

2002 Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP): Reasons and Effects on Political and Institutional Defense Transformation

John BUSHYHEAD*

Abstract

Having risen from the ashes of the Soviet Union, Georgia was a country in desperate need of support and development. As one of the former Soviet republics, Georgia was now not only a newly independent country but a country with its own new Army.

The Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) began in 2002 and involved United States Armed Forces and Georgian Defense Forces. It was designed to train and equip a few Georgian battalions using small unit tactics to fight terrorism. I examine in more detail what GTEP was.

To help the reader fully understand the reasons and effects of GTEP, I identify the role Georgia's geo-strategic location played in the implementation of GTEP and Georgia's role in the struggle for spheres of influence between the West (NATO and the United States) and Russia. Accordingly, in this article I examine the Geo-political environment surrounding the country of Georgia as Russia was determined to keep Georgia close politically and militarily and NATO at a distance. Concurrently, the West desired to reduce the Russian sphere of influence which incorporated much of the former Soviet Union. At the same time, the United States and NATO desired to expand NATO to Russia's border. Conflict was inevitable. In addition to spheres of influence, Georgia was and is uniquely positioned geographically to play quite a significant role in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

Accordingly, several additional points of stress existed between Russia and Georgia including The Pankisi Gorge, Abkhazia and South Ossetia along the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The Pankisi Gorge is located within Georgia. Chechnya borders the Pankisi Gorge and due to the terrain, the boarder is quite difficult to control which enabled terrorists and criminal groups to exploit the area.

Through this study, one may see the effect GTEP had on Georgian political and institutional defense transformation. One may also see Georgia's reasons for political and institutional defense transformation and how they compare to the U.S.'s reasons for the region.

Keywords: Abkhazia, Georgia Defense Transformation, Georgia Train And Equip Program (GTEP), Global War on Terror (GWOT), NATO Encroachment, Oil and Gas Politics, Pankisi Gorge, Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Russian Sphere of Influence, South Ossetia

* Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Email: 20300111@ibsu.edu.ge
SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vakhtang MAISAIA, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia. E-mail: vmaisaia@ibsu.edu.ge

Introduction

Georgia's Geo-Political Operational Environment

Georgia is a Eurasian country on the far eastern border of Europe's boundary with Asia in the Caucasus region. It has an ancient, proud history.

"The Roman Empire is extinct but Georgia still exists." No one knows the origin of this phrase, but it is frequently repeated in Georgia. It expresses a public pride in the idea that the country has possessed a historical continuity of statehood since ancient times that has been interrupted but never extinguished (Sartania, 2021).

Georgia was one of the Soviet Republics set adrift with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

According to McGregor, 2005 (as cited in Zabakhidze, 2021),

After gaining independence in 1991, Georgia was challenged by secessionist movements and civil war. However, at the end of the 20th century and after the relative consolidation of state institutions, Georgia's geostrategic location at the crossroads between East and West brought increased U.S. attention.

The Russians sought to retain her sphere of influence at Georgia's expense while the West sought to limit Russia's sphere of influence. Georgia, however, turned westward.

Georgia needed a lot of work to develop as an independent country.

By the late 1990s, the Georgian military was little more than a collection of uniformed militias operating with titular, and sometimes competing, authority in different parts of the country (Cecire, 2011).

Georgia's strategic location increases her significance in the geopolitical sphere. The war on

terrorism played a significant role in the region and Georgia is located in the Caucasus in a position to leverage this war and fight forces of terror.

It is sandwiched between the Black Sea, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, which gives it importance far beyond its size as a transport corridor. It is developing as the gateway from the Black Sea to the Caucasus and the Caspian basin (U.S. Department of State, n.d.).

After 9/11, the entire world was focused on the Global War on Terror.

As part of US counterterrorism policies around the world, Georgia received assistance from the US to confront domestic terrorism threats in Georgia's Panksi Gorge (Adzinbaia, 2018).

The war on terror was just one of the parameters which interested the U.S. concerning Georgia.

In addition to fighting terrorism, the United States has an interest in the stability of Georgia, primarily due to its oil fields, an oil pipeline that runs through the country and the fact that several U.S. oil companies want to ensure they have the opportunity to access and refine the oil (JOSAR, 2002).

The Baku (Azerbaijan) – Tbilisi (Georgia) - Ceyhan (Turkey) oil pipeline is one example and had the intended effect of enriching Georgia through transit fees and allowing the West to bypass Russian control of oil and gas to the West. Thus because of this pipeline, Russia loses money and influence and cannot as easily hold Europe hostage for energy, which infuriated Moscow. This alternative transit route is a tremendous, aggravating thorn in Russia's side.



Georgia's Bordering Countries

So, for these and other reasons, the U.S. took great interest in the tiny country of Georgia.

In research from RT (2009): For the neoconservatives under George W. Bush, the tiny Caucasian nation represented Washington's "Georgia Project," as Peter Lavelle, RT's political commentator, wrote in his recent blog. *"America's ally could continue the advance of western influence in the post-Soviet space at Russia's expense"*.

Bearing in mind the sensitive issue of spheres of influence, Georgia and the West grew ever closer.

Closer security cooperation with the U.S. encouraged Georgia's political leadership to follow other post-Socialist republics in seeking NATO integration. At the 2002 NATO Prague Summit, former President Eduard Shevardnadze officially declared Georgia's aspiration to become a NATO member (Peuch, 2002, as cited in Zabakhidze, 2021).

Inarguably, Russia had a natural revanchist tendency and strong desire to retain and expand her sphere of influence.

Georgia's long-time desire to become a member of NATO also aggravates Moscow. The relationship between NATO and Georgia deepened steadily from the early 1990s. Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 and the Partnership for Peace two years later. By 1999 Georgian forces were participating in NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) (Smolnik, 2020).

On the other hand, Georgia was fed up with Soviet and then Russian exploitation.

Russia and its occupations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are seen to pose an existential threat, which drives Georgia's ongoing aspirations for its integration into the EU and NATO. The result is a political formula in which independence must first be strengthened and only then is the country's social and economic development possible (Sartania, 2021).

As a newly independent country, Georgia lacked the proper framework, systems, and processes necessary to effectively operate a military, economy or government. So in addition to the expansion of NATO's sphere of influence, the U.S. wanted access to the region.

In turn, Georgia needed modernization before it could become a conduit for trade. (Pike, n.d.).

Georgia needed Western assistance to modernize and this included in the ability to effectively fight the war against terror.

In research from Mangum (2020),

In the last days of the Shevardnadze period, various terrorist groups were beginning to disrupt the peace and stability of the Middle East and threatening to expand their franchise into the Caucasus and southern Russia. Putin accused Georgia of harboring training camps in the mountainous Pankisi Gorge, and gave broad hints that Russian forces may move into Georgia to deal with the threat.

The Caucasus mountain region became a hotbed of Chechen and other terror activity during this period.

In research from Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa (2003), Russia considers the Chechen rebels to be terrorists and wants the government of Georgia to play a more active role in deterring the rebels from entering a safe haven.

So clearly there were several points of contention and tension between Georgia and Russia including The Pankisi Gorge, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia and the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In research from Nuclear Threat Initiative (2003),

The Pankisi Gorge is the Grand Canyon of the Caucasus Mountains. It is about 1/10th the size of the Grand Canyon but you get the point. Accordingly, it is ideal for criminal activity. There is only one paved road in the Gorge and is long associated with being a refuge for terrorists and a hotbed of drug, weapons and human trafficking.



PANKISI GORGE

To the north, the gorge is bordered by Chechnya. Control of the border is extremely difficult due to the severe terrain. This border area runs along the Caucasus Mountains, where there are numerous paths poorly controlled by both the Georgian and Russian sides. Cross-border movements of individuals and criminal groups are common.

So there was no question that the terrorists were in the gorge. The Russians and Georgians acknowledged this fact.

U.S. intelligence also acknowledged that Arab militants and other fighters from Afghanistan had been seen in the Pankisi Gorge (Peuch, 2002, as cited in Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003).

The U.S. maintained a close watch on the gorge and tracked terrorists and criminal actors throughout the region.

According to Philip Remler, then acting U.S. ambassador in Georgia, al-Qai'da and Taliban fighters had scattered across the Caucasus, and some of them were hiding in the Pankisi Gorge and were in contact with Al-Khattab, an Arab terrorist with connections to Usama bin Laden (Vernidoub, 2002, as cited in Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003).

The Russians were feeling the heat and

putting pressure on Georgia to act. According to Vernidoub, 2002 (as cited in Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003), those allegations became the basis for Russian officials requesting a large-scale counter-terrorist operation in the Pankisi Gorge with the participation of Russian troops. Due to Russian-Georgian tensions, the Georgian government excluded any possibility of conducting a joint military operation with Russian forces. However, Georgia accepted a deal from the U.S. government, which offered assistance to the Georgian military to conduct a counter-terrorist operation in the region. According to George Baramidze, then head of the Georgian parliamentary defense committee, Georgia would not object to Western troops helping to settle the problems in Pankisi.

This scenario sets the stage for Georgia's integration into the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and further security integration into the Western sphere.

A Request for Assistance

President Eduard Shevardnadze, the president of Georgia, requested assistance from the United States to enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities and address the situation in the Pankisi Gorge (Marine Corps Forces Europe & Africa, 2003).

"Georgia declined Russian proposal to participate in the joint operation in Pankisi. When Russia exerted pressure on Georgian government, the United States informed the Russian Federation that the US is preparing to assist Georgia to develop its capability to protect its sovereignty," Otar Shalikashvili stated.

"In other words we told the Russian side that we would assist Georgia because Georgia is asking us, not the Russians to help," US military official stated while speaking about the background of the program (Civil.ge, 2002b).

So, Georgia officially joined the fight in the Global War on Terror, which assisted Georgian security forces with internal terrorist threats in Pankisi Gorge (McGregor, 2005, as cited in Zabakhidze, 2021). As part of its anti-terrorism campaign, the US started its Train and Equip Program (GTEP) for the Georgian army (Chedia, 2021).

One may find many nuanced reasons for GTEP and positions from both the Georgian and U.S. sides. It is instructive to know the many nuanced takes to understand the environment in which GTEP was initiated. Accordingly, to paint the illustrative picture, I quote several of them here.

This effort was to complement other counter-terrorism efforts around the globe and increase stability in the Caucasus (Pike, n.d.).

As Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagharishvili announced, the implementation of this program would increase the efficiency of the Georgian Defense Forces and would be a

guarantee of peace and stability in the whole Caucasus region. At the opening ceremony of the program, U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles stated that together with the global war on terrorism, the United States hopes to promote Georgian freedom and stability (Civil.ge and Jashi, 2002, as cited in Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003).

Or, as stated by the U.S. military,

This program implements President Bush's decision to respond to Government of Georgia's request for assistance to enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities and address the situation in the Pankisi Gorge. This effort will complement other counter-terrorism efforts around the globe and will increase stability in the Caucasus (U.S. Department of Defense, 2002).

In seeking motives or the purpose of the U.S. Global Train and Equip Program, one is enlightened by this statement from Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DACA) (n.d.), "To conduct or support programs providing training, services and equipment to national security forces of foreign countries for the purpose of building capability and capacity of Partner Nations."

In yet another nuance, GTEP was a continuation of other assistance provided to Georgia, "This builds on earlier military cooperation, especially support for border guards, to control the border between Georgia and Chechnya" (Pike, n.d., as cited in Speck, 2003).

In another interesting take, V. Maisaia (personal communication, November 27, 2021), stressed the U.S. reasons for the region was a bit different that of Georgia's reason in 2002. The USA sought to combat international terrorism. Georgia sought to combat corruption and avoiding the "Failed State" status quo.

Or as posited by the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (2002), the U.S. initiated a Train and Equip assistance program in Georgia to enhance Georgian abilities to control Georgian territory and counter terrorism.

Or another added nuance,

The main purpose of GTEP was to train and equip the Georgian battalions using company infantry tactics with the intended goal of managing

the volatile Pankisi Gorge region, where suspected terrorists were operating. In other words, GTEP built the capacity of the Georgian forces to respond to a domestic problem (Moroney et al., 2001).

While officially, in research from U.S. European Command [neolink101] (2007), The GTEP goal was to enhance the capability of select Georgian military units, to provide security and stability to the citizens of Georgia and the region.

And the U.S. Marine Corps, "The program is a coordinated effort between the governments of the United States and Georgia to provide a higher degree of protection and stability to the citizens of Georgia and the region," said Marine Corps Maj. Scott Campbell, Task Force GTEP commander (Marine Corps Forces Europe & Africa, 2003).

In essence, the GTEP, was designed to protect the Georgian force's homeland from terrorist threats while promoting peace, security and stability in Georgia and the Caucasus region. (Fontana, 2010).

Understandably the Russians did not take kindly to the notion of U.S. troops on the Russian border.

In research from JOSAR (2002), Activity in neighboring state concerns Russia. Although Georgia Train and Equip was greeted by enthusiasm by the Georgian government and its citizens, it has been looked at with trepidation by Russia, which shares a border with the former Soviet Union state.

Georgia is, after all, the soft underbelly of the oft-invaded country.

According to Rhem, 2002 (as cited in Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003),

The U.S.-Georgian deal concerned Russia, which considered the entrance of U.S. military instructors tantamount to the United States developing a military presence in the Caucasus—a declared Russian sphere of interest. However, the U.S. assistance program, known as the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP), officially launched on May 27, 2002, did not stipulate direct U.S. military intervention in the Pankisi Gorge.

One must further understand the context in which GTEP occurred. Russian troops were still in Georgia while GTEP began.

The Russian military was still occupying Georgia at the time. In research from Speck (2003),

Both, Russia and the United States are important players in Georgia – Europe to a much lesser extent. Russia still has a few military bases left in Georgia, which it is supposed to close, according to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and reaffirmed by an agreement between Georgia and Russia from November 1999. Russia also plays a "peacekeeping" role on the border between the self-proclaimed independent Georgian republic Abkhazia and Georgia proper. Russia also supports Armenia, south of Georgia.

According to a study by Speck (as cited in Cutler, 2000),

The Russian bases in Georgia are not just military bases which are unwelcome. They play a critical role in the complex dynamic of the relations between the central Georgian state and its regions, especially the breakaway region of Abkhazia and Adjara, which until recently supported Shevardnadze, but otherwise tried to go its own way. Russian military – although not actively involved – is used as a source of power against the central Georgian state, and undermines Tbilisi's authority.

The Russian reaction was not surprising but the Georgians and American's worked to allay Russian concerns.

In research from Civil.ge and Jashi (2002), Georgian officials tried to defuse Russia's concerns over the US-Georgian military cooperation and arrival of US military trainers in Georgia (Civil.ge & Jashi, 2002).

"We would appreciate all kinds of assistance Russia would provide for Georgian military although till now we were not offered anything", Georgian Deputy Defense Minister Gela Bezhuashvili told the reporters on May 27 (Civil.ge & Jashi, 2002).

There was indeed an outcry from Russian citizens.

The move drew protests from many Russians (Toal, 2017). On 1 March 2002, in response to the domestic outcry, Russian president Vladimir Putin met with Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze in Kazakhstan and pledged his support for the American military initiative (Staff, 2022).

In the meantime, the U.S. Defense Secretary was actively conversing with his Russian counterpart and allaying Russian concerns and fears through the media.

In research from Civil.ge (2002d),

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated at the news briefing at the Foreign Press Center on June 21 that the implementation of the Georgia Train-and-Equip program (GTEP) is in everybody's interest. "It is in Georgia's interest; it's in Russia's interest that the border area not be a haven for terrorists. So, it has not been a problem, notwithstanding the fact that some people would wish that it were."

The diplomatic and media blitz seemed to work on the ever-suspicious and paranoid-by-nature Russians.

In research from Civil.ge (2002d),

"I've discussed it with [Russian] Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov. They have no problem with it at all. They've said so. We are involved in a relatively short period of time, period of months, helping to train a number of people in Georgia so that they can do a better job with respect to their police work and their border work and their anti-terrorist work," Donald Rumsfeld said.

The Russians eventually supported the GTEP effort.

The Russians response to GTEP is summed up well in research from RT (2009): The program, of course, drew a heated response from the Russian street. Nevertheless, then President Vladimir Putin, still sympathetic to the profound

tragedy that struck America on 9/11, pledged his support for the American initiative.

So, in came the United States military.

EUCOM designated Special Operations Command Europe to run the program. SOCEUR, working with personnel from other commands, sent troops, mostly from the 10th Special Forces Group, to Georgia in April (JOSAR, 2002).

A SOCEUR site survey team of approximately 20 people departed for Georgia on 29 April 2002 to coordinate GTEP logistical requirements. Included in the team were logistics, contracting, and communications personnel. Once the groundwork was accomplished, the main body of instructors would arrive, and the initial program of instruction would begin shortly thereafter (Pike, n.d.).

What is instructive to keep in mind is that this program is not designed for operations to take on the Russian army. It is not designed at the operational level but rather purely at the tactical level.

In research from Pike (n.d.),

The initial program consisted of command center staff training for members of the Georgian Ministry of Defense, as well as staff training for units of the Land Forces Command. Border Guards and other Georgian security agencies would be included to ensure interoperability among Georgia's security forces. The Program's goal was to build strong and effective staff organizations capable of creating and sustaining standardized operating procedures, training plans, operational plans, and a property accounting system. The curriculum would consist of performance-oriented training and practical exercises similar to those taught at the National Defense University, Joint Forces Command, and US Army War College. Staff training was designed to last approximately 70 days and would be conducted in a small group, classroom setting (Pike, n.d.).

In addition to staff training, the program included a tactical training.

In research from U.S. Department of Defense (2002),

In addition to staff training, tactical training will be provided sequentially and will consist of approximately 100 days per unit. The goal of the tactical program is to instruct Georgian battalions in light infantry tactics, to include platoon-level offensive and defensive operations and basic airmobile tactics. The curriculum for the tactics training will include basic individual skills, such as combat lifesaver, radio operator procedures, land navigation, and human rights education. It will also include individual combat skills, such as rifle

marksmanship, individual movement techniques, and squad and platoon tactics.

There was a culture shock for the U.S. training team and the Georgian students but the training was historical and groundbreaking.

In research from Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa (2003), another unique aspect of the training syllabus is "for the first time we are taking a fighting force trained in the Soviet doctrine with Soviet weapons and are teaching them our tactics."

GTEP ended in April of 2004. The Georgians and Americans considered the program a success.

Conclusion

Reasons for GTEP

There were many influential factors contributing to the start of GTEP. Both countries were dedicated to peace and stability in the region.

In Summation of Reasons

Both Georgian and the U.S. had their reasons for implementing GTEP. Some were different and some overlapped.

Overlapping reasons wanted to:

- Enhance peace and stability in the region.
- Enhance Georgia's military capability and stimulate reform while working to promote mutual security and counterterrorism interests
- Promote Georgian freedom and stability.
- Limit, damage or reduce Russia's sphere of influence.
- Eliminate terror actors in the Pankisi Gorge and Georgia proper.

US specific reasons. The U.S. wanted:

- Access to the region.
- Leverage to fight the GWOT.
- Leverage the Oil and Gas resources in Georgia to limit Russian influence in Europe.

- Legitimate partners in the Global War on Terror.

Georgian specific reasons were:

- Need of help to modernize and develop economically and militarily.
- Need of stability in order to build her economy and become a conduit of trade and the U.S. via GTEP provided additional stability.
- Aspiration to become a member of NATO was also a reason for GTEP.
- Build capability to protect its sovereignty. This included enhancing her counterterrorism capabilities to address the situation in the Pankisi Gorge.
- Leverage the Oil and Gas resources to profit and increase her worldwide influence.
- Become a legitimate player in the Global War on Terror.
- Combat corruption and avoiding the "Failed State" status quo.

Effect of GTEP

Eventually the combat came.

In the fall of 2002, Georgian law enforcement agencies backed by U.S.-trained

troops launched a comprehensive security operation to rid the Pankisi Gorge of criminals and terrorists. Despite Russia's skepticism that Georgian Defense Forces could achieve success in the gorge without Russian involvement, Georgian officials say that security and stability have significantly improved since the security operation (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2003).

To further put this in perspective,

GTEP was announced in February 2002, and the first U.S. advisers arrived in March. In July, insurgents attacked Russian forces near the Georgian border. Moscow responded with airstrikes in the Pankisi Gorge, and Georgia launched a special operation of its own in the area, supported with GTEP assets. By early 2003, Tbilisi declared Pankisi free of foreign fighters, including al-Qaeda associates (Crisis Group, 2021).

According to the U.S. Department of State (n.d.), through GTEP, the US achieved its stated goals of enhancing Georgia's military capability and stimulating military reform.

Concretely the GTEP had a lasting and visible effect. GTEP did not, nor was it designed to prepare the Georgian Defense Forces for a land war against a major land power in Russia. GTEP created a limited number of well-trained soldiers on the tactical level such that they could assist the United States in the Global War on Terror. The program enhanced Georgia's ability to stabilize the Pankisi Gorge and contribute in a significant way in assisting the U.S. coalition Iraq.

In research from Mangum (2020),

Trained Georgian contingents served with NATO forces in Kosovo and continued to participate in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the civilian leadership in Georgia saw U.S. training as a means to improve the combat readiness of its armed forces, the training was not geared to prepare Georgia for conventional combat, such as it would face in the Russia-Georgian War. It was geared toward training in counterinsurgency and peacekeeping operations. This lack of understanding by the civilian leadership of the difference between training for combat and training for peacekeeping further displayed the lack of

stability in Georgian civil-military relations (Mangum, 2020).

This is a nuance which was not clearly understood by some Georgian leaders who appeared to feel empowered to provoke the Russians further which, at least to some extent, contributed to the cause of the Russian – Georgian 2008 War. The soldiers of GTEP could perform tactically but not very well at the operational or strategic levels.

Overall, the program was a success.

As a result of the GTEP, the Georgian military significantly increased its capability to execute combined operations in a multi-nation environment, enhanced their ability to protect their sovereignty, improved their ability to defeat transnational terrorists' cells, and stabilize the region from potential terrorist activities. A remarkable aspect to this program was the impact that could be achieved at the small unit level (Pike, n.d.).

During this time approximately 2,600 Georgian soldiers, including a headquarters staff element and 5 tactical units, received training (Mangum, 2020).

One can see that GTEP contributed in a positive way to Georgia today; a Georgia which participates in the civilized world in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). GTEP was one of the pieces of the foundation contributing to the Westernization of the Georgian Defense Forces. GTEP helped move the Georgian Defense Force further away from a Soviet legacy system of dysfunction through over-compartmentalization, over-classification, over-bureaucratization, and operational rigidity to a more modern, western military system. It contributed to Georgia yearning to become a member of both the European Union and NATO. The Georgian leadership sought increased national security from the West.

GTEP was also the first step in moving Georgia towards NATO military standards (Cecire, 2011).

GTEP also initiated additional secondary effects.

Closer security cooperation with the U.S. encouraged Georgia's political leadership to follow other post Socialist republics in seeking NATO integration. At the November 2002 NATO Prague Summit, former President Eduard Shevardnadze officially declared Georgia's aspiration to become a NATO member (Peuch, 2002, as cited in Zabakhidze, 2021).

Accordingly, the beginnings of bilateral security cooperation also lie in the Shevardnadze era, with the U.S. military training Georgian forces between 2002 and 2004 under the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP), and Georgia's participation from 2003 in Operation Iraqi Freedom (Smolnik, 2020).

Concretely there were even more lasting and visible effects from GTEP.

(GTEP) significantly increased the capabilities of the Georgia in border security, anti-terrorism, crisis response, and military reform thus significantly enhancing Georgia's security, and as I hope the US security as well. For many years the Georgian military stood firmly and resolutely next to the US and NATO soldiers in the hot spots as Iraq and Afghanistan (Japaridze, 2021).

The GTEP Global War on Terror results were palpable in other ways.

In 2003, Georgia extradited several Chechen fighters arrested in Georgia to Russia. Throughout 2003, the Georgian Government took significant strides to support US-led efforts in the war against terrorism. Specifically, the Government demonstrated its willingness to provide the United States with information related to possible terrorist activities in Georgia. Georgia is still used to a limited degree as a terrorist transit state, although much less so since the Georgian crackdown on the Pankisi Gorge in late 2002 (Pike, 2004).

One may make the case that GTEP cemented Georgia as a serious, legitimate and reliable player in the Global War on Terror. It is clear that GTEP helped to westernize and modernize the Georgian Defense Forces.

Another unique aspect of the training syllabus is "for the first time we are taking a fighting force trained in the Soviet doctrine with Soviet

weapons and are teaching them our tactics," said Athey (Marine Corps Forces Europe & Africa, 2003).

It is important for readers bear in mind; the author has absolutely no interest in Georgian political parties and accordingly, does not favor either. The author considers that a purely internal Georgian issue. That said, according to a study by Toal, 2017 (as cited in Smolnik, 2020),

Saakashvili presented Georgia to "the West" as a trailblazer for democracy and "Western" values in the post-Soviet space. This political framing or narrative fell on open ears in Washington under George W. Bush, where the "Freedom Agenda" formed a central trope of US foreign policy and support for democratic movements and democratization processes was regarded as a means of combating extremism and terrorism. Georgia was often held up as a paragon.

Did GTEP Result in Political and Institutional Defense Transformation?

Georgia could not eliminate the terror threat from the Pankisi Gorge prior to GTEP. The terror threat in large part, eliminated from the Pankisi Gorge as a result of GTEP training. Additionally, as a result of GTEP, interoperability between government agencies were improved to some extent. More importantly, GTEP enhanced the realization of the need to improve interoperability. Therefore, in this area, it is safe to say that GTEP resulted in political and military institutional change.

GTEP did build staff capability it failed to build the mechanism of institutionalization such that the successes could become institutionalized. In other words, the capability dissipated shortly after U.S. trainers departed.

The soldier training on the other hand was more effective through repetition. However, the GTEP did not have the mechanism in place to implement proper doctrine in support of the GAF's new way of warfighting.

So in both of these cases, while short-term success was achieved, GTEP failed in the long-term.

GTEP was a tremendous success in stimulating military reform and Georgia has been working on this since GTEP.

GTEP created a limited number of well-trained soldiers on the tactical level such that they could assist the United States in the Global War on Terror. The program enhanced Georgia's ability to stabilize the Pankisi Gorge and contribute in a significant way in assisting the U.S. coalition Iraq

Concurrently, it falsely led some Georgian leaders to believe they could not take on the Russian Army more effectively in conventional combat, which went a long way in Georgian leader miscalculation regarding a war with the Russians.

GTEP did in fact as Pike (n.d.) articulated, enhanced their ability to protect their sovereignty, improved their ability to defeat transnational terrorists' cells, and stabilize the region from potential terrorist activities.

The part U.S. European Command [neolink101] (2007) got right regarding GTEP's effect on the Georgian battalions trained by GTEP is, "... that understands the importance of preserving human rights and the need for civilian authority over the military in a democratic society. We have dealt a serious blow to terrorism in the

Caucasus and the world." Additionally, through observation and interaction, GTEP had the serendipitous effect of reinforcing the importance of civilian control of the military.

A change is that Georgia participates in the civilized world in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). A change is that Georgia has an ever stronger desire to distance itself from a Soviet system of dysfunction and saw a little more of what right looks like. It contributed to Georgia yearning to become a member of both the European Union and NATO.

The Georgian leadership eventually sought increased national security from the West and increased bilateral security cooperation. She sought increased interoperability with NATO and continued modernization modeling after western armies. The Georgia political institutions sought ever closer security cooperation with the U.S.

One may posit that GTEP played a larger and more influential role. Sartania (2021) stated it best, "From 2003 to 2012, several key themes emerged in Georgia's memory politics: an attempt to construct new identities using symbols, a reinterpretation of some historical events, and a transformation of relations with Russia from partners to adversaries. In the words of political scientist Tamar Karaia, "a new phase of state-building had begun".

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