve the rule of law and in general to develop democratic society (Open Society Georgia Foundation, n.d.)

Democracy promotion was always an important instrument of the US foreign policy. But after the Cold War, during President Clinton's administration the spread of Democracy, especially in the former Soviet States was effectively used. That's why effective and sustainable democratic institutions were vital for newly independent Georgia, to develop as a strong and Western oriented country.

Another program which was established in 1992 under the Freedom Support Act was the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program, which was sponsored by the US government for the 9th-11th grade students of secondary schools. The scholarship provided funding for students to travel to the US, attend US high schools for one full academic year, and to live with a US host family. Since its foundation, this program has provided scholarships for more than 24,000 secondary school students from the former Soviet States(htt).

Since Georgia gained its independence, the United States has made important contribution in the improvement and development of education

in Georgia, sending Georgian students to the US education institutions aimed to improve the mutual understanding which was very essential as these students could play an important role in development of Georgia's future relationships with its partner countries. Since 2003, the US Government has funded exchange programs for more than 3000 Georgian citizens.

The official statements made by Senator Barak Obama towards Georgia, before his election as the 44th president of the United States was positive, which was expressed by the fact that Mr. Obama fully supported Georgia's aspiration to join NATO and supported its territorial integrity: *"I think the Russians ought to understand that we will support – we, the United States will support the inclusion of Georgia and Ukraine in the natural process, inclusion into NATO"* (The First Presidential Debate, 2008).

When President Obama came to office, his administration carried out this policy toward Georgia.

On July 22, 2009 U.S. Vice President, Joe Biden Visited Georgia. The White House reported that the main message of this visit was to show the world that the U.S. will support democratic and economic reforms. This visit aimed to balance Obama's Moscow trip, as many worried that after Obama's Moscow visit, the question of Georgia and the Ukraine might not be important for the U.S. Joe Biden's Georgian trip was a clear message that the new government of the U.S would continue to sustain relationship between US and Georgia, and support its NATO membership.

The visit of the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton on July 5, 2010 was another confirmation that despite the 'Reset Policy' with Russia, the United States fully supported Georgia's territorial integrity and that reset with Russia would not happen at the expense of neighbor countries.

During the joint news conference with President Saakashvili, Mrs. Clinton said that the U.S. continued to call Russia to end the occupation of Georgian territories. She said: *"I came to Georgia with a clear message from President Obama and myself: the United States is steadfast in its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity"* (Dunbar, 2010). Russia's reaction to this statement was very negative, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said: *"Some believe that it has been occupied, but others think it has been liberated."*

The main aim and attempt of the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's visit was to tell to Georgian people and leaders that the United States valued and would continue to support Georgia's territorial integrity.

On March 26, 2014 the EU-US summit which was held in Brussels, President Obama made a statement directly related to Georgia's possible membership to NATO. President Obama stated that both Georgia and Ukraine were not on the path to join NATO. That meant that NATO by that time was not going to give Georgia membership or Membership Action Plan (MAP). Georgian political parties gave different interpretation to this remark. One of the leading opposition party, United National Movement, said that, this remark was not 'favorable' for Georgia, but at the same time added that there was no need for 'hysteria' about it.

UNM's foreign secretary Giga Bokeria said: *"Of course this comment in the context in which it was made was not favorable for our national interests, particularly because Georgia was mentioned in the context of Ukraine, As Ukraine at that time had no ambition to join NATO"* (UNM Slams PM's Reaction to Obama's 'Unfavorable' NATO Remarks, 2014).

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said that NATO expansion was not planned by that time and added that, President Barack Obama's

statement was 'absolutely adequate'. Mr. Garibashvili called to avoid false expectations about Georgia's immediate NATO membership.

During the NATO Wales Summit held in 4-5 September 2014, NATO instead of MAP, offered Georgia a 'Substantive Package'. NATO Secretary General Andres Fogh Rasmussen said that this package was very important as it could help Georgia to be better prepared for NATO membership. There was also commitment in this package, to create a training center for NATO members and allies in Georgia, in order to improve Georgia's defense capabilities. This is one but important step toward NATO membership.

Georgia has made an important contribution for the global peace by sending military troops to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Africa. Georgia joined the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan since 2004 and it is the largest non-NATO contributor. Georgia has deployed about 1500 troops in one of the most dangerous territory in Helmand province. In 2014, mission was over, but today Georgia has about 885 troops in Afghanistan.

On March 15, 2016 U.S Secretary of State John Kerry met Georgia's Foreign Minister Mr. Mikheil Janelidze in Georgia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, n.d.). Mr. Kerry expressed the United States' support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Annual military exercises known as Noble Partner started on May 11-26, at the Vaziani training territory. More than 500 Georgian, 650 U.S. and 150 United Kingdom soldiers were taking participation. Last year there were only 300 U.S. troops.

On May 4, 2016 for the first time the U.S. Army has sent Abrams tanks to Georgia. U.S. military equipment, among them M1A2 Abrams

main battle tanks and Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, were delivered via ferry from Bulgaria to Georgia's Black Sea port of Poti on Wednesday for annual joint military exercises, which will start next week outside Tbilisi. The military equipment was then shipped by rail from Poti to Vaziani training area, east from the Georgian capital, where the second annual Noble Partner exercises will be held on May 11-26 with the participation of 500 Georgian, 650 U.S. and 150 United Kingdom service members (civil.ge, n.d.). This fact ... is a remarkable step in development of US-Georgian relationships for our country, for deeper cooperation with partners in both fields - training and military, and of course it will increase Georgia's self-defense capabilities. President Giorgi Margvelashvili's response to this training was: "More NATO in Georgia and more Georgia in NATO". The Georgian Prime Minister Mr. Kvirikashvili made a comment:

These military exercises are a very clear example of our partnership with the West; increasing Georgia's self-defense capabilities is very important. We have passed through a very important stage of defense reforms that have made the Georgian military units maximally interoperable with the NATO standards. Today we have to launch a new stage of strengthening capabilities of the Georgian military units. The upcoming drills are directed precisely towards this goal. This is an expression of unwavering will of Georgia and sovereign choice of the Georgian people over foreign policy course (PM Comments on Noble Partner Exercises, 2016).

As it was expected, Russia's position to this issue was negative. They were rather doomed because the new American technology was so close to its borders. The Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov said: "We consider such a consistent 'exploration' of the Georgian territory by NATO troops as a provocative step, aimed at

shaking deliberately military-political situation in the Transcaucasia region” (Rawnsley & Mcleary, 2016). Mr. Lavrov said that this joint military training was against stability in the region.

Why is it so important for Georgia to join NATO? NATO is an organization of collective defense, for Georgia NATO membership means political and military stability and security. NATO membership is not only important for Georgia's security but for regional security as well. Since Georgia gained independence it has achieved important progress in building democracy and strengthening its position as independent country, but today there are many problems, which remain unsolved and call for international support. First and foremost, it is our territorial integrity which is directly linked to the National Security; also, unemployment, slow economic development, and other drawbacks. That's why we need to be member of the NATO family, which will be a guarantor of Georgia's stability, which in turn is the main element of economic progress and job creation.

Conclusion

Georgian people have made their choice to be integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures, and to achieve this goal, it needs a strong, reliable partner, such as the United States. If we seek to find some similarities and differences between the two democrat presidents' – Clinton and Obama's policy towards Georgia, it could be observed that President Clinton's policy towards Georgia was more active - helping building democratic institutions, offering humanitarian assistance, or sending Georgian students to the US universities to gain knowledge and experience. The students and young specialists' Exchange Programs offered by the US, also assistance in building democratic institutions and monitoring of election processes

and other, aim to improve the mutual understanding between the two countries. All US presidents since George H.W. Bush who was the first to acknowledge Georgia as an independent and sovereign country, including the current president D. Trump – have supported Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, also have been steadfast in sustaining young democratic country politically and economically which has been extremely vital for Georgia.

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