



GEORGIAN FOUNDATION FOR  
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# A UNIFIED NATIONAL DE-OCCUPATION STRATEGY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE GEORGIAN STATE

WHY WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL  
MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

TINATIN KHIDASHELI

90

EXPERT OPINION





საქართველოს სტრატეგიისა და საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობათა კვლევის ფონდი  
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## **EXPERT OPINION**

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# **A UNIFIED NATIONAL DE-OCCUPATION STRATEGY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE GEORGIAN STATE**

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NATIONAL MOBILIZATION STRATEGY**

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## Introduction

Given the ongoing occupation of a part of Georgia's territories, the strengthening of Russian "soft power," permanently growing threats in our neighborhood and the appearance of new and increasing areas of confrontation between our partners and the Russian Federation, it is of critical importance for Georgia to generate a strategic political document regarding the issue of de-occupation based on national consensus.

This paper serves two main objectives. On the one hand, it aims to present arguments for the necessity of the existence of such a document while on the other hand it also seeks to propose opinions about a comprehensive national mobilization policy as one of the important parts of the country's de-occupation strategy.

It is definitely not me who discovered that the success of a state can be mostly achieved through civil and military unity. Only this kind of unity will enable us to make de-occupation possible and approximate us to becoming a state which is both strong and confident in its power and abilities. The armed forces alone cannot deal with the occupation, especially here in Georgia. De-occupation must be a unifying idea elaborated into coherent, step-by-step plans of action and which must become a fundamental part of our everyday life.

This paper seeks to present one of the institutional views of achieving this unity, given the fact that in order to achieve success in any struggle, the armed forces need full, unconditional support and trust from their population. Hence, you will read about

- what the state policy in an occupied state must, and must not, be like,
- how to ensure the institutional arrangement of the civil-military cooperation and
- how to maintain a balance between universal and total defense and systemic, obligatory mobilization and many others.

## **De-occupation Strategy Statement**

In 2016, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Georgian armed forces. There is no part of our history when our country achieved any tangible success without the participation of our armed forces. It is perhaps at the expense of our constant aspirations towards liberty and self-determination or that of our geography or that the history of the Georgian state was always being written on a battlefield.

In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, Georgia went through 25 exceptionally severe years. About a fifth of the country is occupied even today. There are three Russian military bases with tanks and Russian soldiers on the territory of independent Georgia. There are two “embassies” opened by the occupant country on sovereign Georgian territory with the enemy playing a daily game of “war and peace” with us through the threat of physical force.

Despite the undeniable financial and man-power advantage of the occupying state, as well as the creeping annexation and a multitude of unresolved security problems faced by the citizens living near the occupation line, we in Georgia cannot yet seem to find consensus about the nature of our armed forces, their structure, their main aims and objectives, whether or not the army should be compulsory or voluntary and professional, about the plans for reserve forces and mobilization, or about their necessity in the first place, the inevitability of the civilian-military union and about many other big or small issues. Furthermore, despite constant reforms and reforms of reforms, there is no strategic discussion going on about the nature of the armed forces or about the institutional system of defense and security in general. To date, the country has not arrived at a consensus about its friends and enemies or, for that matter, the partnership umbrella.

The realization of the fact that in 2017 Georgia has not yet finalized the process of the formation of its armed forces and that every year brings new, tectonic changes to the Georgian army leaves us with a feeling that the governing elite, hiding behind the arguments of limited resources and the maintenance of stability, is waiting for a war that it can win definitively and is not preparing itself for the one that is real and possible. The temptation of deceiving yourself or averting your eye does not cause the threat to disappear or be minimized in any way and usually leads to severe repercussions. I think that Georgia already experienced the harsh results of such a policy in 2008 and such a strategy should have been rejected immediately afterwards.

The expectation of such an illusory war by itself creates a process when we are convinced that we will be able to avoid actual inevitable fight for retaining our statehood.

Do you want to know what an imaginary illusory war is?

An imaginary war is the combination of state policy, government rhetoric and actions of a kind which result in

- Having lost the image of the enemy despite the fact that you can observe and feel the occupation of your country;
- The occupant is kind during the grape harvest in Telavi or picking apples in Gori and bringing profit; however, he becomes evil and cruel when harvesting jonjoli in Sachkhere;
- The oil offered by Lukoil is slightly better and maybe even a little cheaper and hence budget funds are allocated for it; however, as soon as he rolls a tank a few meters forward – a fuel of tank which I paid for – for example, in the village of Jariasheni, the occupant once again becomes cruel;

- Gazprom, which, in the opinion of all of your partners, is a powerful weapon in the warfare waged by the Kremlin and any time spent at the negotiating table with it is a huge strategic security challenge, is just an ordinary agreement for you. You start counting security in dollars and present the occupant as generating profit for your country, only to cover up your weakness;
- When you take care of the peace of mind of the occupant not only through your actions but through your statements as well with “Let us not irritate them” as the main postulate of your rhetoric and, without even realizing it, you become a victim of the psychological influence of the operations planned by the enemy.

An imaginary or illusory war is the process created through the combination of these and other similar factors during which you convince yourself that you will manage to get by and avoid a decisive battle for the de-occupation by means of this policy or, more precisely, for retaining the sovereignty of your country. It is when the risks of physical confrontation, losing more land and more lives become a secondary matter and tiptoeing on the pathways of “remaining unnoticed” you shrink the boundaries of your freedom step-by-step.

Georgia can easily be considered to be a type of country where the “stick and carrot” tactic determined by the enemy has become a textbook document of Georgian domestic politics. Yes, the state should not prevent the attempts of its citizens, for example, to expand the markets for the sales of their products or services; however, the state policy, which encourages dependence on the occupant, bolstering the agenda of the occupant country itself, is fundamentally wrong. It is fundamentally incorrect for a political system to reveal positive sentiments towards the actions or political-economic steps taken by the occupant while the occupation army remains on its territory, kidnapping its citizens and altering land on an almost weekly basis.

Given the fact of such an imaginary or made-up war, we have lost the actual image of the enemy. As unbelievable as it may sound, it is a direct result of our state policy that a significant part of our population does not consider Russia to be the enemy at all while for another part, the line between the kindness and cruelty of Russia is blurred.

The main objective for Georgia, as a state, must be to end the illusion of looking for and dealing with this illusory war. This is due to the fact that despite the interests of the Russian businesses in Georgia or the number of kilograms of fruit and vegetables we sell in Moscow and Rostov, the Kremlin will still ceremoniously welcome the “elected” leaders of the self-declared territorial entities. In addition, it will continue the unwavering implementation of the plans designed to ensure the detachment of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region from Georgia even further. Moreover, every kilogram of fruit and every liter of wine well sold in Russia will always be an instrument for the success of Russian soft power and the Georgian state will be unable to use it for strengthening its vital national interests or sovereignty. In addition, the key to a “successful” trade-economic project will remain, without any alternatives, in the hands of the Kremlin being opened or closed according to its necessity.

Dealing with the scenarios of an illusory war created in our imagination where we do not even have an enemy leaves our army with a symbolic or almost holistic function of being the proof as well as a handy example of our multi-century heroic history. A military serviceman from Telavi or Gurjaani, who must be preparing for a possible war with Russia, knows for a fact that it is thanks to Russia that his family manages to get by month after month. He knows that the key for the appreciation of the hard labor of his parents and the profitable sale of their harvest is in the hands of a Russian businessman who is in love with Georgian wine. Hence, the scale of the problem is easily noticeable.



All of this inhibits the creation of combat-ready armed forces and their modernization and progress but creates a waste of vital years of development and millions of GEL of already limited or practically non-existent resources. More importantly, it makes for the creation of an effective institutional arrangement of civilian-military cooperation which, in the end and during the action, manifests itself in the weakness of any full and unconditional support of the civilian population towards the armed forces of the country.

We must stop looking for a war which we will surely win and start getting ready for a war which is more expectable, taking into account the abilities, ambitions and the potential of the enemy. It is imperative that every day and every tetri be spent looking for the ways that will approximate us to de-occupation, given the very real threats. Armed forces alone cannot deal with the occupation. De-occupation must be an idea appended to the state policy. Our domestic as well as international agenda must become more intensive, demanding, proactive and ambitious in order to always be in the center of events and putting all the advantages that Georgia has in line for the survival of our country.

In order to achieve this objective, we need to start with a strategic vision, a unified civilian-military strategic project. Below, I will present my personal views about one of the many important components of the implementation of the strategic statement on de-occupation; namely, the unified national mobilization system which must become the most important component of Georgian state policy and actions.

## **Reserve and Mobilization System**

An analysis of the security challenges facing Georgia makes it clear that the development of the regular component of the Georgian armed forces, which is imperative to the full functioning of the national defense system, is not enough.

Today, it is an absolute necessity to have a flexible, effective and readily available mobilization and reserve system which, at the same time, builds on the obligation of protecting the homeland, enshrined in the constitution and covering all Georgian citizens. Creating a strong reserve system, parallel to the professional regular army units, is a particularly urgent task taking into account the following factors:

1. Georgia has the smallest military force in the region;
2. Considering the rate of Georgia's economic development, a dramatic increase in spending to bolster defense is not to be expected in the short or medium-term perspective;
3. The growth of the resources of the armed forces, given the meager budget, is mostly dependent on the help provided by partners and, hence, does not lend itself to long-term planning;
4. The security challenges facing Georgia are constantly rising. Ensuring the strength of the defensive abilities of our country using the resources of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia alone is impossible and an unachievable goal;
5. Only a well-developed, large-scale and professional reserve system creates full-fledged civilian-military cooperation which is the main guarantee of victory during military operations.

Hence, it is only logical to fully and strategically gather up the resources possessed by our country, ensuring the defense

capabilities of Georgia, with the aim of strengthening them as well as the implementation of a strategic security plan for Georgia. In the case of an effective system, the process will be mutually beneficial and profitable, given the fact that as a result we get:

- (1) Civilian support to the armed forces during the military operations and
- (2) Assistance given by the armed forces to civilian structures such as, for example, in the cases of natural disasters.

The mobilization and reserve system becomes even more of an urgent and important instrument in the case of limited resources in that having a good strategic vision and planning, the mobilization system relieves the pressure on the limited resources and makes the armed forces more flexible. Hence, it is the very first objective to determine the following at the initial stage:

- (1) What purpose and objective will the system serve?
- (2) What is the final product to which all steps are leading?
- (3) What will the institutional management system, which will be competent and authoritative, be like?
- (4) What is the financial/resource mobilization plan?

Such an approach will enable civilian structures to plan their acquisitions and other ordinary activities consistent to both their needs and the objectives of the national mobilization plan.

Mobilization is a statewide phenomenon which means the gathering up of all of the existing resources with the purpose of producing a maximum readiness for the security of the population, the economy and state institutions. Mobilization, in itself, means the full involvement and participation of the population, the economy and state institutions in order to achieve success.

There are daily examples of inter-dependence created in the fields where the state and citizens interact and these examples by no means differ from successful civilian-military cooperation. For example, getting construction permits must not be limited to only presenting the efficiency and the sustainability of the construction of the building in question. It should also require the presence of an area for the effective operation of fire brigades and ambulances as well as ensuring the existence of parking spaces, greenery and so on. This means that in order for you to start construction on the piece of land that you already own, the city obligates you to meet the requirements of fire safety, greenery, cleanliness and other public safety needs. The general mobilization plan of the country and the plans for its implementation must be based on similar principles of joint action among private and public spheres as well as military and civilian dimensions.

The existence of an agreed and inter-dependent plan of this nature is absolutely obligatory during the implementation of various infrastructural projects when every bridge or tunnel, as well as large and small HPPs, could turn into a defensive obstacle or provide the basis for a successful attack in the case of military action.

There is another example for the better understanding of this necessity. Mass and full mobilization, in itself, means a quick gathering of reserve personnel at previously designated locations. Hence, in order to undertake this task successfully; on the one hand, it is highly important to have a full account of the transportation means in various settlements, especially those far away from the mobilization centers, and possess a detailed plan for using this transport. Public transportation owned privately or by the municipality, school transport, agricultural machines and others could serve as the transportation means for the aforementioned purposes. Taking into account the scale and needs of the mobilization, the transport vehicles owned by

private individuals can also be included in the plan. When we talk about full mobilization, the concept in the case of these examples provides for a full inventory account of transportation, determining the conditions for the transport subject to licenses/permits as well as a strict schedule of their usage and precisely defined rules and conditions.

The general mobilization plan, in itself, combines gathering the information fully, its systematization and planning the usage and restitution of losses of all resources that become necessary components of defense during mobilization. The strategic plan must provide comprehensive answers based on the level of threat and the scale of necessity. Hence, knowing that the mobilization is a) partial, b) full or c) universal, all actors must have prior knowledge of the specific scenarios of their actions.

In accordance with the nature of the mobilization and in the order given below, the the general mobilization plan shall include the following pre-determined mobilization plans for

- ✓ The armed forces
- ✓ All security/law enforcement services
- ✓ Ministries and their departments
- ✓ Municipalities
- ✓ Legal Entities of Public Law
- ✓ Legal Entities of Private Law
- ✓ Individuals

Infrastructure, transport and other material means only acquire their function if there are appropriate human resources which can properly use these means according to the existing objectives. Given the universality of the mobilization, it is imperative that the abilities of the citizens be directed correctly and adequately towards the successful achievement of the pre-determined objectives. The adequacy of the system, on

the other hand, requires from a person what he or she knows the best. At the same time, it is also imperative for the system to be transparent, fair, equal and voluntary because it is only in this way that high motivation and quality, which are vital components of success, can be guaranteed.

Hence, it would be desirable for a reserve system to be formed in three categories and the resources of the state divided accordingly:

1. Regular army reserve
2. Territorial reserve, mostly performing auxiliary functions together with the general armed forces
3. Specialists/professional reserve

The names of the categories themselves indicate the differences and major characteristics. If in the case of the regular army reserve we are talking about the professional army reserve, the main purpose for it will be to fill the losses inflicted during combat operations and strengthen the military forces on the battlefield. The main criteria for admittance in such a reserve will be qualifications in military affairs, compatibility with the armed forces as well as health and physical conditions. The enlistment in the reserve will be performed within a certain period of time after the finalization of a contractual military service (within five to seven years) and the individuals enlisted must meet the requirements determined for military service. The individuals dismissed from other para-military institutions could also be eligible for enlistment in the regular army reserve. These include personnel from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia as well as from the Emergency Management Agency and others given the fact that their training system is compatible with the Georgian armed forces and given the objectives of the national mobilization.

Less strict requirements for people wishing to enlist in the territorial reserve forces can be instituted given the specifics of

service there. The number of years passed after the contractual military service can be higher and individuals who have not served in the military at all, but have the ability of undertaking important tasks in emergency situations due to their professional experience, can be enlisted as well. This can include alpinists, guides, geologists, civil aviation pilots and others.

And finally, the professional or specialists reserve is an especially interesting, large-scale and valuable component for the mobilization service given the fact that it enables people of any profession, education and experience to serve the defensive objectives of their country, becoming part of the implementation of the defensive plan which is based upon the existing challenges for the period of time defined in the mobilization system. This can include doctors, cyber specialists, engineers, psychologists, interpreters and so on.

The modern army gives us the ratio of approximately 1:10 in the cycle from the “frontline soldier armed to the teeth to rearguard and support units” which means that about eight or nine people in support units are responsible for the success of one soldier on the frontline. In the real world, this means that a large majority of those in the armed forces may never have to protect their homeland weapon-in-hand but serve the same objective from a workplace instead. Given the shifting realities and the different, developed and technologically advanced nature of warfare, today, more than ever before, the creation of an effective reserve service with rotation and precisely defined objectives gives us the opportunity to get top quality results and save resources in the process.

Given the defense objectives and specific situation, special conditions for all categories of the reserve service can be determined; as already pointed out before, reserve forces are used for not only defensive actions but for other circumstances as well, including where the armed forces are assisting others during states of emergency due to natural disasters.

## **Voluntary Military Service, a Fully Professional Army**

While discussing compulsory or forced military conscription, one can put forward tons of arguments having to do with the current state of affairs, the full usage of the abilities of those conscripted and their psychological conditions. It is possible to call on statistics depicting a very concerning image of attempted suicides among conscripts and discuss the forced labor of the 18-19-year-old boys, making it clear that these activities have nothing to do with military service or serving the country. We can also talk about the unfairness of the system when only a fifth of youngsters of conscription age are actually drafted, creating a giant space for nepotism and unhealthy relations between citizens, military commissariats and the recipient ministries. However, I do believe that we can find answers to the most difficult problems by asking quite simple questions.

How do we act when we are faced with a problem? Let us discuss the most standard situations when the perception of threat rises and we are looking for help.

- If sick – we trust professional doctors, equipped with knowledge and experience
- Every time a 16-year-old teenager leaves the house – we are counting on the professional police, paid for by us
- We did not trust the teachers with proper order in elementary schools and created a special professional school warden system to ensure order
- However, when we are moving along the east-west motorway and see the silhouette of an enemy state flag, reinforced by the tanks of the same country, we rely on 18 and 19 year-olds, forcefully removed from their families or the work they love, gave them uniforms and weapons and tasked them with protecting their homeland until the last drop of their blood.



I believe that it is only sensible and justified to look at the people who are in the service of protecting our country and who can end up on a battlefield at any given moment of their life with as much responsibility as we would afford those who protect our individual security every day.

Military service carries a special pride and satisfaction. It gives exceptional knowledge and experience. It facilitates the formation of personality with confidence, discipline and good morale. The regular army is a constant effort for better discipline and endurance. Apart from the careers we first imagine when thinking about military service, there are also doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, interpreters and many other professionals serving in the armed forces – people who can provide futures for their families by working in the private sector, too, without having to subject themselves to life threatening risks. They, however, choose military service, a profession they love, of which they are proud, where they grow, learn and get experience, boosting their abilities and status in the process. In both large and small countries, with peaceful and aggressive neighborhoods, young people decide in favor of military service every day. The same is true for Georgia. Those wishing to start military contracts exceed several times the number of service men needed which, given accurate management, is the most valuable resource for a state.

The factual conditions of military service push us to make multi-level, innovative decisions when the personnel policy in the armed forces is not straightforward and we either take everyone or no one or and, what is even worse, we have a spontaneous personnel policy.

From the beginning, we can introduce several important characteristics which will help us improve the existing reality as well as being in line with the effective use of resources.

1. We do not abolish the conscription system. Instead, we abolish the compulsory element of it within the timeframe established by the government.
2. The time and type of the military service determined constitutionally is to be served entirely through the choices of citizen and includes all, irrespective of gender.
3. Based upon the interests of the armed forces, after graduation youngsters are able to continue their studies through scholarship programs aimed at defense objectives which will naturally determine the type of their relationship with the armed forces in the future.
4. It is possible to undergo military service by the approved rules of reserve and mobilization. This means that a person can choose to serve in the professional reserve, tackling already pre-determined tasks. This could be, for example, being a swimming instructor in the military lyceum in Kutaisi for two years with a previously agreed schedule (a compulsory number of days). The lyceum saves the resources designated for hiring the instructor, directing it to other needs, while the youngster masters the minimum of compulsory service, also acquiring the experience of working with minors and getting an additional profession.
5. A person with a military obligation may serve in any form proposed by the state, at the place of his choosing and on a schedule which he compiles pursuant to his interests and abilities. Such a military service is beneficial in more ways than one as it frees up the financial resources of a particular institution while the conscript acquires the abilities which are compulsory by the established rules, also benefiting from mastering a profession or getting experience. For example, from the proposed options he can choose to go for service in a tank construction

factory which, in itself, means giving him additional professional knowledge.

6. During his first draft to professional military service in the period of the initial combat training, a military service man benefits from insurance, food and all of the other services and benefits available to a military person, including the reimbursement of travel costs, although he will have no salary.

This is just a typical list of suggestions that would make the constitutionally reinforced compulsory military service beneficial for everyone, fully freeing it from forced labor.

## Conclusion

Given the growing threats and challenges, democratic states are discussing new, innovative and development-oriented systems for strengthening security and ensuring peace as well as new models for self-organization. Perhaps for the first time in the past 25-30 years, the world agenda is once again saturated with security issues with principal discussions, as well as financial resources, being devoted to making it healthier and maintaining a better security environment.

Everyone today agrees that if you are infected with cholera, you should not forget that despite the importance of all other projects, it must be cured and this cure must be the utmost objective. Doing all other things, one must remember that without fighting cholera, no special breakthrough will be possible. Hence, fighting it must be a cross cutting line in all other work. We all realize the threat and know that without a collective effort in defeating it, even the most successful plans and strategies will have no effect and we will fail in saving any cause.

In addition, for correct and successful strategic management it is vital to remember that parallel to this fight, the state must continue to fully function and the basis for its existence, the institutional foundation, must be unshakable. Cholera cannot turn into an argument, justifying the disruption of the rule of law and diminishing the perception of equality and fairness. This is due to the fact that one day we might discover that we have rescued the population from one disaster, only to put it facing another one no less severe.

The success of the state is only achievable when it manages to correctly prioritize the existing threats, its own capabilities and top interests, consequently creating a strategic plan and forming tactical objectives, barring and doing its best to neutralize the main challenges to its security instead of encouraging

them. Once again, if there is an outbreak of cholera, the main objective of the state strategy must be to combat, defeat and prevent its future spread. All of this must be exercised not by chaos but by institutional order and principled policy – planning and spending based upon the objective of defeating the disease and not ignoring or encouraging it.

The aim of this paper was to offer a wide front for combating cholera or, in our case, occupation.

- When the state and its representatives are acting according to a unified, previously agreed strategic plan of acquiring the main condition for victory which is intra-state consensus and the unconditional support of the population
- When the armed forces, both with its active and passive personnel, is an important but still just one part of this unified plan
- When the population is the participant and owner of the national strategy on de-occupation
- When the enemy does not even have an illusion of achieving victory by using soft power and winning the hearts and minds of the Georgian population

A country which does not have a clear, transparent and unified national de-occupation strategy saves resources at the expense of the critical costs for the country's security, also exercising restraint on the international arena, will manage at best to postpone the inevitable but will not achieve its goals with regard to avoiding the major threat. A confused population, which has lost the image of the enemy, is an open invitation for this enemy to intervene in the future and inflict even more violence.