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## **BIRTH OF THE CHARTER ON THE US-GEORGIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED WITHIN ITS FRAMEWORK IN 2009-2014**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to determine the effectiveness of US-Georgia defense and security cooperation within the framework of the Strategic Partnership Charter of US-Georgia in 2009-2013. The study will discuss the basic principles of the military cooperation between the two countries, as well as the basic concept of the charter, where we will try to investigate the effectiveness of the cooperation between the USA and Georgia in terms of defense and security and the measures that contributed to the deepening and strengthening of the military cooperation between the USA and Georgia in the target period. It is worth noting that within the framework of strategic mutual cooperation, the USA and Georgia have expanded cooperation programs in the fields of defense and security. The aforementioned programs included adapting Georgian military units to NATO standards, increasing Georgia's involvement in international peacekeeping operations, and other important issues. Based on internet publications, monographs and articles, it's intended to be discussed one more important issue, which is very relevant for the war-torn country – what were the measures the United States has taken for Georgia in terms of post-war reconstruction and financial stability. The article uses the methodology of comparison and analysis, which will allow us to determine the effectiveness of the reform implemented within the framework of the Charter in strengthening the defense and security sector of Georgia.

**Keywords:** Defense and Security, Charter on Strategic Partnership, Democracy, Progress, Politics, Ideology, Public Opinion, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), International Community.

### **Introduction**

From the early period of the US-Georgia cooperation, the desire of the United States to provide constant support to Georgia in both the diplomatic and military fields was mainly caused by Georgia's strong will to carry out reforms. Ever since 1992, when the official Washington established diplomatic relations with Georgia as an independent state, it provided significant political and economic support. Taking into account common values and interests with Georgia, the United States gradually became an important partner country supporting Georgia's territorial integrity and Euro-Atlantic integration in the international arena.

It should be noticed, that since the 90s, from the beginning of the presidency of George Bush Jr., when diplomatic relations between these two countries were established, and then continued with President Bill Clinton, Georgia gained significant foreign political recognition in the world community, the best example of which was the visit of the 43rd President of the USA, George W. Bush Jr. to Georgia in 2005. The visit, on the other hand, had great political significance for the Georgian people, which could be said to be a proof of unprecedented support for the country's accession to the Euro-Atlantic organizations.

The political and military support of the United States increased significantly from year to year, which



was followed by the constant dissatisfaction of the Russian Federation. This extremely tense relationship reached its peak in August 2008, when Russia invaded Georgia and the ideological-political tension between Georgia and Russia was ended by the Russian intervention.

I think the Russian aggression was the first sign and an important message to the democratic and civilized world (even more so in the light of the current geopolitical situation and the Russia-Ukraine war) that in the given reality the pro-democratic course of the independent, post-soviet states was unacceptable for Russia.

For official Washington, the Russian intervention in Georgia was an important ideological and strategic blow as American analysts estimate [Bix, 2008]<sup>1</sup>, and in the given force majeure situation, an action plan was developed, as well as a strategic partnership charter was signed with Georgia to reduce the risks of such aggressive steps in the future, which is the main focus of my research and I will try to provide more details of analyze about below.

### **The birth of the Charter on Strategic Partnership between US-Georgia**

In the introductory part of my research, I briefly mentioned the Russian intervention in Georgia, which brought tragic results to the country both in terms of human resources and economy, not to mention the attempt to overthrow the state institutions, which the aggressor initially intended to achieve. As a result of the Russian aggression of August 2008, on January 9, 2009, in Washington, DC, at the initiative of President George Bush, the United States of America-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership was signed.

Some of the experts in the field of politics, as well as the majority of the civil society, believe that the mentioned charter signed under the administration of George Bush Jr. on the strategic partnership between the USA and Georgia is one of the most important military-political documents in terms of defense and security cooperation between the two countries. I think that in response to the crisis created by the August 2008 war, the United States chose the right approach to avoid the real threat of losing the country's sovereignty, which would be an absolute disaster for the functioning of state institutions [Mitchell and Cooley, 2010].

Despite the fact that on January 20, 2009, Democrat Barack Hussein Obama took the Oval Office in the White House, before that, the most important document was signed in the 30-year history of diplomatic relations between Georgia and the United States. The 8-year rule of the Republicans ended with an important political decision for Georgia [Mitchell and Cooley, 2010],

In essence, the mentioned document was a response to Russia's actions against Georgia. The following aspects of cooperation were written in the charter:

1. Democracy and governance;
2. Defense and security;
3. People-to-people relations and cultural exchanges;
4. Economy, trade and energy.

As we can see, the Charter represents the most important framework for relations in the direction of expanding cooperation in the fields of security and defense, economy and trade, energy, culture and education, and strengthening democratic institutions and deepening relations between peoples, based on the principles of strategic cooperation between the two states to support sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, to strengthen democracy and stability of Georgia [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2008].

It is worth noting that during the research period of my article, within the framework of the US-Georgia strategic partnership charter, four meetings of working groups on security, democracy, people-to-people

<sup>1</sup> Herbert P. Bix, 2008. *The Russo-Georgia War and the Challenge to American Global Dominance*  
Source: <https://apjif.org/-Herbert-P-Bix/2919/article.html>

relations and economic-energy issues have already been held [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2008].

The Charter on Strategic Cooperation had and has great political significance. This was the first official document between the United States and Georgia, which announced coordinated, time-bound, joint activities between the two countries, which, in turn, focused on Georgia's defense and security, democracy and governance, people-to-people relations, cultural exchanges, economy, trade and It meant modernization and strengthening in the fields of energy. The foregoing strategic document created the whole format of bilateral meetings, where the future directions of cooperation should have been regularly discussed [Mitchell and Cooley, 2010].

The fact that the charter was signed by the outgoing Bush administration is also significant, and there were some doubts as to how comfortable the future administration would feel based on the said charter, but as explained in the administration's press service, all this was agreed with the administration of Democrat Barack Obama. Of course, there was a theoretical risk that the aforementioned charter would find little realization in the hands of a democratic ruler within the limits of its resources (which actually happened), but work was still underway in the direction of the various agencies outlined in it [Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2008].

Even before the signing of the charter, in particular, 2008 Bucharest NATO summit was successfully completed for Georgia, where the country's progress was confirmed once again, taking into account reforms and progress, and it was planned for Georgia to develop specific mechanisms for joining NATO. The administration of the United States could not hide its admiration for the report of international financial institutions about Georgia, according to which the country occupied important positions among several states in the region. In fact, the country was getting rid of the term post-Soviet cliché very soon, and it was assisted by the United States and the Some European countries offered significant support.

Under the new US administration, not much has changed politically for the better, unfortunately. Despite the fact that the Obama administration demanded from Russia the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008, statements remained statements and bilateral relations took on a very formal character.

Although the states dynamically continued to support Georgia at the international official level, one of the manifestations of this was probably the unanimous adoption of the resolution supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia by the Senate in 2010

[Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

### **Cooperation within the framework of the Partnership Charter in the fields of defense and security in 2009-2014**

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there were risks that the partnership charter developed and signed under the outgoing Republican administration would not be at least as effective as it was conceived by the Republicans and would be less likely to be implemented in the following years under the Democratic administration. The election of a Democratic president has somewhat justified the aforementioned risks and doubts, as the change in administration has indeed rearranged both domestic and foreign policy priorities of the US. All the more so when the newly elected US Democratic President Barack Hussein Obama announced the implementation of a "reset policy" with Russia a year after taking office, which, as the following years have shown, was nothing more than a compromise on the path of Russian imperialist intentions. The mentioned serious challenge, I think, was not only for Georgia, but also for some Eastern European democracies, for whom the United States would be thought of as a force defending democracy in the wake of an ideological or hybrid war against Russia. Since the policy of Obama's withdrawal and the unfortunate consequences caused by this policy are not the main topic of our article, we can return to the process of implementing the charter from 2010.

Despite the mentioned challenge, it must be said that the implementation of the Charter continued with slow movement and inertia.



Since March 2010, Georgian infantry battalions have been participating in the ongoing ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) operation in Afghanistan as part of the United States Marine Corps contingent. Through the GDP-ISAF program, more than 11,000 Georgian military personnel have undergone pre-launch training since 2010. In addition, it is worth noting the military education programs, the assistance of the US advisory group, the evaluative visits of the American expert groups, etc. Since 2010, more and more Georgians have been enrolled in the educational centers of the United States through military exchange programs, for example, several hundred servicemen were trained within the framework of the SSOP, and as a result, the number of Georgian servicemen in Iraq reached 2,000.

Similarly, during this period, Georgia had up to 15,000 military personnel trained by American military programs and with combat experience, which was an unprecedentedly large number for Georgia [Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

If we take into account the fact that almost 85% of the Georgian soldiers who benefited from the programs took part in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan, we had a military sector with great combat experience in the region, and not only in the region. To date, the mentioned programs are financed and implemented by the US side, which aims to increase Georgia's defense capabilities, stimulate military reforms and raise the level of professional military education.

In 2009-2012, 3 plenary sessions and 23 meetings were held within the framework of the Charter on Strategic Partnership, including in the field of defense and security. [Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

In 2012, at the plenary session of the Charter on Strategic Partnership held in the city of Batumi, which was attended by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who confirmed the support of the US, openly supported the peaceful initiatives to resolve the conflicts in the territories of Georgia occupied by the Russians, and the need to purchase specific defense systems for Georgia [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia].

It can be said that despite Georgia's internal political challenges, Georgia is recognized by the democratic part of the world as a leader in the region, which confirms the effective cooperation between the USA and Georgia. Georgian-American relations are still developing. Thanks to the Strategic Partnership Charter, the US-Georgia have set a future course of joint value-based cooperation and are faithfully leading their duties to this day.

Despite the change of governments in both of the States and the unstable world order, both countries create peaceful and stable conditions for development, which is the most important prerequisite for building a democratic society and state.

It should also be noted that the following political steps were taken within the framework of the Charter:

- Completion of the 2010-2014 defense strategic review document. Publication of a new national military strategy;
- Implementation of the main initiatives of the military personnel management system;
- Structural reorganization of the Georgian Armed Forces.

Progress was also made in professional military education, in particular:

- Development of the National Defense Academy, which also includes the undergraduate program for officers.
- Establishing a simulation training center of Georgia.
- Development of the Georgian command and staff training course.

[Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia].

In the same period, another important direction of cooperation with the USA emerged – the USA's support in the operations carried out under the auspices of NATO, in particular, in the fall of 2009, Georgia's transfer program – International Security Support Forces (GDP-ISAF) was established. In 2014, the program was replaced by the Georgian Redemption Program – Resolute Support Mission (GDP-RSM) [Archive of the

Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

Recently, the Georgian side has participated in NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) with 870 military personnel. Georgia has been one of the largest and number per capita contributors to the Resolute Support mission.

### **United States support for Georgia's NATO accession in 2009-2014**

Based on the fact that the main issue of my article within the framework of the Charter on Strategic Partnership is cooperation in the field of defense and security, we can openly talk about the way of successful implementation of the obligations undertaken by Georgia to NATO in relation to the US assistance, which can also be derived from the needs of the Charter. For example, on August 19, 2008, at the extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of NATO member states, the alliance decided to establish the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC), and the memorandum of understanding was signed on September 15, 2008, during the first official visit of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to Georgia.

It should also be noted that the foreign ministers of NATO member states decided that Georgia would start implementing the annual national program (ANP) within the framework of the NATO-Georgia commission, which was a great political message against the background of the geopolitical reality at that time. On December 7, 2011, a meeting of foreign ministers of the alliance member states was held at the NATO headquarters (Brussels), within the framework of which Georgia was formally mentioned as an aspirant state, together with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

In addition to that, in 2013, the US and Georgia agreed to further enhance interoperability with NATO by deploying one infantry company of the Georgian Defense Forces to the NATO Response Force (NRF). Since 2013, the US has been providing assistance to the Georgian Defense Forces in the process of preparing for participation in the NATO Response Force. At the Wales summit of NATO in 2014, the member states of the alliance recognized Georgia as one of the most interoperable partners and together with four other countries (Australia, Jordan, Finland, Sweden) became the "Enhanced Opportunity Partners" (EOP). The status was granted, which implies receiving expanded opportunities for cooperation with NATO.

According to the decision of the member states of the alliance, Georgia received the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) within the framework of NATO's Defense Capacity Building Initiative (DCB) at the Wales Summit in 2014, the main goal of which is to strengthen Georgia's defense capabilities and increase interoperability with NATO. and facilitating the process of joining NATO [Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia].

Furthermore, it should also be noted the NATO-Georgia Essential Package (SNGP), whose position as the deputy of the core group has an expert who is responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the initiatives defined within the package. In addition, the USA is the lead country of the logistics initiative, which supported the implementation of the said initiative with an experienced expert.

### **Conclusion**

It can be said that today the Georgian-American relations are still developing and the Charter of Strategic Partnership still has great resources to add even more large-scale and multi-sectoral content to the cooperation between the two countries. As a conclusion, I can say that thanks to the strategic partnership charter, the US-Georgia set a future plan for joint, value-based cooperation, and they are faithfully leading their duties to this day. Despite the change of governments and the unstable world order, both countries create peaceful and stable conditions for development, which is the most important prerequisite for building a democratic society and state.



Great efforts of the United States as strategic partner in terms of unwavering support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia should be highlighted.

Despite some political challenges that took place during the research period of my article, which resulted from the change of the US administration, the relations between Georgia and the US were at one of the most active stages of their development, and even today, the United States is actively involved in Georgia's NATO in the process of joining.

Nowadays, Georgian-American relations can be described to be developing dynamically. The close partnership between the parties is truly strategic in nature.

The strategic importance of Georgia is well understood in Washington; our country is a leader in the region with democratic governance. The main base of the US in the region is Georgia, and thus, to move to the next stage of US-Georgia bilateral relations, the main task should be to provide defensive weapons and security guarantees.

And finally, I believe that my goal of analyzing US-Georgia cooperation within the framework of the Charter of Partnership in 2009-2014 has been achieved. By signing the Charter on Strategic Partnership, a platform was truly created, which, on the one hand, helps various state directions to develop at the expense of numerous programs or projects with favorable conditions, and, on the other hand, protects already established democratic institutions in order to create a sustainable basis for the functioning of a progressive-minded society and democratic state institutions.