

Future Developments of Cooperation on Security Issues, Including Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Illegal Arms Export

Alexander Kukhianidze

Introduction

The issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Georgia occurred already in the Soviet period. Georgia, being a part of the Soviet Union, had a direct border with Turkey – a NATO member-country, therefore a large amount of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and conventional weapons, as well as a necessary infrastructure for its maintenance and utilization was accumulated on the territory of Georgia.

At the beginning of 1990's, in the course of the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union, first the Soviet army and then the Russian armed forces have partially left Georgia. They have taken along with them the weapons of mass destruction, which were deployed in the country. Georgia's newly formed Government was not opposing this taking away process. On the contrary, it started working on the security issues and in particular weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation and banning the illegal arms export from the very first years of the country's independence.

The International community was frustrated that during the disintegration of the Soviet Union there was a reduced oversight of weapons of mass destruction, its components, materials and assembling technologies. This fact was significantly endangering the international peace.

Georgia does not manufacture any weapons of mass destruction; however, its proliferation remains a serious problem up to this date and depends on several basic factors:

First: Georgia is a transit country and represents a main crossroad in the Caucasus region which links the Western and Eastern countries on the one hand and the Northern and Southern countries on the other. From the commerce development viewpoint this factor plays a positive role, however, it also fosters various kinds of smuggling. This problem is particularly evident in the conflict zones, in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions where Georgian authorities can not control border check-points on Psou River and at Roki tunnel.

Second: Russia, which bordering Georgia in the North is a manufacturer of weapons of mass destruction, while the countries to the South of Georgia either are aiming at manufacturing these weapons or harboring various terrorist organizations, which uncontrollably function on their territories and would not mind using these weapons in the terrorist acts.

Third: new States that emerged in 1990's after the collapse of the Soviet Union turned out to be so weak that could not appropriately control their own boundaries and accordingly could not ensure non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their components. This first of all is right in respect to Georgia which, particularly in the first half of 1990's, could not control its borders due to the internal armed conflicts, weakness of the Central Government and chaos created in the society, which in its turn fostered thriving of smuggling, organized crime and corruption in the country. This period in Georgia continued from 1990 till November 2003 and was characterized with existence of the corrupted pyramids, merging of political and criminal formations, border disarrangement and chaos or complete lack of control there. The aforementioned does not mean that the implementation of different measures against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction started only after the *Rose Revolution*.

Taking into consideration these factors it could be said that there is a high risk of smuggling via Georgia dual use technology and equipment, as well as conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and this is not only a probability, but is an evidence based reality. In early 1990's nuclear materials were primarily smuggled from Russia and

the Eastern Europe, bound for the Western Europe; later in the second half of 1990's and particularly in 2000 these routs moved from Russia and Kazakhstan towards the South – through the Central Asia and the South Caucasus to Turkey, Iran, Syria, Libya, Iraq (before 2003) and other Arabic countries.

Today all of these require taking urgent steps and developing a finalized system of non-proliferation of weapons and hazardous materials. Solving the proliferation problem for Georgia does not mean only joining the relevant International Conventions. Solving the weapons of mass destruction proliferation problem directly depends on the efficient control on the State borders, tackling corruption in the country and elimination of poverty (generally, poorer people try to trade in radioactive materials). All of these are possible only under the conditions of an efficient reform of the State governance.

Derelict Radioactive and Nuclear Materials and Smuggling Attempts

On March 7, 1994, Georgia joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in 1997 started cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as a result over 300 derelict radiation sources have been discovered in the country. Security Service of Georgia has stopped some ten attempts of radiological and nuclear materials smuggling. In a number of cases, the detained smugglers got with them such nuclear materials as enriched uranium 235 and plutonium. With the special technology, such materials can be easily turned into nuclear weapon.

The majority of the smuggling cases has been detected on the same route; coming from Russia to Batumi via Tskhinvali region and then transported to Turkey where since 1990's emerged an active *black market* of nuclear materials. There have been cases of attempted smuggling of radioactive materials from Russia to Batumi via Abkhazia. Besides, there have been detected cases of attempted smuggling of nuclear materials from Russian territory to Armenia through Tskhinvali region and from Armenia to Batumi through Akhalkalaki.

The fact, that also on the territory of Turkey, namely, in Istanbul, there have been attempts of smuggling of nuclear materials of Russian origin involving Turkish and Georgian citizens, is indicative that the problem is very relevant and there is a real threat not only for the Western countries but Turkey itself coming from the Kurd terrorist formations. Moreover, the nuclear terrorism is also dangerous for Georgia given that it has plenty of both external and internal enemies.

Export Control on Transportation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Components

Georgia is facing a very critical problem– this is how to create an efficient regime for non-proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. This problem requires undertaking a whole set of measures. Though Georgia is not a manufacturer of the mass destruction weapons itself, but it is a transit country. That is why establishing export control on the weapons of mass destruction and its components is a basic element of non-proliferation regime.

Before disintegration of the Soviet Union, Georgia did not have any developed system of export and border control for weapons of mass destruction. Primarily, the Western countries were paying much more attention to Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan rather than the countries of the South Caucasus regarding the export control issues. Along with some local factors, such inattention entailed an activation of the nuclear smuggling right in this region in the recent years. The export control capability of Georgia is limited, due to both the political reasons (Russia fueling separatism on the Georgian territory, absence of the border demarcation with Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) and the economic and social situation.

Several statutory acts have been adopted in Georgia directed towards suppressing smuggling of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. On February 8, 1995 Parliament of Georgia adopted the law N508 prohibiting transit and import of toxic and radioactive materials on the territory of Georgia. In September 1996, a forum was held in Washington on export control and non-proliferation, attended by the Government representatives of the Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Starting from that time Georgia began systematic work on non-proliferation and export control issues. Consequently, under a Presidential decree dated December 2, 1996, an interagency working group has been set up for the purpose of establishing a system of control on radioactive, chemical, biological materials and high technologies. In 1998, the Parliament adopted a law on the export control, mainly for the purpose of Georgia's compliance with its international commitments in respect of non-proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction.

After 2003, an active fight against the corruption, organized crime and smuggling in Georgia has significantly improved its export control, namely, the control on transportation of the weapons of mass destruction and their components.

However, a certain part of Georgia's borders remains unprotected, those are, in particular, some sections located in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, also some segments of the border with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia. It is necessary to have modern radiation detectors at some border checkpoints. Meanwhile, poverty elimination and educational programs shall lead to reduction of the number of cases of attempted trading in radioactive materials by poor and undereducated people.

Alexandre Kukhianidze
Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, Director
E-mail: alex@traccc.cdn.ge
<http://www.traccc.cdn.ge>

European Neighbourhood Policy and Georgia
Analyses of independent experts

**Tbilisi
2007**

The publication has been prepared and published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), “Open Society – Georgia” Foundation (OSGF) and CORDAID Foundation.



The Representation
of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Georgia
App. 7, Bldg. 4, 1st Lane, Ilia Chavchavadze ave., Tbilisi 0179
tel.: (+99532) 250728 / 912695 / 912615 fax: 226727
e-mail: stiftung@fesgeo.org.ge



“Open Society – Georgia” Foundation
10, Tamar Chovelidze str., Tbilisi 0108
tel.: (+99532) 250463 / 250592 fax: 291052
e-mail: contact@osgf.ge



The Representation
of CORDAID Foundation in Georgia
34, Kazbegi ave., site # 3, Tbilisi 0177
tel.: (+99532) 420030 fax: 420060
e-mail: misha@cordaid.ge

The opinions presented in the publication are those of the authors

Copyright ©, 2007, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, “Open Society – Georgia” Foundation,
CORDAID Foundation