



Conference on "Georgian NATO Accession and Potential Impacts on the Georgian-Abkhaz Peace Process"

Istanbul: June 12-15, 2007

Heinrich-Boell Foundation, Berlin, Tbilisi

Center for Citizen Peacebuilding, the University of California, Irvine

Since the events that transpired in Kodori last summer official negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and the "Geneva Process" respectively have seen no progress. Informal civil society dialogues appear strained and a certain fatigue has set in. Organizers and supporters of these dialogues from both sides are increasingly criticized by their governments and domestic political opponents who consider such dialogues pointless and ineffective.

Instead of direct exchanges on official and unofficial levels, both sides are concentrating on courting and presenting their case to the international community. Through these efforts, they hope to gain an advantage in the constantly changing geopolitical situation. In this context two issues important to international politics play an important role: the decision about the future internationally recognized status of Kosovo, which is scheduled for 2007, and the possible accession of Georgia into NATO within this decade.

Both these issues provoke serious, political controversies and contradictory political analysis between and within the conflicting parties. These two topics also evoke connotations and emotions, which themselves have repercussions on the negotiation process and trust-building between Georgians and Abkhaz. This is particularly the case with NATO accession talks which incite fears or hopes in Abkhaz and Georgian societies.

Consequently, the organizers believe it is extremely important to offer a forum to their Georgian and Abkhaz partners where the public on both sides of the divide can transparently discuss the requisites and possible consequences of Georgia's accession into NATO among themselves and together with international experts. Even though fundamental controversies and clashes of interest will not be resolved at this conference, the discussions and resulting published conference proceedings will help clarify the issues, and provide insight into the motivations and interests behind the different positions.

The discussions will be structured by the three following questions:

I. What is the role and function of NATO today?

- Symbolic level: Perceptions in the East and West
- Legal level: What does NATO demand of its members? What does it guarantee for them?
- The transformative power of NATO accession: The case of Croatia
- What does a Membership Action Plan imply?

II. What international political and economic interests will influence the decision about Georgia's accession into NATO?

- The differences between the US and the EU in their relationship with Russia

- The 2008 presidential elections in the USA and Russia
- The West's energy interests in the South Caucasus
- The West's strategic interests in the South Caucasus

III. Euroatlantic Integration of Georgia and the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict

- Does accession into NATO increase the likelihood of a military option to bring Abkhazia back under Georgian control?
- Does Georgian accession before a resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict confirm and preserve the existing de-facto separation?
- What role can NATO play to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in comparison to other international organizations like EU, UN etc. (taking into account the experience from the Balkans)

Political and civil society representatives from Georgia and Abkhazia, NATO and EU representatives, and experts from NATO countries and Russia will participate at the conference.

Before the multilateral conference a bilateral meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz participants will take place. The aim of this meeting is to promote informal information exchange regarding current developments on both sides.

Walter Kaufmann

Tbilisi, 02.04.2007

Conference Agenda

PART I: Georgian-Abkhazian Bilateral Meeting

Tuesday, 12.06.07

- 01:05** Arrival of Abkhaz participants, SU 205 from Moscow
- 06:35** Arrival of Georgian participants, TK 1386 from Tbilisi
- 14:00** *Lunch*
- 15:00** **Opening** Arda Inal-Ipa, Abkhazian coordinator of Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue
Paata Zakareishvili, Georgian coordinator of Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue
- 15:30** **Overview of current political developments in Abkhazia** Different participants from Sukhum/i
Chair: Paata Zakareishvili
- 16:30** Discussion
- 17:00** *Coffee break*
- 17:30** **Overview of current political developments in Georgia** Different participants from Tbilisi
Chair: Manana Gurgulia, Media Club, Sukhum/i
- 18:30** Discussion
- 19:00** End of the first day
- 20:00** *Dinner*

Wednesday, 13.06.

- 10:00** **The domestic discussion about NATO accession in Georgia** Archil M. Gegeshidze, Georgian Foundation for Security and International Studies, Tbilisi
Chair: Arda Inal-Ipa, Sukhum/I, Centre for Humanitarian Programmes, Sukhum/i
- 13:00** *Lunch*
- 14:30** **Perception of NATO and the Georgian accession plans in Abkhazia** Natella Akaba, Abkhaz Women's Association, Sukhum/i
Chair: Tina Khidasheli, Republican Party, Tbilisi
- 15:15** Discussion
- 16:00** *Coffee break*

16:30

Discussion

*Chair: Paula Garb, University of
California/Irvine*

18:00

End of Part I

20:00

Dinner

PART II: International Conference

Thursday,
14.06.

11:00	Opening of international conference	Walter Kaufmann, HBF Paula Garb, UCI
11:30-14.00	Panel I. What is the role and function of NATO today? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symbolic level: Perceptions in the East and West• Legal level: What does NATO demand of its members? What does it guarantee for them?• The transformative power of NATO accession: The case of Croatia• What does a Membership Action Plan imply?	Susanne Nies, Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques, Paris Jan Hendrick van Thiel, French Foreign Ministry, Paris Damir Grubiša, Institute for International Relations, Zagreb <i>Chair: Paula Garb, University of California, Irvine</i>
12:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
15:00-19:00	Panel II. What political contexts will influence the decision over Georgia's accession into NATO? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The differences between the US and the EU in their relationship with Russia• The 2008 presidential elections in the USA and Russia• The West's energy interests in the South Caucasus• The West's strategic interests in the South Caucasus	John Mackey, NATO headquarters, Brussels Andrei Ryabov, Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow Bruno Coppieters, Free University Brussels Nigar Göksel, European Stability Initiative, Istanbul (to be confirmed) <i>Chair: Susanne Nies, IRIS; Paris</i>
16:30-17.00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
20:00	<i>Dinner</i>	

Friday,
15.06.

**10:00-
14:00**

Panel III. Euroatlantic Integration of Georgia and the Abkhazian conflict

- **Does accession into NATO increase the likelihood of a military option to bring Abkhazia back under Georgian control?**
- **Does Georgian accession before a resolution to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict confirm and preserve the existing de-facto separation?**
- **What role can NATO play to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in comparison to other international organizations like EU, UN etc. (taking into account the experience from the Balkans)**

Alexandros Yannis, Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

Magdalena Frichova, International Crisis Group, Tbilisi

Shalva Pichkhadze, NGO "Georgia for NATO", Tbilisi

Vjacheslav Chirikba, Abkhazian Institute for Humanitarian Research, Sukhum/i

Chair: Bastian Hermisson, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Berlin

**12:00-
12.30**

Coffee break

14:00

Lunch

15:00

Closing session

Chair: Walter Kaufmann, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Tbilisi

17:30

End of the conference

Conference Languages: 1st part in Russian and 2nd part in English and Russian

Conference venue and accommodation:

Nippon Hotel

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