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**TERRITORIAL DEFENCE FORCES OPERATIONS IN ACTIONS.  
GEORGIAN AND OSSETIAN TERRITORIAL DEFENCE FORCES  
COMBAT STRATEGIES ANALYSES IN RUSSIA-GEORGIA  
2008 AUGUST WAR: COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**Summary:**

*The Caucasus region is still considered as one of the hottest geostrategic spot in the world politics and still inter-state war scenarios are most plausible and could be revoked into real scenario development at any moment. Even current example of Georgian and Russian relations is to be one of the evident of the occasion. As it is known, Georgia and Russia are still in formally in war, both de facto and de iure and only a truce between the parties named as „Saakashvili-Medvedev-Sarkozi” treaty is indicating a fragile peace in the region. Hence, the consequences of the warfare waged in August of 2008 are being echoed in contemporary period of time. However, from the geostrategic point of view, only the fights between Georgian and Russian Armed Forces are being reviewed and analyzed but no one paid attention to and scrutinized combat operations between Georgian and Ossetian military formations scrutinizing, whereas both sides perceived territorial defence forces as one of the serious strike units at the initial stage of the conflict on 3-9 August of 2008 which was falling within the scope of Low Intensity Conflict. The operations could be analyzed on how the parties were using this kind of active reserve military formations, how efficient had been both territorial defence systems before the war and how it reflected the situations developed after the war. The comparative analyses of the engaged parties’ capabilities with regard to territorial defence strategies and properly used tactical reserve forces are very important and omnipotent to relevantly consider possibility and opportunity to achieve peace and stability at the regional level and reinforce regional security provisions.*

**Keywords:**

*territorial defence system, Georgian Armed Forces, South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces, National Guard, Cold War, Urban warfare, Neo-urban warfare, Asymmetric warfare, Fourth Generation Warfare.*

## Introduction

The end of the Cold War represented a change in the environment in which national security and defence planning provisions have been drastically changed which led to new implications. The concern over popular support of military actions can be seen in a couple of ways in the Selective Service system, which had periodically conscripted young people into military service<sup>1</sup>. The formation of the regular Armed Forces in the post-Cold War period responded to new realities and new security environment and to the global détente provision in world politics and unipolar world order as well as an endorsement of those international political process (how Hegel insisted that war helped to uphold the moral health of society and prolonged provisions for “perpetual peace”)<sup>2</sup>. In that conditions, even meaning of war concept and even military conflict development cardinally changed and the war is transposed to be sketched by Carl von Clausewitz in his *On War* when war proclamation are in the hands of government and people and Army is only an instrument to achieve this mission<sup>3</sup>. All these provisions are leading toward creation of new type of Armed Forces excluding attrition military operations against any foe and performing offensive war game scenarios. Each member of contemporary international society is trying to prepare for defensive military operations and the defence planning is corresponding to these realities. Moreover it is interesting to underscore that namely Reserve Force formations are to be main military units to perform any modern type of combat operations – peacemaking, peacekeeping, crisis management and low intensity conflicts. After the Cold War was over, a number of movements, groups, and individuals that had practiced terrorism during the Cold War stayed on course. The breakup of the Soviet Union into more than a dozen of independent countries did not end once and for all the historic ethnic conflicts within and between these states<sup>4</sup>. Steadily, defence policy has been transformed into the stage of being indispensable part of national policy with new dimensions of making decisions at high level of politics<sup>5</sup>. Hence, in this model of new approaches toward defence planning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and applicability of one common standard, at least under the aegis of NATO standards, Reserve Forces and Territorial Defence Systems are increasing their role in the planning frames and they are giving new impetus even for international security environment, mainly from military security perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> D. M. Snow, *National Security for A New Era: Globalization and Geopolitics*, New York 2004, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> T. Kucera, *Conflict Analysis – Case Studies* [in:] *Introduction to Security Studies*, ed. R. Ondrejcsak, Bratislava 2014, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, Princeton 1989, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> B. L. Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, New York 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield 1991.

## Fourth Generation Warfare Concept and Territorial Defence System Classification

After series of hazardous terrorist acts have covered the European continent and perception of insecurity dominated Western community Georgia's community always expressed very pro-European views since Georgia restored its sovereignty in 1991. Since that time Georgia has been casting into a sense of fear and uncertainty. After that in current international politics due to Crimea occupation and annexation by the Russian Federation new jargon has emerged – *New Cold War*<sup>6</sup> – thanks to the well-known journalist and scholar Edward Lucas. Even another jargon *New Terrorism* (terrorism associated with religious frustration) also was taken up by the key experts and scholars. Nowadays, Western society has been facing up new challenges and threats before unknown (among other things, the phenomenon of *New Terrorism* which is associated with the idea of *religious soft power*<sup>7</sup>). Paris, Brussels airport, Istanbul airport, Nice, Munich, again Paris – there are only few cases proving how far and how frequently individual suicide-terrorist and specially trained terrorist groups have induced psychological menace and fear of physical extermination in all European community as a Global War of Terror is underway. As it is known, NATO now borders two quasi-state entities: the “Caliphate” declared by the ISIS and Al-Qaeda's emerging “emirate” in north-western Syria. These entities will continue their reliance on terrorism as the weapon of choice against what they broadly understand as the West, and further, given the right circumstances and opportunities, could subsequently gravitate towards other means of waging warfare. Having considered that Euro-Atlantic security landscape has been changed and the security provisions are being coped with asymmetric military challenges posed by the ISIS (recently held NATO Warsaw Summit has even confirmed existence of the threats and counted ISIS as one of the key enemy actor to the whole Euro-Atlantic community – see final Communiqué<sup>8</sup>), from the side of Western society a demonstration of uncertainty and inability to cope with these challenges are very unattractive indications to those parts of international community which aspire to become an indispensable part of the society – for example, Georgia's society. It is true that the West has also been responding to these missions upon its capability – for instance, recently released EU Global Strategy highlights the importance of states to the east and the south, and the contribution those societies' (where Georgia holds key posi-

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<sup>6</sup> V. Rounding, *The New Cold War by Edward Lucas*, Independent.co.uk, 07.02.2008, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-new-cold-war-by-edward-lucas-779038.html>> (10.12.2016)

<sup>7</sup> J. Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion*, London 2013, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, NATO.int, 09.07.2016, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm)> (10.12.2016)

tion) resilience makes to Europe's security. As for the NATO's perspective under the aegis of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, the Alliance should, when affected by developments beyond its borders, engage in attempts to enhance international security via a network of partnerships with third countries (including – first of all – Georgia). At present, military strategic and operational concepts are associated and affected with doctrine of asymmetrical warfare (the term was popularized by the Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld) and is defined as the situation in which both (or all) sides do not accept or practice the same methods of warfare. Asymmetry can extend both to the methods opposing sides use to conduct military operations and to the rules of warfare to which they adhere. Two components are parts of the doctrine – guerrilla warfare and terrorism<sup>9</sup>. The doctrine has direct linkage to so-called *Fourth Generation Warfare*<sup>10</sup>. concept that is defined as military conflicts which involve the following elements:

- high technology;
- terrorism;
- a non-national or transnational base;
- a direct attack on the enemy's culture;
- highly sophisticated psychological warfare, especially through manipulation of the media.

Certainly, Fourth Generation Warfare encompasses newly emerged multi-lateral doctrine of Hybrid Warfare and becomes dominant strategic modality for waging wars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The term implies – *One country attempt to impose on another country (or countries) its political will via complex political, economic, informational means and it is performed without declaration of war, under the aegis of cozy war in accordance to international law standards (“Green men” phenomenon in Crimea occupied and annexed by the Russian Federation from Ukraine in 2014)*<sup>11</sup>. From that standpoint derives the idea where stands and where the place of territorial defence forces, which kernel are reserve formations. According to RAND Corporation research: Territorial Defence Posture is a system that:

1. is defensive, unsuited to attack across borders, and unlikely to be perceived as a threat by other states;
2. relies principally on latent rather than standing forces, involving many citizens;
3. relies on weapons and technologies different in type and composition from those of intervention and bombardment systems;

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<sup>9</sup> D. M. Snow, *op. cit.*

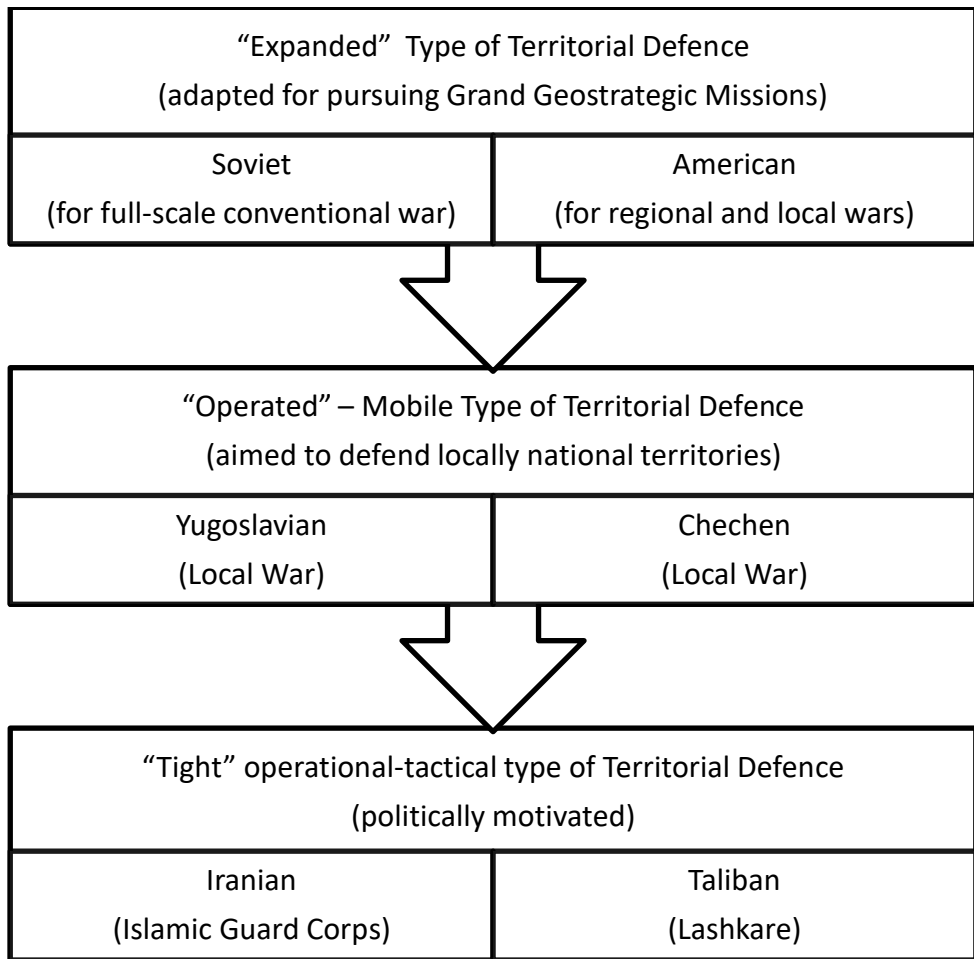
<sup>10</sup> W. S. Lind, *The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation* [in:] *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989, pp. 22-26.

<sup>11</sup> Е. Магда, *Гибридная Война – выжить и победить*, Харьков 2015, p. 4.

4. relates the military resources of a society so closely to the defence of its own territory and institutions that it constrains the country's participation in an international military alliance, especially one that calls for an integration of alliance forces<sup>12</sup>.

Having considered contemporary provisions of military security perspectives, there are several types of Territorial Defence Systems that are important component of rethinking military operational capabilities and doctrinal principles (see figure 1 below).

Fig. 1: Typology of Territorial Defence Systems



Source: own work.

<sup>12</sup> H. Mendershausen, *Reflections on Territorial Defence*, Santa Monica 1980, pp. 2-3.

## The Ossetian Military and Security Implications and Georgian-Russian War Inspiration

It appeared that the power structures (among them special service) and military forces in South Ossetia had to knuckle under to the proclaimed President of South Ossetia (now Eduard Kokoiti). The joined forces were governed by:

- the Defence Minister, who was appointed in midst of June and was proposed by the Transdniester Regional authority;
- Russian Colonel Anatoly Barankevich;
- the Minister of Internal Affairs – Colonel Robert Guliev (he came from North Ossetia);
- the Secretary of Security Council – Oleg Alborov (former Head of South Ossetian KGB);
- the Minister of Emergency Situations – Boris Chochiev, who was concurrently the co-Chairman of the Trilateral Russian-Ossetian-Georgian Commission on the Conflict Resolution.

According to some sources two bodies – Ministries of Defence and Emergency Situations informally united at the joint National Guard command under the aegis of the President of South Ossetia. At the same time main coordinator of power structures was the President’s Advisor in military issues (Major-General Petr Gatikaev). For achieving their political goals republic’s authority used military forces twice, announcing emergency situation in 1997 and in 2002. In case of military situation forces will be commanded from secure command point or reserve governing centre which was located in Tskinhvali in the premises of government. Hierarchy of so called South Ossetia power bodies were as follows: the National Guard, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Security Service. There and then it is possible to give characteristics of each of the mentioned above institutions.

National Guard: according to 2002-2003 data, strength of this structure did not exceed 2000 men. The guard is headed by a commander whose official title is the Chief of Civic Defence Staff. In fact he performs the functions of the Defence Minister – at present Anatoly Barankevich. Since Eduard Kokoiti’s approach and neutralization of military putsch, in which national guard forces performed a bad role, the issue of their reorganization and strengthening their loyalty towards the government became topical. The National Guard as well as the National Guard of Georgia were set up in 1992 – two Ossetian brigades were formed (among them was tank brigade “IRI”) since the end of military operations. According to 2003 data the following structures were included in the National Guard:

- battalion of mounted infantry on armoured cars;
- armoured-tank battalion;
- detached special purpose battalion (trained by Russian paratroopers);
- first battalion of peacekeepers;
- logistical subdivisions.

According to South Ossetian calculations each battalion consisted of 500 men (this structure had been adopted from former USSR service regulations). The most effective were First Peacekeeping and Special purpose battalions. Special purpose battalion was founded on July 12, 1992. Now battalion effectively operate under the command of the head of trilateral commission for the cessation of hostility in conflict regions. According to 2003 data, there were enlisted 469 men among whom only 30% were local residents. However, among enlisted servicemen there are non-Ossetian hired professional mercenaries. Among them in 1994-96 one man nick-named “Voron” (raven) served as a military instructor captain of special purpose forces of the Russian Federation. The battalion is located in 47<sup>th</sup> Tskhinvali military settlement. A certain Vice-Colonel Ferdinand Geguev was said to be the founder of this battalion. Obviously, he was one from the cadre of the Russian Interior Troops Special Forces. The first peacekeeping battalion consists of 700 servicemen and 300 reservists. Average age of them is between 18 and 50 years. Service term was 6 months to 3 years (on contract basis). That is the reason of prevailing (Russian and Ossetian) cadre servicemen. Battalion was equipped with light arms and armoured vehicles. The servicemen were remarkably good in physical and military preparedness. It was under the control of the Defence Minister or actually under the command of the National Guard although in the past it obeyed to the North Ossetian Ministry of Emergency Situations and later on to some temporary special support society concord. By that time it was funded by Russian part. Its commander was Vice-Colonel S. Tuaeov and its units were located in 7 crossing points between borders and (key bridges) and 19 observation points. The permanent location was Tskhinvali lower military district. There was ongoing military reform and the organization of new military charter recently. According to some sources, the National Guard’s quantity increased to 3000 men, through the calling up of reservists in South Ossetia<sup>13</sup>. The first summons to mandatory military service to the National Guard was in November-December of 1996, during which men born in 1978 were summoned to duty. Organized reserve was based upon the principles of a Territorial Defence Forces. According to data, the Guard had about 10-15 combat tanks (mostly T-55 types + 4 tanks could be granted by Abkhaz side), 25-30 infantry fighting vehi-

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<sup>13</sup> Д. Арас, *Вооруженный Кавказ*, Vol. 1, Центр по изучению конфликтов низкой интенсивности, Баку 2000, pp. 259-264.

cles (Russian abbreviation БМП-1) and 70 entities of armoured transporters, 20 artillery systems and 20-25 “Grad” and “Gvozdika” jet-propelled systems<sup>14</sup>.

Ministry of Interior Affairs: quantity of enlisted is about 3000. Basic armed forces is militia’s special purpose battalion that consisting of several companies. Ministry’s subdivisions work in Tskhinvali, Java districts and some rural militia territorial units. The Minister of Interior Affairs is Colonel Robert Guliev.

National Security Service: until 1992 it was called the State Security Committee (KGB) which later on transformed into the Security Ministry and since 1998 – the National Security Service. In 1998-2002 it was headed by Leonid Tibilov. There were about 300 staff workers. A special purpose detachment (Commander Aleksii Chibirov), operational and well-equipped with arms and equipment, is subordinated to the National Security Service. The duty of this detachment is to struggle with terrorism and smuggling, thus in case of a military crisis situation it will assume responsibility for the formation of small (5-10 men) guerrilla groups into enemy’s rear. During 1991-1992 war this detachment was responsible for organizing terrorist acts in Tbilisi, which were blocked by the Georgian Security Services. Incidentally, in 1999 equipment and arms necessary for the National Security Service was purchased in Moscow. Among other units, they is an active radio-interception subunit, accomplishing radio signal including cell signals interception (approximately in Gori area). Lately, this service played key role in the neutralization of an attempted putsch against President Kokoiiti. Ossetian security officers, based on secret memorandum, closely collaborate with their Abkhazian counterparts. According to some sources, two security representatives held confidential meetings and consultations in Moscow with other separatists. Special attention should be paid to the secret underground phantom group (forest group) that was organized in 1994 in North Ossetia with the objective to carry out diversion on strategic objectives (pipelines, arterial roads, etc.) in Georgian and Ingushetian territories. Structure and future objectives are unknown, as well as whether it is still active or not right at the present time and whether or not it is somehow related to the South Ossetian “irredentist” government – all these things are not determined.

Customs: this is smallest body not exceeding 100 men in total and they have small armed groups near the Georgian regions and in the region of Roki automobile tunnel, which borders the Russian Federation.

Russian Peacekeepers: the peacekeepers present in the area since 1994 consists of 557 servicemen, 36 armoured cars and vehicles, 9 artillery systems and several pieces of air-strike equipment like ZU-23 and ZU-23M near Roki tunnel and 120-mm calibre jet propelled systems. Commander – General-Major Sviatoslav Nabzorov – graduated from the Military Academy of General Staff of the Russian Federation. He was commander of the 201th Motorized Division in Tajikistan. Later he has served as a military commandant of Achkoi-Martan

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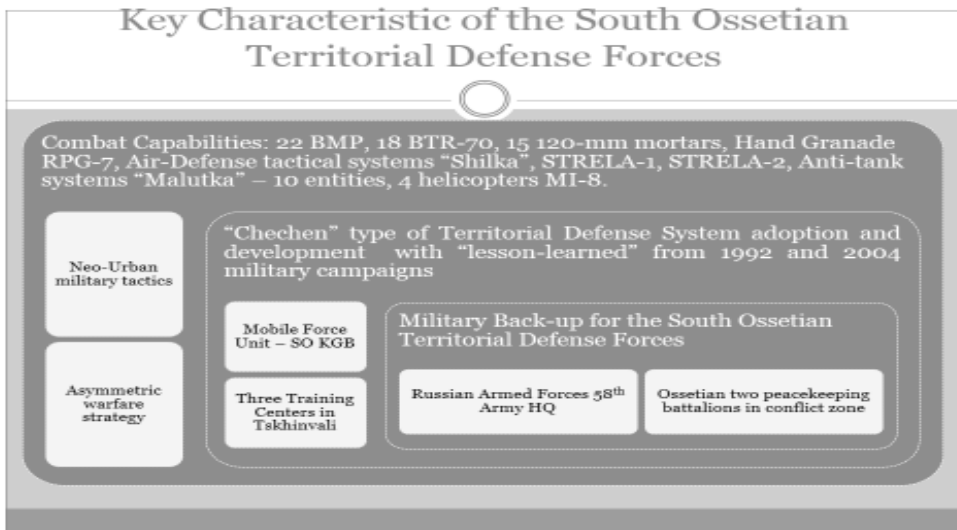
<sup>14</sup> V. Maisaia, *Russian Military Presence at the North Caucasus: Inspirations for Conflict?*, “The Georgian Times”, 26.07.2004.



(Chechen Republic) for 8 months. Since November of 2002 he is a Commander of Russian Peacekeepers.

It is interesting to review how the law enforcement agencies are funded. The structures are funded by the Diaspora in the Russian Federation and income received from the smuggling of alcohol and defrauded humanitarian aid. At the same time, there is a well-disguised financial support agency, entitled “Concord”. Officially the level of funding is low and not sufficient to their real needs. For example, debts resulting from arrearages in paying salaries in 1996 were paid by South Ossetian government only by April 1997. Shortages are evident in armoured forces supplies and equipment as well. However, in times of escalation, the funds will be allocated immediately from local and North Ossetian criminal groupings that really backed Kokoiti and government of North Ossetia. To sum it up, the opposite side is experienced and skilful and Georgia’s new authority will envisage it during making geo-strategic decisions.

Fig. 2. Key characteristics of the South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces



Source: own work.

### **The Georgian Army – 26 years old: Where to Lead?**

The Georgian Armed Forces has celebrated its “day of birthday” launched by the President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze since 1996 that was backed on the then previous President Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s decision on April 30, 1991 to create national paramilitary formation – the National Guard to counterweight the Soviet military might. The two Presidents “common value” some-

how has coincided because of main common thing – the Armed Forces backyard to any kind of authority. The Georgian history has many examples when the armed men were capable to deal with foes and enemies of any kind and type. However, the 22 year old Armed Forces creation, development and reinforcement are associated with most dramatic geopolitical and, unfortunately, political events directly linked with building new type of national statehood since the Soviet Union collapsed. During its 22 years of existence, the Georgian Armed Forces have experienced the following concrete political processes: three civil wars (Tbilisi 1991 war, South Ossetia war in 1991-1992, Abkhazia war in 1992-1993), local military campaigns (Gali region small scale wars in 1995 and in 1998 as well as in Tshkinvali region in 2004), military coups d'état or mutinies (1991 August disobedience from the National Guard units to subordinate the President's decree ended up with 1992 Tbilisi mutiny, 1998 Senaki mutiny, 2001 Mukhrovani mutiny), full-scaled war in August of 2008 with the Russian Federation and tactical military operations (disarmament of the Russian airborne special force units in Khodori gorge in 2002 and anti-terrorist sweep operation in 2002-2003) and, at last, demonstrative humiliation faked "political performance" aimed to degrade the role of the Armed Forces in the Georgian society, taken place on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and conducted by the Mikhail Saakashvili's authoritarian regime.

This is quite long list and, certainly, all these particular events are supposed to be excessively numerous for the so "young" in age national Armed Forces. From the other standpoint, the Georgian Armed Forces play a very crucial role, from the geostrategic consideration, in keeping a balance of power with two regional neighbours (Armenia – 60.000 combat strength, Azerbaijan – 120.000 combat strength), a great-power – the Russian Federation with 1.200.000 combat strength and two regional big powers: Turkey – 600.000 combat strength and Iran – 200.000 combat strength. In addition to that, in the geopolitical region – the South Caucasus, which is a very unstable area – where two main military coalitions: the NATO (on average with up to 2 million combat strength) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (on average with up to 2 million combat strength) with the USA and Russia's domination per se, are competing very fiercely for reaching hegemony at regional levels, a question is to be posed: whether Georgia with its current Armed Forces with combat strength in no more than 30.000 is capable to pursue successful foreign and defence policy missions. The answer is already clear. The "bandwagon strategy" that, getting astride to the NATO policy line, was launched by the President Shevardnadze in 1999 when the Georgian Armed Forces joined the NATO PARP process and engaged into the peacekeeping mission under the aegis of the NATO in Kosovo that was followed up with the mission in Afghanistan in ISAF. In that way Iraq mission, started in 2004 under the U.S. command, stands alone and connects to specific military capabilities achieved abroad but have no real indications as for the defence of homeland (this factor became very evident in waging war with the Russian Federation's Armed Forces in August 2008). However, some

years ago, the same Armed Forces were part of the pro-Russian dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization and were commanded by the Defence Minister who had been appointed by the Kremlin. The “tilting” geopolitical cycle indicates how difficult became to develop a concept of the national defence strategy. It has already affected the creation of stable and credible Armed Forces that can successfully accomplish its goals and purposes. For sure, this delicate topic makes very casuistic what and how to perform national military doctrine that is still sensible to the Armed Forces at present time. The issue of the promoting true missions set for the Georgian Armed Forces are gives rise to uncertainty due to the new realms of the international politics. Instability rims stretching from the North Caucasus to the Middle East and from the Central Asia to South-East Asia are indications what are to be possible military risks and challenges for Georgia’s national security environment.

As for the Georgian Armed Forces establishment and development processes viewpoint and from historic perspective, there are five main phases in which the Georgian Army gave its birth and where it stands at time being. The five phases could be evaluated how well the process has been pursued and – by and large – how it effects on development of the Armed Forces:

1. First Phase (1991-1992) – the period was associated with establishing of paramilitary formation – the National Guard under the aegis of the Parliament of Georgia controlled by the national-liberation movement representatives on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1991. The National Guard was sought to be a premature for further composition of the Armed Forces of independent Georgia. The National Guard (NG) incorporated the whole paramilitary formations run by the various political movements of Georgia except for the “Mkhedrioni” military formation. Tengiz Kitovani – the then Head of the Defence and Security Commission of the Parliament of Georgia –v was appointed the first Commander of the NG. Very soon – namely, in August 1991 – the NG became military challenge to the Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s authority when in order to avoid military clashes with the Soviet Army units subdued to the so-called GKCP Communist leadership which seized power in the Kremlin, the President Gamsakhurdia disbanded the NG and subordinated their forces to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. This provoked the mutiny of the NG and led to the tragic events of December of 1991 ended up with depriving Gamsakhurdia of office in January 1992.
2. Second Phase (1992-1995) – this period was very controversial and tragic for the Armed Forces history. It could be labelled as “black hole” as during that time – despite of new authority’s effort led by Eduard Shevardnadze – it was impossible to create centralized and unified Armed Forces. By that time, it comprised more than 50 various military groupings, among them larger and relevantly disciplined were only three ones: the National Guard, “Mkhedrioni” and the Internal Troops of the MIA. Unfortunately, the failure of setting up common and cen-

tralized regular Army led to utter defeat in war over Abkhazia and – in consequence – losing control over the Tskhinvali region as well as semi-political independent rulership of Aslan Abashidze in Adjara with strong Russian military presence in the area.

3. Third Phase (1995-2004): After adoption of the Constitution and endorsing Presidential style of governance in Georgia where the position of Supreme Commander was created, a process of establishing of the Regular Armed Forces went ahead but in correspondence to the Russian military traditions with leadership of the then Defence Minister Lieutenant-General Vardiko Nadibaidze. In 1998 the style was changed into the “American” style since Lieutenant-General David Tevzadze became the Defence Minister. In this period quite radical reforms have been performed to create a credible and well-subordinated Armed Forces centralized under the General Staff tasked to coordinate the military strategy. By that time, military intelligence service was created, the Armed Forces was developed based on three-tier forces: the Air Force, the Navy and the Army; a military doctrine and strategy were developed, etc. The process was promoted further with endorsement, with U.S. Pentagon assistance, “Training and Equip Program” which cost \$64 million and with creation of mini-U.S. Armed Forces alike to Latin American nation experience in the Cold War (Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Columbia). However, budgetary shortcomes and heavy social burdens ruined “dreams” for developing strong system of national defence in the country<sup>15</sup>.
4. Fourth Phase (2004-2012) – “Rose Revolution” introduced new momentum in realizing new concept of the military strategy. However, as soon as President Mikhail Saakashvili seized the power and endorsed authoritarian type of authority, he exposed a wish to subdue the Armed Forces under his personal leadership and use them as a puppet to pursue his own political will. By doing so, he imposed his control over the Armed Forces via the political secret police – some like Soviet type of special counter-espionage service “Smersh” – Counter-Espionage Department of MIA and by articulating with military propaganda all over the country (in 2006-2008 the Georgian military defence expenditures reached 7-8% of the GDP). The president Saakashvili did not express trust even in his defence ministers and often changed them as fast as possible (Baramidze-Bejuashvili-Okruashvili-Kezerashvili-Sikharulidze-Akhalia) in order to complete “politicized” the Armed Forces. All these false imaginations of foreign threats and a tightened political grip over the Army concluded in complete defeat in the August war of 2008 with Russia and downgraded the Armed Forces status from three-tier system (Army-Air Force-Navy) into simple one tier (Army).

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<sup>15</sup> Idem, *Georgia's Foreign Policy Priorities After "Cold War" 1991-2004*, Tbilisi 2013, pp. 150-151. The publication is in Georgian.

5. Fifth Phase (2012-up to date) – after democratic transformation of the political power and the successfully held Parliamentary elections in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, a last momentum starts for complete reorganization of the Armed Forces and advocacy for new strategic defence concept compatible with NATO standards. The new leadership and governance in defence sector needs further sophistication and cohesion.

### **Georgian-Russian 2008 August War and the Reserve Formations Involvement – Brief Analysis**

Officially war between Georgia and Russia is considered to begin on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2008. Despite Georgia's unilateral ceasefire earlier in the day, South Ossetian separatist forces, including already mobilized Territorial Defence Units continued shelling ethnic Georgian villages in and around the capital of South Ossetia Tskhinvali. In response, the Georgian Armed Forces, to use President's Mikhail Saakashvili words, began *restoring Constitutional Order* and commenced a heavy military offensive against South Ossetian military units. Only thirty minutes after Georgia began its offensive, Russia came to the aid to the South Ossetian side, moving its 58th Army combat tanks through the Roki Tunnel into Georgian territory<sup>16</sup>. However, on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the Georgian leadership announced mobilization of the Reserve Forces containing more than 60 battalions and composed on basis of the "Soviet-type" mobilization standards (with only 18 day combat training program run under the aegis of the National Guard Department and dispatched to proper military units). By doing so, the Georgian General Staff leadership called up and created up to 50.000 Army Corps size strategic-operational grouping with 15.000 regular militaries, 5.000 paramilitary servicemen from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and 30.000 reservists whilst South Ossetian combat forces did not exceed even 6.000, including Territorial Defence Force militiamen<sup>17</sup>. Certainly due to this reason, at initial stage of the combat operations, the Georgian Armed Forces took up strategic initiative and successfully launched offensive operations from three directions (see the below military map presenting the battle for Tskhinvali) and by midday of August 8 they were even capable of seizing some parts of Tskhinvali and reached central part of the city. It is interesting to mention that Mikhail Saakashvili's government defined very concrete mission for the Armed Forces leadership – only seize and reinforce positions in Tskhinvali and no other military missions were conducted. By that time real ratio between offensive and defensive forces were 5:1 in favour of the Georgian side and in some strategic geograph-

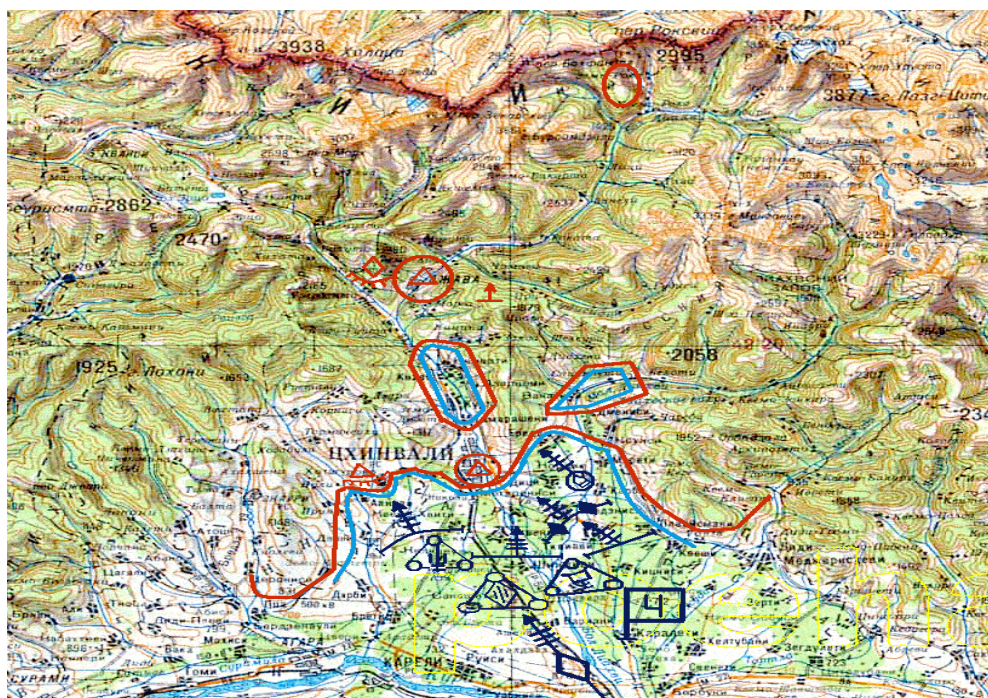
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<sup>16</sup> C. Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, New York 2011, pp. 686-687.

<sup>17</sup> G. Karkarashvili, *Our Homeland Is Burning*, Tbilisi 2009, pp. 52-53. The publication is in Georgian.

ic areas even 10:1<sup>18</sup>. However, the South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces led by de-facto Defence Minister of the South Ossetia – Anatoly Barankevichch – managed to create a military trap for the Georgian Armed Forces which relatively uselessly employed heavy armaments in urban terrain, mainly heavy combat tanks – modernized with Israeli “Elbit Company” T-72-SIM-1 Soviet tanks and Turkish “Kobra” armoured vehicles – in order to make breakthrough in the South Ossetian forces. However, at the same time, the South Ossetian Defence Forces halted the Georgian Armed Forces attrition rate and even at tactical level made possible taking over the initiative in urban warfare in the city.

Map 1. Battle for Tskhinvali 7-8 August of 2008



Source: own work.

The South Ossetian Defence Forces managed to regroup their remained formations and imposed over the Georgian Armed Forces so-called “Chechen guerrilla” tactics designed especially for urban terrain. The tactics is of an ad hoc nature, is adopted to smaller breakouts and weapons. Interestingly, force positioning are often similar to those used when conducting a raid or attacking a strong point, since

<sup>18</sup> А.Б. Широкоград, *Кавказский Капкан: Цхинвал-Тбилиси-Москва, военные тайны 20 века*, Москва 2009, р. 299.

many of the same tactical considerations apply. Fire and manoeuvre as well as assault by bounds are evident among the more seasoned groups but a normal attack consisted of 15-50 combatants moving in the same direction, firing as they go. Like Chechen guerrillas, the South Ossetians territorial forces attacks involved small groups acting in somewhat coordinated manner. The attackers relied on the impact of suppressive small arms fire on the enemy as they advanced<sup>19</sup>. By doing so, with involvement of the Russian military Air Forces starting bombing Tskhinvali since 2 p.m. on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the South Ossetian Defence Forces both in the centre and outskirts of Tskhinvali lined at least 7 combat Georgian tanks and 3 armoured vehicles and the same day at 3 p.m., the Georgian Armed Forces departed from seized positions and at last left the city<sup>20</sup>. Below is comparative analyses of of combat activities in Tskhinvali of the Georgian Armed Forces and South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces.

**Fig. 3.** Comparative analyses of Georgian and South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces in 7-9 August 2008 Combat Operations in Tshkinvali City



Source: own work.

<sup>19</sup> D. Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994-2009*, Kansas 2012, pp. 134-135.

<sup>20</sup> G. Karkarashvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

Thanks to the analysis of the battle for Tskhinvali we may conclude and identify interesting strategic military novelty and new modality that could be named as *Neo-Urban Warfare – a military operation of special type conducted in combination state – non-state actor with involvement of local defence territorial units and with intention to impose tactical missions characteristic of asymmetric warfare on enemy's regular army*. The Neo-Urban Warfare key characteristics are to be concluded as follows:

- asymmetric type of engagement;
- manoeuvring style of tactical missions;
- form of battle: regular Armed Forces vs. irregular/Territorial Defence Forces;
- massive casualties among peaceful and civilian population;
- involvement of light armament and priority for special force Comparative analyses of Georgian and South Ossetian Territorial Defence Forces in 7-9 August 2008 Combat Operations in Tskhinvali City.

This type of warfare could be regarded as relevantly adapted for promoting military strategies of the 21st century.

### **The Georgian Armed Forces under Reform: Where to Lead?**

For the time being, the Georgian Ministry of Defence declares its intention to reshuffle national defence capabilities and drastically reform national defence system at all. The plan was declared by ex-Minister of Defence Minister, Irakli Alasania, for the Parliamentary hearing at the Defence and Security Committee session on March 23, 2013<sup>21</sup>. According to the plan, to complete professionalization of the Armed Forces by 2017 is assumed as well as retaking remained 30% of the Armed Forces conscripts into the professional service term. The plan envisages implementation of absolutely new type of the military high command by setting up two strategic-operational commands: on Eastern and Western command directions. Moreover, it considers creating three tier reserve forces that are to met security arrangements of Georgia and somehow counterbalance military capabilities at the regional level. These reserve forces contain the following:

- Combat Reserve Forces – run directly by the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Georgia and aiming to create so-called *second defence line* operating at the strategic command directions;
- Territorial Reserve Forces – run by the National Guard Department of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces and aiming to provide defence at regional level and with local paramilitary units;

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<sup>21</sup> *White Book*, Ministry of Defence of Georgia 2013. The publication is in Georgian.



- Civilian Reserve Forces – run presumably by the Ministry of Defence and aiming to deal with crisis management and civilian defence matters.

The reserve system is very alike to the former Yugoslavian defence system, successfully operated in the Cold War. The same defence system has been operating in the South Ossetia. The system needs a high qualified professional team that is a real problem for contemporary Georgia and radically distinct approach in composing of new drafts of the National Military Strategy and Defence Strategy Review. Hereby, the Defence Minister announced two key challenges to the national and defence environment that he points out as: *terrorist clandestine operations*, taken into account Sochi winter Olympics in 2014, and *reinforcing of fortification installations at the occupied territories of Georgia in South Ossetia and in Abkhazia*, i.e. from Russian follow-up intervention and possible continuation of occupation of the territories of Georgia.

Having considered above-mentioned visions on challenges and military reform implementation acclaimed by the Defence Minister, a question should be asked: whether these ones clearly correspond to the realities of the regional security environment and realms of the geopolitical processes at large. That really lacks of true scrutiny and expertise and spurs dubious inspirations on high-qualified calculations and analytical forecast done by the Georgian Ministry of Defence. In that stance, it is interesting to mention that all neighbours of Georgia have much more stronger, experienced and outnumbered Armed Forces. From that perspective, the Georgian Armed Forces numerical strength amounts to 23.000 – 25.000 military personnel and the figure is yet to be determined (it is curious that the Georgian high defence authority has less knowledge about true numbers of the Armed Forces' combat and auxiliary personnel as well as the previous one had no idea how many militaries served in the Georgian Armed Forces and that was a dilemma for all the Georgian authorities in the past and still is in the present). Although according to the law "On Defence", the Georgian Armed Forces are to be composed of 28.000 – 32.000 military personnel, this requirement has not been fulfilled. Based on some sources, there is a quite dangerous rim of the military powers and capabilities around Georgia: supposedly the ratio between the Georgian Armed Forces with similar forces of neighbours is 1:4. Here is clear justification of the data – Turkey has about 400 000 militaries distributing into 5 military regional commands (the Turkish 2nd Field Army oriented to the Georgian direction), under the arms Armenia possesses about 60.000-70.000 militaries in its Armed Forces, Azerbaijan enjoys about 130-140 000 military personnel grouped in 5 Army Corps as the regional command structures.

The most important remains impact of the "Russian direction" as Georgia and Russia are still at war and only tiny armistice with six paragraphs is keeping fragile peace between the parties into force. Who knows when and how the peace breaks down or will be torn into pieces and new war will be waged. It could occur at any time. The Russian side mobilizes two full readiness level

Army HQs – 49<sup>th</sup> (tasked to defence Black Sea shore lines and Abkhazia) and 58<sup>th</sup> (dedicated to South Ossetia and internal parts of Georgia). Namely, the Army HQ ran military operations against the Georgian Armed Forces in August war in 2008) and, in addition to that, there are special military bases (relevantly 4<sup>th</sup> Base in South Ossetia and 7<sup>th</sup> in Abkhazia) in the occupied territories of Georgia in South Ossetia and Abkhazia<sup>22</sup>. The forces, at the internal Georgian territories, are composed of an Army Group HQ that are equipped and completed at 90% and are at full combat readiness level, ready at any proper time to strike and launch massive attrition toward the Georgian capital Tbilisi and to the Kutaisi per se. Here is to admit the local Armed Forces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia totally composed of 10.000 – 15.000 combat ready forces that are fully controlled by the Russian military regional command authorities. The whole forces are composed of the so-called “South Strategic Command” of the Russian Armed Forces headquartered in Rostov and aimed to coordinate and manage all operational and paramilitary forces stationed at the North Caucasus as well as in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia and include also the Russian Armed Forces deployed in Armenia (102<sup>nd</sup> Military Base in Giumri and 882<sup>nd</sup> special squadron of the Air Forces in Yerevan). In summary, the Russian military capabilities for the whole Caucasus region are equal to roughly 200.000 personnel. The “South Strategic Command” units are equipped with modern Russian military weapons (precisely of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation in combat Air capabilities and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation in combat tanks and artillery systems) in 30-35% and the process is under way and by 2015 the figure will have reached 60%. Along with the Russian Armed Forces in the North Caucasus Islamic insurgency formations are operating in strength of roughly 6.000 Jihadist guerrillas led initially by well-known Islamic warlord Doka Ummarov (declared as one of the most dangerous terrorist by Russia and the U.S. officials and was killed in 2014) and later got under leadership of ISIS. Having considering the so-called “Lafankuri” accident that has taken place on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, a hypothesis could be formulated that the Islamic insurgent leadership is very furious, claiming revenge and wanting to punish the Georgian authority for that “bold deed”<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, a menace declared by the Defence Minister has very little connection with Sochi Olympics and is bound with “Lafankuri” operation consequences.

The indirect challenges for Georgia are organized crime network and drug and illegal arms trade smuggler cartels to whom the previous Mikhail Saakashvili authoritarian regime arranged *off-record* type bargain and obtained huge amount of *dirty cash* laundering under the aegis of the *suspicious financial investment projects* frame. For the time being, the accord has been broken and

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<sup>22</sup> “Arsenali”, 2015, No. 49 (206), p. 16. The publication is in Georgian.

<sup>23</sup> *Report of the Public Council at the Public Defender's Office of Georgia on the Special Operation of 28 August 2012 near the village of Lapankuri, Lopota Gorge*, Tbilisi 2014, pp. 27-30.

concrete transactions could be conducted without governmental back-up, increasing instability inside of Georgia. It is highly probably that military operations over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenian and Azerbaijani Armed Forces will sooner or later be renewed and military Islamic insurgency at the North Caucasus will widen, spilling over into the Georgian territories. In case of deepening crisis in Syria and possible U.S. military aerial and rocket attacks to Iranian strategic installations, the geostrategic situation in the South Caucasus could be deteriorating and Georgia could be converted as a transit “gateway” for delivering arms, mercenaries and displaced people that could cause more security problems for Georgia.

Having said so and having backed on the above-mentioned assumptions it makes clear that the Georgian new government assumptions on risk assessment and geopolitical analysis are demonstrating low-profile expertise and surface approaches in compiling “cost and benefit” calculations in that regard.

### Conclusion

In conclusion it is to be mentioned that due to the grand transformation of technical and conceptual defence planning provisions, national defence systems and Reserve system is transformed into fourth warfare strategy requirements that make all before arranged defence planning processes as obsolete. At present time, namely, Reserve Force system should be corresponded to asymmetric warfare realms and in general the defence system of any nation transformed into new realities where old strategic military thinking occurred flattened on level of inaccessibility of waging war by any party or actor. Hence, the Reserve System is to be based on territorial defence priority adjusted to wage defensive war that directly corresponds to realms of contemporary conditions of international politics. Among classical systems of formation of Reserve and Territorial Defence Structures two of them – “Yugoslavian” and “Chechen” reserve systems are the best models for contemporary realms of international security which are based on *Neo-urban warfare strategy* and makes it difficult for any aggressor to have impression of easy victory in that warfare. These are concrete facts stemming from Georgian-Russian war of 2008 campaign and concrete “lessons learned” consequences are being concluded with concrete perceptions how to improve defence policy and increase national military capabilities. Hence, there are some implications on why Georgia is pursuing very strict and straight forward pro-Western foreign policy, based on common solidarity of people, government and public community (some sort of post-Clausewitzian posture). It is true that the West has also been responding to these missions upon its capability – for instance, recently released EU Global Strategy highlights the importance of states to the east and the south, and the contribution those societies’ (where Georgia holds key position) resilience makes to Europe’s security. As for the NATO’s perspective under the aegis of the 2010 NATO Strategic Con-

cept<sup>24</sup>, the Alliance should, when affected by developments beyond its borders, engage in attempts to enhance international security via a network of partnerships with third countries (including, first of all, Georgia). However, these positive responses and reactions to Georgia's public aspirations are not enough to persuade these people to having chosen right path in right duration.

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