Georgia’s significant contribution to the NATO-led missions in Afghanistan

Study of rationality beyond small states foreign policy choices

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IV
Abstract

Since 2012, Georgia remains the biggest per capita contributor among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and non-NATO member states in both International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support (RSM) missions. The deployment process coincided with the challenging period for Georgia when the country was facing a range of internal and external threats. The decision of deployment was undertaken in conjunction with the foreign policy goals of the country. The following study aims to analyse the rationale behind the decision makers' choice regarding mentioned significant contribution, and discusses pre-deployment and post-deployment events through the prism of Rational Choice Theory. The research further scrutinises the factors that lay the foundation for this specific foreign policy objective and hence the ways the country has shaped its interaction with the NATO-led missions.

The dissertation utilizes the qualitative research methodology and largely relies on the in-depth interviews, as well as on the analysis of the primary and secondary sources. As the given study reveals, regarding existing problems and alternatives domestically or globally, the choice of sending a significant number of troops was profoundly logical and rational.

The participation in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Mission resulted in tangible outcomes which significantly benefited the national interests of Georgia.
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List of Abbreviations

EU- European Union

GAF- Georgian Armed Forces

IR- International Relations

ISAF- International Security Assistance Force

JTEC- Joint Training Education Centre

NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NGC- NATO - Georgia Commission

PARP- Planning and Review Process

PFP- Partnership for Peace Programme

RSM – Resolute Support Mission

SOFA – Status of Forces Agreement

SNGP – Substantial NATO- Georgia Package

UN- United Nations

U.S. – United States of America
Chapter 1. Introduction

The International Relations (IR) field is highly dominated by the studies on super powers, while research on small powers is less advanced. Even the definition of small states is a matter of discussion. Considering the fact that small states constitute the majority of the United Nation (UN) member states, the study of these countries and their foreign policies, especially in terms of participation in the military operations, is an interesting issue. A proposed thesis will thoroughly contribute IR field by providing the proper definition of small states and suggesting a scientific research on small states and their incentives to join the military operations.

Participation in international military operations has been an important part of Georgia's foreign policy since Kosovo war (Gotsadze, 2014, p. 7). However, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is very distinctive among launched multinational operations. Indeed, according to Gotsadze (2014, p. 14) ISAF is the biggest operation that was conducted beyond the Euro-Atlantic zone in the history of North Atlantic Treaty Origination (NATO). In total ISAF mission united 49 countries, including 28 NATO member s and 21 non-NATO member states.

As Gotsadze claims (2014, p. 14), the main objective of ISAF was to train the Afghan National Security Forces, to develop the governmental entities and fight against terrorism. From the beginning, ISAF intended to protect the Kabul, Capital of Afghanistan in order to help local government to develop and neutralize the threat of Al-Qaeda. In 2004, Afghanistan hosted its first Presidential election that was won by Hamid Karzai. Before the Presidential Election in October 2003, the UN Security Council agreed on expanding the operating area of ISAF from Kabul to whole Afghanistan (Gotsadze, 2014, p. 14).

Georgia started participating in International Security Assistance Force mission in 2004 (Gotsadze, 2014: 14); however, Georgia's foreign policy in regards to NATO and this particular mission does not lend itself to simple and linear explanation, as there are several factors that determine the formation of foreign policy.

In 2004, Georgia sent an infantry platoon (54 servicemen), which intended to ensure security during Presidential elections in Afghanistan (Gotsadze, 2014: 14). By to 2009, Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) had several of its surgeons deployed in Afghanistan with the team of
Lithuanian professionals. In November 2009, Georgia made a decision to deploy 173 soldiers in Kabul under the French command. In the following year, Georgia increased its contribution in Afghanistan by deploying an infantry battalion in the Helmand province, which was supposed to serve along with the U.S. forces (Civil.ge, 2013).

During that time, when Georgian side made a decision over deployment its troops to Afghanistan, it was also promised that soon, a small state with 4 million inhabitants would make it the largest per capita contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (Agence France-Presse, 2010).

Indeed, since 2009, the data yielded by ISAF official documents provide convincing evidence, that Georgia has actively been involved in the mission. For instance, in 2010 (International Assistance Security Force, 2010) and 2011 (International Assistance Security Force, 2011), Georgia was the second biggest non-NATO contributor, while in 2012 (International Assistance Security Force, 2012), 2013 (International Assistance Security Force, 2013) and 2014 (International Assistance Security Force, 2014) the third-biggest contributor among NATO and non-NATO member in terms of the number of troops and the largest contributor per-capita. A closer look at the data indicates that, in 2012, Georgia was presented with 1562 soldiers in ISAF mission, while big and powerful NATO member countries with only 543 (France) and 998 (Turkey) personnel (International Assistance Security Force, 2012). In 2014, when member states started withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan, Georgia remained one of the biggest contributors (755 servicemen) in terms of the number of soldiers, while Canada did not have any representatives and other NATO member states were presented with relatively limited contingents, for example, France (88 servicemen), Turkey (393 servicemen), Spain (181 servicemen) and Poland (304 servicemen) (International Assistance Security Force, 2014).

The Resolute Support mission (RSM) was launched on January 1, 2015 immediately following the stand-down of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). According to the Resolute Support Mission official web-page (2017), the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), signed on September 30, 2014, and ratified on November 27, 2014, is used as a legal framework for the RSM. The SOFA is a set of terms that authorizes NATO forces’ deployment and operating procedures. The RSM is also reinforced by the United Nations Security Council Resolution №2189, which was adopted in 2014 (Resolute Support Mission, 2017).
The Resolute Support mission is a NATO-led training, advisory and anti-terrorist assistance operation. The objective of the mission is to provide training, advice, and assistance to the Afghan Armed Forces, as well as specific assistance in the fight against terrorism (Resolute Support Mission, 2017). RSM is a follow up of the ISAF mission, where all NATO-member states, as well as partner countries, were involved, including Georgia. As the data (Resolute Support Mission, 2017) indicates, the number of contributor countries in RSM in comparison with International Security Assistance Force mission is reduced. For instance, Canada and France left Afghanistan and did not continue the mission after 2014; the same applies to some other NATO partner countries (Bahrain, Republic of Korea, Singapore) that were presented in International Security Assistance Force. However, Georgia kept its forces and stayed as the biggest non-NATO member and the largest per capita contributor (Resolute Support Mission, 2017).

Consequently, the central objective of the dissertation is to explore the rationale behind Georgia's decision regarding sending a significant number of troops in both missions launched in Afghanistan. The core issue of the dissertation attempts to analyze is formulated as follows:

*Why did Georgia, a small state, make a decision over its significant presence, being the largest per capita contributor among NATO and non-NATO states in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Missions since 2009? Although, Georgia reached this number in 2012, as it was already disclosed, a promise over possessing the leading per capita troops in ISAF, was made in 2009.*

First and foremost, I find the necessity to provide a definition of the small state. One of the promising scholars from Realist School, Hans Morgenthau (1972, pp. 129-130) said that "a Great Power is a state which is able to have its will against a small state, which in turn is not able to have its will against a Great Power." According to that definition, small state is the opposite of great power, but it is still vague whether a small state is the same as a small power.

Along similar lines, Baldur Thorhalsson and Anders Wivel (2006, pp. 652 - 654) argue that today, the distinction between great powers and small states is not based on the fundamental rights of states: all states are sovereign and equal. A scholarly approach to the definition of the small states, though simple, is to perceive them as states that are not great powers. In sum, they have reviewed several aggregate variables a small state is characterized with. Their
argument can be concluded as follows: a state will be considered as a small when it is ostensibly (small) in size (i.e. territory, population, wealth, and economy, military capability) and coming up (developing as a state) in a compressed form (Thorhalsson&Wivel, 2006, pp. 652 - 654).

Georgia can be categorized as a small state, with the population around 3, 7 million (World Bank, 2015), located in the South Caucasus neighboring Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey. IndexMundi (2017) data appears to suggest, that the territory of the republic of Georgia is about 69,700 km2, number 120th in the world. Along with small population and size, the economy is also limited; the country ranks number 118 out of 199 states (World Bank, 2017). As for the military strength, Global Firepower (2014) list has used more than fifty factors and ranked 106 states through their military power and Georgia took 64th place among them.

The dissertation is solely analyzed through the prism of rational choice theory. The latter one perceives the national actors as rational, which evaluate existing problems, alternatives, probable benefits and ways to maximize the outcome (Allison, 1969, pp. 694).

The usage of theory can have several ways in qualitative research. In this particular study, the theory will have a very definite objective; “explain behavior and attitudes of individual decision makers” (Creswell, 2009, p. 70).

By presenting the timeframe, from 2009 to 2017, challenges, as well as objectives Georgia had for the time of making the decision over deployment its forces to Afghanistan, will be presented. The study will show to what extent this decision helped the country to reach its goals and reduce existing threats and problems. Hence, several domestic and international factors will be analyzed, which, from my own perspective, serve as an explanation beyond the decision over sending Georgian soldiers to Afghanistan to that significant extent.

Noteworthy, the topic itself is not entirely new to the academic world, since several scholars have attempted to study Georgia's involvement in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Mission. They explained Georgia's engagement from different perspectives, started from elite-driven policy and identity issues (Gvalia, Siroky, Lebanize & Iashvili, 2013, p. 108), ended with global, regional and domestic security interests of Georgia (German, 2015, p. 609). However, none of these studies have addressed the scope itself.
Georgian presence is not something very ordinary if the number of troops is taken into consideration.

Hence, I believe that this particular study will contribute the field of International Relations to a great extent; first and foremost it will benefit scholars, interested in small states foreign policy behavior. Above all, suggested research will greatly assist national actors while making decisions over participation in military operations and shaping policies towards super powers.

The structure of the dissertation is the following: Chapter 2 scrutinizes the research design and methodology, as well as the specific methodological steps taken in order to find a plausible answer to the research question. In chapter 3, review of the existing literature on the chosen topic will be presented. First of all, literature on small states and their incentives in shaping certain foreign policy, mainly making decisions over participation in military operations will be outlined. Proposed general overview will be followed by the existing literature on Georgia’s participation in Afghanistan missions. The Chapter 4 will sketch out the main aspects and points of the theoretical framework which will be used for answering a research question. The chapter 5 will show challenges, threat, objectives, and alternatives Georgia had for the time deployment. Lately, the most important part of the suggested theoretical framework – an outcome will be presented, and the given study will evaluate benefits Georgia has gained through its significant deployment in ISAF and RSM missions. In this part, interviews conducted with the three different groups of people, experts, representatives of defense and the governmental sector will be offered. The latter is necessary for measuring goal attainment of Georgia. Finally, in chapter 6, along with the summary of the findings and their relevance to the research question, suggestions for the future research will also be proposed.
Chapter 2: Methodology

In order to provide a detailed and an accurate answer for the research question, it is important to identify the proper method. As a result, this Chapter will review the research design and methods that will be used to answer the research question and the rationale behind them. On the other hand, the chapter will present the specific methodological steps and the possible limitations of the study.

First and foremost, understanding of research paradigm is profound. It refers to a set of a priori, fundamental beliefs or worldviews that one holds as the foundation of its research practices (Creswell, 2009, p. 24). In political sciences, the term “worldview” can be mentioned with different concepts, like paradigms, epistemologies, and ontologies or broadly conceived research methodologies. Creswell (2009, p. 23) sees worldviews as “a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds. These worldviews are shaped by the discipline area of the student, the beliefs of advisers and faculty in a student’s area, and past research experiences”. There are four different research paradigms: post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2009, pp. 23-24).

For this research, the pragmatist view has been adopted. Since the central aspect of every research is the problem study, the pragmatist view enables researchers to concentrate on the research problem and allows them to understand it by using all existing methods. Usage of the pragmatist view gives researchers an opportunity to freely choose different research methods, data collecting and analysis approaches that are more suitable for their research purposes (Cresswell, 2009, pp. 27-28).

The researcher has chosen the qualitative research method because it provides an in-depth insight into the research problem. According to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, p. 4), "a qualitative research, covers a wide range of approaches, but by definition, none of these approaches rely on numerical measurements. Such work has tended to focus on one or a small number of cases, to use intensive interviews or depth analysis of historical materials, to be discursive in the method, and to be concerned with a rounded or comprehensive account of some event or unit". Although the qualitative research deals with the small number of cases, the researchers still study the tremendous amount of information. Typically, qualitative
research is associated with the case study methods in which the concentration is on a particular decision, issue, or result (King et al., 1994: 4). Furthermore, the research will analyze the reasons and most important aspects behind the individual decisions.

### 2.1. Research Design

The Research design is the plan or proposal to a conducted research, which involves certain methods, the aspects of philosophy and strategies of inquiry. King, Keohane and Verba (1994, p. 26) suggest that every research design requires the following components: the research question, the theory, the data, and the use of the data.

The case-study design has been adopted as a research design. The case study is particularly useful in situations where we want to shed light on the how and why of phenomena in situations where researchers have little control over the events studied and in situations where attention is directed towards contemporary aspects in a context of real life (Gerring, 2006, p. 186). According to Gerring (2006, p. 186) “The case study is appropriate when one is more interested in the linkages of time, the frequencies or impacts, especially when the links are too complex for investigative strategies or experimental strategies”.

Yin (2014, pp. 13-14) distinguishes between single case studies and multiple case studies. The multiple-type case study consists of identifying recurring phenomena among a number of situations, whereas the single case study includes the core and instrumental types. The single case study involves an in-depth analysis of the various aspects of a situation in order to reveal the significant elements and links that unite them in an effort to capture the particular dynamics of this situation (Yin, 2014, p.14). For this research, the longitudinal study has been chosen as it allows a repeated observation over time of a phenomenon and/or a sample of individuals. The aim of this research is to be able to analyze Georgia's foreign policy in regard to NATO-led operations, ISAF and RSM missions over time.

Within the case study, a process tracing method is applied in order to follow chain from 2009, in other words, from the time of deployment to 2017. Conducting open-ended interviews and data analysis will be helpful to identify cause and effect relationships. The process tracing allows the researcher to employee different types of evidence in order to verify a particular conclusion. The hallmark of the process tracing method is in the ability of showing causal links. In fact, not all causal claims are equally relevant for the research (Vennesons, 2007, p.
198). As Bennett and Checkel (2012, p. 10) outline, a process-tracing method contains several advantages suggesting process itself, chain and assumptions regarding events within a case, which serve for different purposes in the research: either develop or test the hypothesis in order to describe the relationship between cause and effect.

As for the case selection process, pragmatic considerations play a vital role (Gerring, 2006, p. 150). Being a citizen of Georgia and full employee of the Minister of Defence worked as an incentive for conducting the proposed research.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

There are two types of data – qualitative and quantitative. For this particular research the qualitative data is used. First, in the latter method, it is important to measure the validity of the data (King et al., 1994, pp. 23-25), which means that the researcher measures the right data for the research. Second, the data gathered from the research should be reliable. Reliability of data implies that every time the similar method of data gathering is used the outcome will always be the same (King et al., 1994, pp. 23-25). The necessary data to analyze the foreign policy of Georgia towards NATO-led military missions in Afghanistan and disclose the factors, which impact the choice and the process of the foreign policy behavior include: official (strategic) documents and reports from the Government of Georgia, such as: National Security Concepts (2011) and Foreign Policy Strategies of Georgia; progress reports, action plans and relevant documents provided by NATO. Additionally, official statements, speeches, and transcripts of the relevant stakeholders and policy-makers, official internet resources, as well as academic literature regarding the subject matter are analyzed. All these data are public and accessible through open channels and the official governmental collections and NATO. Moreover, statements by the policy makers regarding the foreign policy directions include key speeches. Reports by the non-governmental organizations and think-tanks working on related issues, such, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, usually provide critical insights towards this topic that is why they are incorporated in the analysis part. The documents are chosen according to their relevance to the research question. The thematic analysis, which is the qualitative analytic method, has been adopted for this research (Bryman, 2012, p.624). The thematic analysis enables the researcher to concentrate on analyzing the hidden and explicit themes within the data.
The dissertation employs exploratory stance, as the major question deals with the current developments with some necessary connections with the political events from the late 1990s. In order to avoid unnecessary complexity of the research topic, only short description will be provided to establish the logical connection. The research contains descriptive elements because as King, Keohane and Verba (1994, pp. 7-8) suggest it is impossible to produce good analysis without providing some degree of description especially in the case study. Therefore, the analysis of the data and discussion are incorporated in the case.

In order to answer the research question, the in-depth interviews, a qualitative research method, were used. The in-depth interview aims (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3) to discover respondents' opinions concerning the research and to discuss new issues in depth. This method is ideal for probing more complex and subjective information. The result is detailed information, which cannot be obtained by applying any other quantitative methods (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3).

Another important aspect in using in-depth interview is a sample size. As Mason (2010) suggests, differently from quantitative research, qualitative research does not require the large sample, especially after considering the fact that having a lot of data on hand does not always mean that all the information is relevant for the research. The main reason why qualitative research does not require large sample is that it focuses on the meaning and not on the general hypothesis. Mason (2010) believes that having the large sample for the qualitative research is time-consuming and a rigorous task, and often entirely unusable. However, the researcher has to be careful in defining the sample size because each respondent has his/her own opinion. As a result, the qualitative research sample has to be balanced so that it will cover all the important perspectives and at the same time not to be repetitive (Mason, 2010). For the mentioned purpose, for the accurate assessment of the information obtained by in-depths interviews, several sectors were covered: governmental, non-governmental institutions along with experts and high ranked militaries.

2.3. Quality of the Research and its Limitations

It is important to make sure that research meets all validity and reliability criteria. In order to guarantee the validity of the paper, the researcher has to use different resources such as official documents, reports, studies, speeches and statements regarding small states participation in military mission, as well as on Georgia's participation in ISAF and RSM
missions. Furthermore, the researcher has to study the opposing perceptions in order to guarantee the reliability and validity of the research. And the last but not the least, reliability is also an important criterion that needs to be addressed to ensure the quality of the research project (Yin, 2014, p. 47-48).

One of the biggest limitation deals with the generalizability of the single case-study. The primary objective of the study is not to provide widely generalizable results but rather contribute to the study of Georgia's foreign policy with rigorous and in-depth analysis of policy patterns.

According to King et al. (1994, p. 35), real social science attempts to go beyond these particulars to produce more wide understanding. However, it should be noted that by generalizing the assumptions and finding, the role of particular should not be abolished. King et al. (1994, p. 42) believe that a good research in social sciences should serve for producing both outcomes, particular, as well as general. It should tell us something about classes of events, as well as about the specific events at particular places.

Although the primary objective of the study is not to provide widely generalizable results but rather contribute to the study of Georgia's foreign policy with rigorous and in-depth analysis of policy patterns, some wide assumptions might still be allowed. There are several small states participating in NATO-led operations, as well as seeking for its membership. Thus, studying Georgia's foreign policy in this particular extent might obviously be generalized on these countries.

Focus on the limitations shows several other flaws, including the suggested sources of the proposed study. Since the dissertation is mainly based on the public records, given the fact that high-level foreign policy decision-making process is not available for public records, I faced serious difficulties in gaining the full picture of Georgia's foreign policy behavior. In terms of the number of soldiers participating in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support missions, information was obtained from the General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces. In fact, I was asked not to make them public in case of publishing suggested dissertation. Moreover, the latter mission, RSM is still undergoing and Georgia's presence is not yet over; hence the final benefits or outcomes of abovementioned contribution will later be more easily evaluated.
Chapter 3. Literature Mapping

The following chapter reviews the existing academic literature on the small states incentives to join the military operations, as well as Georgia's involvement in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support missions, on which the study is built. Since participation in the military operations is a part of the foreign policy, several approaches will be presented and most importantly, the chapter will further identify the gap in the literature, which the research aims to address.

The first group of scholars highlights the security issues as vital factors in shaping small state's foreign policy in terms of joining alliances or military operations. According to Sherwood (2010), one of the biggest challenges for small countries is security and power. Hence they tend to employ different strategies in order to improve their conditions. The best option for the small states is to become members of different international organizations. Another possibility in this line refers balancing, whether it is internal balancing or external balancing. The notion of balancing concerns to the weak states choice over joining a coalition with other weak or stronger states in order to counter the influence of a stronger state. The term is derived from the concept of balance of power and it opposes the bandwagoning. Sherwood (2016) believes that balancing occurs when a weak state decides that the dominance or influence of a strong state is unacceptable and that the cost of allowing it to act without counter actions is greater than that of an action against it. Balancing may be internal (allocation of additional resources in the field of defense, which can lead to an arms race). It can also be external; in this case, many weak states will unite against the strong, thereby reestablishing the balance of power in their favor (Sherwood, 2016).

Balancing or bandwagoning as small states' foreign policy strategies is further explored by Stephen Walt's (1987) "balance of threat" theory in his hallmark book "the origins of alliances." The theory details the circumstances that determine when states adopt balancing or bandwagoning behavior. In conflict, balancing means making the alliance against the stronger state, considering that bandwagoning requires joining forces with the stronger side from which the threat is coming (Walt, 1987, p. 18). One can find a term "alliance" confusing and not relevant to the proposed research. However, Walt (1987, p. 12) applies a very broad
definition of the alliance, which is "a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states". This explanation truly overlaps the definition of military operations, and these two do not contradict to each other; hence his work is relevant to the given research.

Walt (1987, p. 2) argues that states do not balance against power alone, but against threats. Indeed, his argument is very strong. If a weak state is on good terms with a powerful state, the weak state will be unlikely to balance against the more solid state. In fact, the weaker state is likely to benefit from the security generated by its good relations with the stronger state. But if the weaker state perceives, the more solid state as a threat, then the weaker state will balance against the stronger state to protect itself.

The core idea of the "Balance of Power" implies that the weaker countries are uniting in order to stand up against stronger states or balance threat coming from them. Walt (1987, p. 22-28) underlines the importance of simultaneously analyzing the different threats when choosing the either strategy. The bandwagoning behavior is expected to occur especially within the known circumstances (Walt 1987, p. 22-23). For instance, in the case of absence of alliance possibilities, the weak states are also more inclined to bandwagon (Walt 1987. p. 29). However, in Walt’s study, there is ample support for the claim that balancing behavior is more widely used approach than bandwagoning (Walt 1987, pp. 22-23).

According to Walt (198, pp. 22-28), there are four most important principles which help states to identify whether a particular state presents a threat. These principles include aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and offensive intentions.

Geographic Proximity plays a significant role in influencing states decision regarding bandwagoning or balancing against coming threat. If the small countries are surrounded by more powerful states from which a threat is coming, the former ones are more likely to prefer bandwagoning rather than balancing against the powerful states (Walt, 1987, p. 24).

Their decisions are influenced by the factor of projecting power that declines with the distance. Therefore small countries that are surrounded by powerful countries might be so defenseless against them that the best choice for them is to just simply bandwagon (Walt, 1987: 24). If this particular hypothesis was tested to Georgian case, the results would be
entirely opposite. However, in this study, Walt's argument will not be explored, since the scope of this research is profoundly distinctive.

According to George Liska (1962, p.12) conflict, which directly violates security level, plays a significant role in defining and analyzing the foreign policy of small states. In "Alliance Alignment Theory" Liska (1962, p. 12) identifies key factors, which foster small state's foreign policy choices. According to Liska (1962, p. 12), "when the security of the state becomes the chief concern of its leadership, and the conflict is sufficiently intense, the latter becomes the main determining factor in alignment movements."

Liska (1962, p. 13 - 14) also suggests that alliances are created against a particular threat and serve specific purposes. However, building alliance without a conflict is disadvantageous for both strong and weak states because it requires from more solid state to share its resources, while it threatens the independence of a small state (Liska, 1962, p. 13).

For Liska (1962, p. 21), preventing or reducing the influence of an opposing power, as well as development of their own capacities are the key factors for states choices on making the alignment. In this extent, geographical proximity between allies is not a driven factor. What matters is accessibility between allies.

Joseph Maila (1986) also suggests fascinating view on small states behavior, especially when their sovereignty is violated. Manila (1986, pp. 36-37) stipulates that the foreign policy of small countries is highly dependent on the level of sovereignty. In case of violation of sovereignty, a small, in his definition a buffer state, will try to make an alliance with a large state and by this action; the former will try to restore its territorial integrity. If small countries fail to make an agreement, hence be ineffective in restoring territorial integrity, then the foreign policy of such state will be a failure (Manila, 1986, p. 37).

The last argument to this direction will be presented based on Michael Handel's (1990) masterpiece "The Weak States in the International System." According to Handel (1990, p. 121), one of the most prominent scholars in small states' studies, a weak state's choice over allegiance with another state, most likely with strong ones and by doing that augmentation of its own internal strength with external strength, is a result of necessity, not preference.
Handel (1990:121) believes that when stronger state threatens a small state, the latter will choose "the lesser of two evils – an alliance with another great power – in order to reduce the overwhelming pressures upon it."

In this regard, the easiest and most usual way for weak states to commit a great power to support their interests is in obtaining written or oral commitment from stronger countries. However, signing a formal treaty with super power is not an easy task, especially if the weak state faces imminent danger. And even if this goal is attained there is still no guarantee that such support will be available (Handel, 1990, p. 122-123).

The second view on the foreign policy of small states is focused on the identity driven hypothesis. Victor Gigleux (2016, p. 27) argues that small states, despite sharing the common characteristic of size, do not necessarily pursue similar foreign policies. This can be explained by the significant differences that exist in their perceptions, interests and external strategies. This observation led Gigleux (2016, p. 27) to criticize neorealism as a way of explaining the foreign policies of small states for overarching conclusions, “reinforcing the one-size-fits-all approach to small states in international affairs”.

Gigleux (2016, p. 29-30) proposes that the role approach, grounded in Foreign Policy Analysis, better explains variations in small states' foreign policy behavior than dominant International Relations perspectives. Main argument is that small states (Gigleux, 2016, p. 39) have multiple self-understandings, which are also shaped by others' perceptions, expectations, and demands. The small states hold different images of themselves leading their policymakers to take various foreign policy decisions and paths. Gigleux states (2016, p. 39), that "there is a need to move beyond the belief that small countries are necessarily defined by one stable and undisputed identity built upon the perception of vulnerability".

The role of values, ideas, and identity, spreading them abroad and being a normative power is another explanation of small states behavior in terms of participating in military operations. This particular approach (Rosamond, 2007, pp. 3-4) originates from the Nordic countries. In order to better understand this approach, it is important to know the Nordic countries' military identity, which suggests that they are forces that are trying to make not only their countries but the whole world a better place. Nordic countries are employing both military and non-military opportunities in order to realize the normative approach fully. They are actively
supporting the international stability and peace while considering non-peaceful states as solidarity societies (Rosamond, 2007, pp. 3-4).

According to Miriam Fendius Elman (1995, pp. 171-172), another aspect that influences the small states participation in the military operations is a domestic political factor. Elman’s (1995, pp. 171-172) notion directly contradicts one of the most influential approaches the Neorealism Theory, which argues that the small states' foreign policy behavior is based on the power. Based on the cases evaluated by Elman (1995, p. 171) the majority of small states’ foreign policy decisions can only be explained in terms of their internal politics. He also adds, that the impact of domestic political factors on shaping small countries' foreign policy still requires further researcher.

The core idea of Elman’s (1995, p. 212) study is to decline the hypothesis showing that the national level approach is less applicable in analyzing country's foreign policy behavior than the international level. However, by presenting given arguments, Elman (1995, p. 212) is not invalidating the Neorealist Approach. It literally provides a clear distinction when the domestic and international approaches are more applicable and when the external and internal constraints play a significant role in shaping country's foreign policy behavior. Elman (1995, p. 212) believes that external approach was more applicable in earlier periods for the newly independent states that needed to be receptive to external threats in order to ensure the protection of the newly independent state. On the other hand, in later periods, countries’ foreign policy behavior can be better evaluated by the national level approach (Elman, 1995: 187).

The identity driven approach is an important aspect in assessing and understanding Georgia's foreign policy. In his article "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy" Stephen Jones (2003) stated that in order to define Georgia's foreign policy first it is important to understand and explain Georgia's cultural perceptions and its worldview. Furthermore, Jones (2003, pp. 103 - 104) frequently highlights culture as one of the influential factors in shaping Georgia's foreign policy. Consequently, the identity driven approach is also relevant to understanding Georgia's foreign policy towards NATO.

The role of identity and beliefs in shaping country's foreign policy choice is also researched by Kakachia and Minesashvili (2015). According to them, Georgia's foreign policy behavior is driven by identity, which comes from Georgia's historical context. By analyzing the social
orders and values, the authors simply identify Georgia's foreign policy as a character driven (Kakachia and Minesashvili, 2015). However, the article is quite comprehensive and provides generalized theoretical view regarding the impact of identity on the foreign policy behavior (Kakachia and Minesashvili, 2015).

Interesting observations are found in Tracey German's (2015) article "Heading West? Georgia's Euro-Atlantic path". He has identified two factors that have motivated Georgia's current foreign policy in regards of EU and NATO. First, since Georgia is constantly facing threats from Russia, becoming the member of EU and NATO means more security and stability in the country. The second driving factor for Georgia to become the member of the EU is Georgia's "European identity." German also argues (2015, p. 609) that political direction and the widespread support are in accordance to the country's foreign policy; yet the justification behind Georgia's foreign policy choice remains debatable. However, Georgia's foreign policy in regards of NATO, including participation in NATO-led missions is solely based on the national interests and security issues.

When evaluating the small state foreign policies, Gvalia et al (2013, p. 108) argue that elite-driven decisions are the most influential factors in determining country's foreign policy, rather than the external factors. For instance, Georgia's foreign policy is directed towards the West (elite driven-decision) rather than bandwagoning with Russia (Gvalia, et al, 2013, p. 108).

Subsequently, despite of the existing views on the small states' foreign policy behavior, the authors suggest that the core driving factors in shaping Georgia's foreign policy are the elite ideas of the Georgian officials. Georgia's Involvement in International Security Assistance Force is taken as a case, and authors conclude that this particular policy choice was made by Saakashvili and his government's pro-western view. Although, Gvalia et al (2013, p. 130) provide strong arguments, the study is concentrated on a particular government in a specific period, which leaves opportunities for further research.

Ryan Mccarrel (2015) in his article "The Strategic Deployment of Georgia's Expeditionary Forces" directly addresses the issue and tries to show the factors which led Georgia deploy its troops Afghanistan. Mccarrel, (2015, p.9) believes that by sending its contingent to Afghanistan, Georgia sought to renew the prestige of its soldiers, exactly after one year when Georgia's Armed Forces suffered devastating defeat at the hands of Russian military. Mccarrel ( 2015, p. 9) also emphasizes the role of location, where Georgian troops had been
deployed. Noteworthy, Helmand was one of the most dangerous combat missions in which most allied countries restricted their units from participating. By doing this, Mccarrel (2015, p. 9) further explains, that Georgia tried to prove quality and professionalism of its armed forces. Indeed, as the conflict approached its unceremonious ten year anniversary, many other coalition countries had begun withdrawing their deployments altogether. Georgian soldiers would often fight in their places - replacing other allied units as they withdrew.

Mccarrel’s discussion also focuses on the outcomes. He (2015, p. 9) shows that the deployment to Afghanistan secured Georgia a "seat at the table" (so-to-speak) at NATO, which they viewed as an important improvement in overall relations with the alliance. Mccarrel (2015, p. 9) finds this reward as an incentive for the Ministry of Defence to expand GAF’s initial operations to two battalions at the beginning of 2012.

Underling the role of Mikheil Saakashvili in sending Georgian troops to Afghanistan was another input Mccarrel has made. However, Mccarel (2015, p. 9) also adds, that Georgia continued to send soldiers to support ISAF, even after the successful transition of power to Bidzina Ivanishvili and his Georgian Dream coalition, indicates that, “on-the-whole, the decision was more strategic than personal”.

Noteworthy, ex-president of Georgia, President Saakashvili (2009) published an article in Wall Street Journal and explained his country’s presence in Afghanistan. Saakashvili (2009) is mainly focused on international security and stability. "Some might be surprised that a small country not yet in NATO - and partly occupied by more than 10,000 hostile Russian troops - would make this commitment to an Allied mission abroad. Let me explain why it makes perfect sense. We see ourselves as firmly allied with the values of the U.S. and the trans-Atlantic community. That is why we are sending serious forces, a massive battalion, and two light companies, with no restrictions on the kinds of missions and combat in which they can participate" (Saakashvili 2009).

Ex-president Saakashvili (2009) tried to portrait Georgia as an example for Afghanistan. For the sake of discussion, ex-president of Georgia presented a brief overview of his country’s contemporary history, in which Georgia was also considered as a failed state some years ago due to existing political and military tensions. However, through the assistance of West and profound reforms, reforms the country underwent serious changes. Hence, Saakashvili (2009) believed that based on the example of Georgia, a young democratic state, it can be argued that
there is a possibility of improving the overall situation in Afghanistan. Ex-president of Georgia had an aspiration over sharing its experience in order to improve Afghanistan's police forces and other institutions, which play a vital role in shaping the stable and transparent government. His main argument falls on sharing Georgia's own successful experience and providing assistance to both U.S. and Europe in order to promote peace and security in Afghanistan (Saakashvili, 2009).

In terms of fighting in Afghanistan, a Georgian scholar Salome Ugulava (2012) underlines the importance of the regional security issue. According to Ugulava, the instability in the country would consequently result in facts like 9/11. Therefore, the best solution to avoid similar occurring is in possession of the strong country and armed forces. In article "Why do we fight in Afghanistan" Ugulava also discusses Georgia's national interests in connection with the West. She believes that a perpetual dominance of the west in the international arena is vital for Georgia, because it is a tool for the latter to balance the Russian Federation. “The failure of West will directly result in Russia's increased power and influence over the Region” (Ugulava 2012). Ugulava is also pointing out the experience Georgian Armed Forces could obtain in Afghanistan by fighting in real combat. For her, an experience gained by taking part in a real combat could not be replaced by field exercises. Based on the overall security situation existing Georgia, Ugulava(2012) believes that the country needed deterring Armed Forces. Her final argument addresses to the NATO membership, and she believes that the participation in ISAF would Georgia, at some point, to become an Alliance member, because it demonstrates Georgia's willing to promote international peace and security (Ugulava, 2012).

As the literature review reveals, studies on Georgia's presence in Afghanistan is not vast and the actual small amount that was above presented mostly discusses the incentives and reasons primarily in terms of identities, as well as elite-driven perspective and security. However, Georgia's significant presence to that scope, namely being the largest non-NATO contributor to the Afghanistan missions is profoundly understudied. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to address this gap and answer what the rationale beyond Georgia's decision-makers choice over sending the huge number of servicemen in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Missions.
Chapter 4. Theoretical Framework

Rational Choice Theory

Stemming from the central objective of the research, the conceptual and theoretical framework of the dissertation is based on the study of Foreign Policy Analysis, which as a sub-field of International Relations. The foreign policy is the study of the course, impacts, or outcomes of a particular foreign policy decision. The justification behind the foreign policy is that it is an activity that is carried out on domestic and international levels and is affected by both factors (Flockhart, 2012, p. 88). From the decision-making perspective, the main point of the foreign policy analysis study is to review a specific foreign policy decision made by the particular international actor and then evaluate how this specific decision was adopted by the players (Stuart, 2010, p. 576).

Though, decision analysis and country's foreign policy choice do not lend themselves one straightforward definition. There can be derived several factors that affect the formulation and implementation of certain foreign policy objectives, that is true particularly in the case of Georgia's foreign policy. Different approaches and theoretical prisms can be utilized to analyze Georgia's foreign policy towards the missions launched by NATO in Afghanistan.

As mentioned in the literature mapping chapter, mainstream IR theories have already tried to explain Georgia's participation in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support missions, however, in this research, the issue is addressed differently. The study is mostly focused on numbers, which makes Georgian case unusual and exclusive. The aim of the study is to explain the rationale behind Georgian officials’ decision to send the biggest number of troops per capita in Afghanistan among NATO and non-NATO member states. For the purpose of this dissertation, rational actor model is employed to analyze the specific actions to obtain a credible answer to the research questions.

Mark Lichbach (2003, p. 38) states that the rationality is essential for individuals and that actors make decisions based on the existing desires and beliefs, which can be changed in case of empirical evidence. There are three assumptions about rationality. The first assumption suggests that actors make purposeful decisions to achieve specific goals. Second, rational actors have an opportunity to choose strategies from various alternatives that are available to
them. Third, actors are trying to achieve the best outcome by adopting the most advantageous alternative (Lichbach, 2003, p. 38).

The explanations suggested by the Rational Choice Theory imply that the desires and beliefs are the rationales behind the actions, as well as the causes of this action. At the beginning of an action, ideas are causing factors, and simultaneously ideas rationalize the actions. The concept of interest is another important aspect of the Rational Choice Theory. It implies that the actions are carried out for specific reasons and that these reasons stimulate the action. In other words, telling someone that making a particular decision is in their interest, gives this person a reason to make this certain decision (Lichbach, 2003, p. 35-36).

According to Lichbach (2003, p. 36), one of the most distinctive aspects of rationalists in comparison with other approaches is that the formers do not view generalizability as a solution, instead of studying the extensive and complex developments as a whole; they are using a rationalist approach that concentrates on actors making decisions at a decisive time. The rationalist approach allows researchers to divide a particular event into many parts, in order to discover the internal causal factors and to make relevant predictions (Lichbach, 2003, p. 36).

Furthermore, MacDonald’s (2003, p. 552) findings lend support to the claim that rational choice model as the theory of social behavior is a distinctive theoretical assumption in which actors behave according to the rationality assumption. The rationality assumption consists of three components: purposive action, consistent preferences, and utility maximization. The purposive action suggests that the actor's behavior is influenced by the goal-oriented actions rather than by the traditions or social acceptability. Consistent preferences suggest that the preferences are hierarchical, changeable, and are not controlled by the existence or nonexistence of fundamentally independent alternatives. Utility maximization implies that actors are more likely to choose the behavior that will provide the most predictable outcome for them MacDonald (2003, p. 552).

Mintz (2010, p. 57) goes to the same direction and states that the goal of the rational actor is to be able to distinguish policy options and assess their effects in order to maximize the result of the specific decisions.
Noteworthy, even though the origin of the rational actor model is in Economics, the rational actor model developed by Graham Allison in 1969, became parsimonious (Mintz, 2010, p. 57). The Rational Actor Model is a comprehensive model that includes the "decision-theoretic" component (Bendor and Hammond, 1992). According to Allison (1969, p. 705), Rational Actor Model includes the four main concepts that are used to analyze the decisions. These concepts include goals and objectives, alternatives, choice, and action. Goals and objectives are the actors' interests and beliefs that become preferences at the decision making process stage. The actors have several alternatives that they can choose from while making a decision. All these alternatives that are available for the actor obviously have their own consequences. The third principle, the choice suggests that actors can choose from the existing alternatives, the one that better suits their preferences at the decision-making process. In this case, action refers to a roughly calculated "solution to a strategic choice," while rationality is a reliable and a value-maximizing choice within the given limitations (Allison, 1969, p. 705).

For instance, during the Cuban Missile crisis, the United States was trying to pose sanctions on Cuba in terms of blockade, ultimatum and other options, which the US government weighed the advantages and disadvantages of all existing alternatives and chose ones that better served its interests. Hence, the actor chooses among the set of alternatives the one that better serves its interests. Consequently, in order to analyze the actor's decision one has to evaluate not only the actor's objectives but also alternatives, the prices, and benefits of each alternative and actor's willingness and unwillingness to take risks that come with each alternative (Allison, 1969, p. 696).

Organizational Behavior Model is another model suggested by Allison (1969, p. 699), which provides an extensive understanding of how organizations make and implement decisions. Based on the Organizational Behavior Model the foreign policy is the product of organization's behavior. The nation or the government chooses its foreign policy behavior. The actor, in this case, a government will choose an action that has more value-maximizing results.

Allison suggests different aspects of decision making. First and foremost, Allison (1969, p. 699) explains the institution, which is taking action, in other words, makes a decision. They use a special term national actor, which is the nation or government, conceived as a rational, unitary decision maker. This actor has one set of specified goals, one set of perceived options,
and a single estimate of the consequences that follow from each alternative. Decision made by the national actor is chosen in response to the strategic problem which the nation faces. Nations solely act in response to threats and probable benefits arising in the "international strategic market." As soon as the problems are identified, a nation or a national actor makes a static selection. A static selection accounts for the government officials' activities that are relevant to the problem and presents the "solution" chosen by the nation (Allison, 1969, p. 710).

In summary, Allison’s (1969) Rational Choice Model suggests that the actors should choose an alternative that has the best value-maximizing outcomes within the existing constraints. The Rationality in Rational Actor Model is that the actor sets goals, evaluates threats and problems and then finds the best solutions for them. This model allows researchers to depend on the following pattern of conclusion. If a government made a particular decision, it means that the action justified the end and that it was an optimal option. Identification of goals and objectives, finding solutions for problems, evaluation of alternatives and maximization of preferred outcomes are the factors that explain Georgia's significant presence in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support missions.
Chapter 5. Theory into Patrice

The following Chapter will present the goals, alternatives, threats and perspectives Georgia had for the time of making decision on deployment in 2009. According to the Rational Choice Theory, a national actor, by considering these factors, make a decision in order to maximize its outcome. The outcome is one of the most important aspects of the above mentioned theory; hence at the end of this chapter, the consequences of this decision will be presented.

5.1. Goals, Objectives, alternatives, threats and perspectives for Georgia existing in 2009

In 1991, after the collapse of Soviet Union and regaining independence, Georgia embraced western values of liberal democracy. However, due to the lack of strong democratic traditions, political culture in general, scarce financial resources and inherited domestic conflicts, Georgia could not develop any viable foreign and security policy. Under the very first president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, country pursued a utopian pan-Caucasian project, which did not make any success. Instead, a country faced two civil wars which resulted in two breakaway regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The next leader, Eduard Shevardnadze was committed to attain more internationalist foreign policy and make close ties to the west. However, despite initial rejection of the idea, he had to accept Russia’s influence through membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1993 (Kakachia&Minesashvili, 2015). According to Kakachia and Minesashvil (2015) “Shevardnadze's decision was influenced by his need to strengthen his position in the struggle for power against warlords and the ousted president as well as in ongoing territorial conflicts”.

When situation was relatively stabilized in the country, Georgia once again started looking for integration perspectives with the West. This pro-Western ideology was very much popular among younger generation of reformists in the ruling party – the Citizen's Union of Georgia. This process occurred parallel to the “othering” of Russia which failed to contribute to
conflict resolution despite all the compromises Georgia has made (Kakachia&Minesashvili, 2015).

In 1994, Georgia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) and in 1999 the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). Since then, balancing Russian power was perceived as a vital strategy for Georgia’s security. In this regard, aligning with the western powers and membership in their structures such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Union represented a means of achieving its security. However, despite several attempts and very obvious pro-western driven foreign policy, Georgia did not reach any tangible outcomes. It was only after the Rose Revolution that Georgia and the west, more precisely NATO and EU developed closer ties (Kakachia&Minesashvili, 2015).

In parallel with emerging political changes, Euro-Atlantic integration was set out as the main foreign policy priority. The National Security Concept of Georgia (cited in Kakachia&Minesashvili, 2015), the basic document that explains Georgia's fundamental national values and interests, adopted by parliament in July 2005, outlined full integration into Europe's political, economic and security systems and aspiration of the people of Georgia to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In parallel, relationship with Russia was worsening; each step toward the West was punished by Russian side by imposing embargos, deportation of Georgian migrants and energy blockade (Kakachia&Minesashvili, 2015).

The Rose revolution led several vital reforms which turned country as an example for new democracies. The government initiated political, security, agricultural and educational reforms, actively and efficiently combatted corruption and within two years it was successfully eliminated. According to Utiaishvili (2015), Saakashvili’s government succeeded in reforming the security sector, establishing the rule of law, showing dramatic economic growth and reestablishing a central power. It is interesting to note that World Bank (cited in Utiaishvili, 2015) named Georgia as “the world’s leading economic reformer” and “was in the top 25 countries in overall rankings for the ease of doing business”. Indeed, Saakashvili’s reforms transformed the country and it underwent profound changes (Utiaishvili, 2014).

Overall assessment of governmental activities since the Rose Revolution was amazing. The budget of the country began to increase dramatically and laws supporting economic liberalization were quickly adopted. The World Bank and the European Bank (cited in
Chipashvili, 2007, p.2) for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in their reports have declared Georgia to be one of the fastest developing countries.

Along with all these reforms, Georgia’s political elite hoped that country would finally get a Membership Action Plan from NATO in the upcoming Summit which was scheduled for April 2008. Neither Georgia nor Ukraine were given MAP and as the U.S. State Department officials have contended (Gallis, 2008, p.4), “only Germany opposed the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for the two governments because Berlin was concerned about a negative reaction in Moscow to putting two neighboring countries on the road to membership”. However, as it was later revealed, opposition against Georgia and Ukraine over delivering MAP was broader. According to CRS interviews (Gallis, 2008, p.4), in addition to Germany, representatives of France and at least two other governments indicated that they wish the MAP process to go more slowly”. Even nowadays, the names of these two countries, which opposed Georgia’s aspiration over obtaining MAP to Georgia and Ukraine, are not officially declared.

In a few months, a full scale war erupted between Russia and Georgia, which led dramatic consequences for the latter one. The territories under Russian control were enlarged. Perhaps most important of all, Russia was left in control of the last geographic obstacles between Tskinvali and the Kura valley (Gressel, 2015), “making effective Georgian defence against a renewed assault extremely difficult, if not impossible”. After formally recognizing the breakaway regions, Russia gradually increased its military presence in both regions. By insisting on its own interpretation of the six-point agreement, Russia denies the EU monitoring mission any access to the breakaway regions. Furthermore, Russia deported about 15,000 ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia and nearby villages which opened a gate for Russia to control the region more tightly than ever (Gressel, 2015).

In 2009, when the Georgian government made a decision to send troops in Afghanistan, as suggested evidence and facts reveal, the country had several important challenges both domestically and internationally. Georgia’s exceptional success in terms of economic and political reforms was at stake. Country failed to gain MAP, lost more territories, had to accommodate more refuges and most importantly, because of instability, country could not attract investments which would directly have a negative impact on Georgia.

An American scholar and team leader at the General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) and Senior Advisor to the Vice Rector of the National Defense Academy of Georgia,
professor Robert Hand (2017, March 28) finds this overall situation, existed critical time for Saakashvili with the development of democracy and democratic issues, structures here inside of Georgia very natural explanation for Georgian in general and particularly for the ministry of defence over sending huge number of troops abroad for their own goods (R. Hand, personal communication, March 28, 2017).

Indeed, Saakashvili’s regime was losing credibility in Western foreign policy circles. As Mccarrel (2015, p. 10) suggests, Saakashvili was increasingly viewed as unforeseeable and already opponent of democratic reforms. This view became particularly widespread after he violently suppresses peaceful demonstrations at the end of 2007. Furthermore, in some parts of the west and western media, he was very much publicly blamed for provoking Russia into war. In 2008-2009, one of the biggest allies of Georgia, the United States of America was also undergoing several changes. Ex-president Saakashvili had very close relationships with neocons like Senator John McCain, however the strategy and political views of newly elected President Obama had were drastically different. Clearly, a new direction was needed if ex-president Saakashvili wanted to continue to secure U.S. geopolitical sponsorship (Mccarel, 2015, p. 10).

According to the professor Robert Hand (2017, March 28), along with these internal problems and damaged imaged of ex-president Saakshvili and his country, the “five-days war” of 2008 and its outcome was one of the main influential factors in influencing Georgia’s decision over sending significant number of troops. “The decision was born out of lots of factors, not the least of which was in 2008. So we can never think of that decision as a stand-alone item. It had its root in the unfortunate problems of 2008 War with Russia. The War with Russia brought up several shortages not just in equipment but in training. So we cannot look at this as a stand-alone option, what we have to look at is the series of events that not led up to 2008 but resulted from 2008. So we knew that there were severe shortages in modern weaponry, we knew that there were problems with lots of systems underneath, like maintenance. We knew that the discipline and training of the Units of soldiers was not up to standard” (R, Hand, personal communication March 28, 2017).

Indeed, the same line and reasons are reflected in an official discourse. As former Minister of Defence of Georgia Bacho Akhalaia stated (Civil.ge, 2011), in 2009 Georgia was not only participating in NATO-led mission but was also recovering from the damages of 2008 War.
Akhalaia (Civil.ge, 2011) maintained that this particular experience would highly benefit Georgian Armed Forces, which was undergoing serious reforms at that time.

Yet in 2009, further development of Georgian Armed Forces was named as a primary explanation of Georgia’s huge contribution in International Security Assistance Force. As ex-president Saakashvili explained (Civil.ge, 2009), “This is a unique chance for our soldiers to receive a real combat baptism. We do not need the army only for showing it on military parades”.

Along with security issues, concerns on abandonment beyond Georgia’s motives, are also obvious. In 2008 US presidential election, Barack Obama from the Democratic Party defeated John McCain and became the US president. Given the fact that the US is a leading country of NATO without its support Georgia will never get its long desired membership in Alliance.

After the inauguration, ex-president Obama had promised that America would win friends everywhere, where under President Bush it had antagonists. President Obama's decision to scrap a missile-defense agreement, the Bush Administration negotiated with Poland and the Czech Republic, voiced fears that America would make antagonists where it had friends. That decision was welcomed in Russia and Germany but was criticized in Eastern European countries (Wall Street Journal, 2009). Obama was dedicated to normalize relationships with Russia, a country which is the biggest threat for Georgia. Therefore, concerns on being abandoned by the biggest ally which plays the most important role in NATO-Georgia’s relationship, appeared.

Brian Whitmore (2009) believes that Participation in ISAF operation could be perceived as a tool for Georgian side to keep close ties with new government and to make sure that The USA would not abandon Georgia. According to Whitmore (2009), Georgia had been desperately trying to attract attention of U.S. President Barack Obama and by sending military troops in Afghanistan, it may have finally succeeded. In fact, the Secretary of the State -Hillary Clinton visited to Georgia in 2010 and ensured its pro-American Leader that Obama administration’s improved relations with Russia would not affect U.S.–Georgia relations and the latter would not abandoned by its ally (Sheridan, 2010). Clinton’s statement shows that concerns on being abandoned were real, at least in government of Georgia.
As Georgian expert in American foreign policy Giorgi Khatiashvili states “2009 is after August war after Obama became a president and we have witnessed the politics of reset, with Russian-American reset. And one of the few things Georgia could do to be still interesting for NATO and US was to send troops to Afghanistan and show that we are not only demanding our security, we are also providers”(G. Khatiashvili, personal communication, April 2, 2017).

It is worthy of note, that the military support Georgia provides for NATO was perceived as an “ace” for Georgia on its path of Euro-Atlantic integration among Georgian political elite representatives (High ranked military personnel of General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces, personal communication, April 05, 2017). Although it is not a sufficient factor for Georgia’s eventual membership in NATO, politicians and experts were attempting to evaluate this decision as a necessary in the process of attaining this goal. As the scholar in small states studies, Tornike Turmanidze says, “The main factor behind this decision was to help Georgia become NATO member as soon as possible. First, the decision to send troops in Afghanistan helped Georgia to show NATO that it does not only require security but also provides support and security for NATO missions. Within our military capabilities, we can help bigger countries to reach their security goals. Given the situation, that there are not a lot of countries that want to participate or send a large number of troops in this type of missions. Georgia took this step to show NATO and US that Georgia can support international security. Generally speaking, there is always a question of why small countries choose to get involved in such missions with bigger countries, the main purpose is to gain some sort of benefits” (T. Turmanidze, personal communication, April 06, 2017).

By contributing to the ISAF and RSM missions, Georgia somehow morally obliges NATO to get help if needed (T. Turmanidze, personal communication, April 06, 2017). Turmanidze (2017, April 06) believes, that Georgia sacrifice certain things so that in return the country can get the benefits, for instance being NATO member. “In our case, there is no quid pro quo benefit for small countries but this attempt, sometimes successful or unsuccessful, for Georgia was to show NATO member countries that it deserves and has a strong ambition to become the member of the Alliance”. Turmanidze (2017, April 06) deems that although there is no guarantee for Georgia that NATO will help Georgia when it is needed, it still give them a moral responsibility to show necessary support.

The rationale behind Georgia’s aspiration towards integration in North Atlantic Treaty organization can be found in the structure and objective of above mentioned block. NATO is
a political and military organization, with the purpose of defending the freedom and security of member countries. As a result, for Georgia becoming the NATO member is guarantying its security. Most importantly, according to the Article 5, the military attack on an individual NATO member state is considered as an attack towards the Alliance, which has a right to engaged in self-defensive military actions in order to guarantee the overall security of the Alliance (Summers, 2010, p. 16). Considering the fact, that Georgia is constantly under the direct threat coming from Russia, the importance of becoming NATO member is quite obvious. Hence, all means, including participation in ISAF and other NATO-led missions seen as a part of long way towards the Alliance membership, is logical.

The former secretary general of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Civil.ge, 2012) also highlighted the importance of Georgia’s contribution in Afghanistan. However, Rasmussen stressed that participating in NATO-led operations was no guarantee for the NATO membership. Ex-secretary general added that Georgia still had a long way to go to become the full member of the Alliance (Civil.ge, 2012). Although membership of NATO is Georgia’s initial goal and the best outcome, the process on this path also brings tons of benefits. For instance, cooperating with NATO helps Georgia to strengthen democratic values, to conduct democratic reforms, especially in the Defence sector and overall to create a secure environment in the country. For Georgia being a member of NATO does not only mean a secure environment but also an opportunity for it to promote and support international peace and security. By participating in both NATO-led missions Afghanistan and Kosovo operation Georgia has shown its willingness to support the international security (Civil.ge, 2011).

Indeed, those factors were later once again reflected in the “National Security Concept”. Among the several interests of the country, ensuring territorial integrity was the top priority. In this direction, strengthening state Defence capabilities was regarded as vital. Georgian officials stressed to actively work on reinforcing its Armed Forces, enhancing Defence, collaborating with the international organizations to promote peace and security. Georgia has undergone serious Defence reforms in order to meet NATO standards (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011, p. 6). As a result of the Defence reforms and modernization of its Armed Forces Georgia has the ability to participate in international military operations, which enables the country to strengthen its military forces. Noteworthy, the role of Georgia’s participation in Afghanistan to that scope was highlighted in strengthening Georgian Military Forces. By participating in multinational anti-terrorist, peacekeeping, search and rescue and
humanitarian operations, Georgia acquires valuable experience, but more importantly, contributes to Euro-Atlantic security. Georgia, as a member of the international anti-terrorist coalition, contributes to the establishment of peace and stability in different parts of the world (National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011, p.6).

Last but not least, by sending its troops to Afghanistan, Georgia showed some regional - oriented strategy. As it was already mentioned, Georgia is located on the crossroads of the West and the East and The North and the South, so any regional or international changes in the current system is easily reflected on the country. Securing Afghanistan, which is not geographically far from Georgia and defeating radical Islam there should be in a direct interest of Georgia. Ex- defence Minister Davit Sikharulidze (2017, May 04), who served at the office for the time of deployment, believes that nowadays, national borders cannot solely protect the security of states any more. The threat of terrorism is something very global and creates similar challenges for Georgia as it does for any other country. Hence, Georgia’s participation in ISAF could also be evaluated in the prism of securing international security (D. Sikharulidze, personal communication, May 04, 2017).

As above mentioned facts show, in 2009, Georgia did not have a lot of alternatives, it could either adjust damages, have demoralized army, collapsed economy, problems with democracy, damaged prestige on international level and high risks of isolation from international society or it could make a dramatic change and find solutions for all mentioned problems. Sending troops to Afghanistan could work as a solution for above mentioned problems. As Robert Hand stated (2017), “in some ways, it was the most logical decision Georgia could make” (R. Hand, personal communication, March 28, 2017).

As for the choice, along with sending troops to Afghanistan, Georgia made a very strategic decision by deploying them to the most dangerous province – Helmand and on other provinces with French and German military contingents. To recap, these were the countries which publicly opposed MAP for Georgia and Ukraine in April 2008.

Indeed, these combat-oriented missions were intended to prove that Georgia could not only be a NATO partner, but a net contributor to the over-all security and operational capacity of the alliance. This became a priority of the government given the precarious situation at home vis-à-vis the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia that were causing significant
doubt among many NATO members over whether Georgia’s complex security situation would weaken the alliance if Georgia was admitted (Mccarrel, 2015, p. 8).

5.2. Outcome – Explain the Consequences of Georgia’s Significant Deployment in ISAF and RSM

By participating in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support missions, Georgia partially achieved its initial goals and objectives. As the shreds of evidences, suggested in the previous chapter have revealed, Georgia’s huge presence, so being the leading per capita contributor among NATO and non-NATO member states since 2012, aimed to restore military’s reputation after Russian - Georgian war, develop Georgian army by having a real combat experience, secure stability of Afghanistan and the region itself, and gain Membership Action Plan or anything systematically similar, which would lead the eventual membership. Certainly, it is very hard to measure attainments mathematically and in numbers, because the process is still undergoing and some of the benefits will have a real outcome in the future.

One of the first objectives, obtaining real combat battle experience and through that developing Georgian Armed Forces is assuredly attained. Noteworthy, in the last six years, the number of active duty personnel has been static and consisted of 37,000 soldiers (Kunchulia, 2015).

Since 2009, more than 15500 Georgian soldiers gained real combat experience in ISAF and RSM missions (High ranked military representatives of the General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces, personal communication, April 05, 2017). This is very important especially for countries like Georgia, which faces a perpetual threat coming from Russia and fear of renewing armed conflict between these two countries. According to the professor at Tbilisi State University, Tornike Turmanidze, in order to be ready for combat, the army needs to be constantly in action. “As a result taking part in this mission was very beneficial for GAF in order to gain combat experience. Furthermore, the mission helped GAF to gain experience of working and fighting along with other NATO members” (T. Turmanidze, personal communication, April 06, 2017). In fact, participating in peacekeeping operations such as ISAF and RSM enabled Georgian military personnel to gain useful experience. As one of the high ranked military of Georgian Armed Forces’ General Staff states (April 05, 2017),
through participation in international operations, Georgian servicemen gain professional military theoretical and practical knowledge and get unique combat experience. “Taking part in international missions alongside with military forces of NATO member-states significantly contributes to the development of Defence capacity of Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) and the achievement of full compliance with NATO STANAGs and operational requirements” (High ranked military representative of the General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces, personal communication, April 05, 2017). Indeed, along with gaining a real combat experience, Georgian armed forces have to have the certain qualification and meet NATO standards in order to be able to accomplish its membership.

Another tangible outcome Georgia has reached by participating in ISAF and RSM missions with that huge presence is the restoration of Georgian Armed Forces prestige. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, Georgian soldiers were deployed in one of the most dangerous areas, more accurately in Helmand. According to Robert Hand (2017, March 28), Georgian soldiers operate extremely well with the Americans, Germans and French contingent and they show rest of the universe that even if you are not NATO member you can still play a vital role in attaining common security objectives and be part of something that is so much bigger.

Yet in 2013, on the farewell ceremony of Georgian soldiers, as the former ambassador of the United States Richard Norland explained, the Georgian military are well-prepared to fulfill assigned tasks perfectly. He also added that Georgian soldiers have a good reputation and their high combat skills are perfectly demonstrated while performing the mission (Drozoff, 2013).

In November 2016, due to Georgian servicemen bravery, a terrorist attack was repelled. Because of their rapid and professional actions, Germany’s General Consulate stuff was moved to a safer place, and worsening of situation was avoided. Such events happen frequently, and the quality of Georgian servicemen is praised on every NATO summits, during official meetings and visits (Morrison, 2016).

Another primary goal, ensuring Georgia’s security can also be categorized in attainment section since there was no full-scale escalation between Russia and Georgia since 2008. As ex-minister of defence outlines(2017, May 04), Georgia is not a secured country yet, because a ceasefire agreement exists between Russia and Georgia, but the absence of any Peace
Agreements highly worsens the country’s security level. In his opinion, the current stability in Georgia is directly resulted from participating in above mentioned missions and being a NATO partner country. Putting Georgia on the international political radar as one of the most committed states to the international peace and security deters threat coming from the North (D. Sikharulidze, personal communication, May 04, 2017).

Although neither membership nor Membership Action Plan was given to Georgia, so far, several huge steps were made in that direction and relationship between NATO and Georgia and the US and Georgia is the strongest since Georgia’s independence.

Soon, after the deployment, a very first official telephone call was conducted between president Saakashvili and Obama and fear of abandonment was removed. Ex-president Obama thanked Georgia for significant contribution in Afghanistan and once again reiterated U.S support over Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. This was a clear message from the U.S that despite the “reset” politics, America stayed supportive and one of the closest and strongest allies of Georgia (Civil.ge, 2010).

Soon in April 2011, NATO-Georgia Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers took on the first joint statement that conveyed Allied states’ assistance to Georgia in regard to NATO integration and its regional unity and independence. Notably, the fact that a very first joint statement between Georgia and NATO was adopted after Georgia’s significant deployment in ISAF mission highlights the role this particular decision had played (Office of the Minsiter of Georgia on European & Euro-Atlantic Integration, 2017).

On December 7, 2011 during the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting the final statement in regards of the Alliance’s relations with the partner states was adopted, in which Georgia, for the very first time, was mentioned as an aspirant country along with Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Office of the Minister of Georgia on European & Euro- Atlantic Integration, 2017). Among Georgian political elites representatives, this step was regarded as a huge victory for Georgia.

In 2012, at the NATO Chicago Summit, Georgian representatives took part in all meetings that were open for partner countries. During the Summit, Georgia's substantial contribution to the Euro-Atlantic security was once again highlighted. It is also worth mentioning that Georgia hosted the three North Atlantic Cooperation Council visits in 2008, 2011 and 2013,
none of the partner countries have ever hosted this number of visits (Office of the Minsiter of Georgia on European & Euro- Atlantic Integration, 2017).

Gradually, because of its significant commitment, Georgia obtained a sit on a table, which gave a chance to the official Tbilisi to observe what NATO members were thinking about Georgia. Noteworthy, since war 2008, Georgia was actively trying to assure its allies to use more clear and direct wording over Russia’s aggression. In fact, the progress was achieved immediately. On June 5 2013, the former NATO Secretary - General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that NATO greatly valued Georgia’s support in NATO-led operations. The former Secretary- General also openly criticized Russian military presence in Georgia (Office of the Minsiter of Georgia on European & Euro- Atlantic Integration, 2017).

NATO labeled the presence of Russian military forces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as it is - an occupation. However, it is worth mentioning that many European states failed to address this matter as an occupation. Especially, considering the situation in Crimea and Ukraine, it was vital that the Alliance sent a clear message towards Russia. Moreover, NATO actively assured support for Georgia’s territorial integrity and called on Russia to not to use force against Georgia and to repeal its recognition of the breakaway regions as independent. NATO has also raised concerns about Russia’s military buildup in the breakaway regions and called on Russia to permit international observers and humanitarian groups free access to the regions. (Coffey, 2016)

An expert in American foreign policy Khatiashvili also sees the role of Georgia’s significant contribution in positive changes for Georgia over alliance’s wording towards Russia. “Every pro-Georgian argument that is voiced on the NATO table is based on the issues that we are fighting their wars in Afghanistan, so we are providing our friends with Most importantly” (G. Khatiashvili, personal communication, April 05, 2017).

The next success between NATO - Georgia relations was achieved during Wales Summit in 2014. On September 5, at the NATO Summit, instead of long-awaited MAP Georgia was granted a “Substantial Package” (Janashia, 2014).

NATO officials positively evaluated Georgia’s progress since the 2008 Bucharest summit and declared that granting a “substantial package” was an additional boost to Georgia’s integration in the Alliance. The substantial package contains the defense and security related
capacity building initiative with an objective to support aspirant countries to promote international security and stability by sharing the Alliance expertise.

Subsequently, the Substantial Package was designed to improve Georgia’s Defence abilities, to support Ministry of Defence of Georgia to carry out defence and security reforms and modernize its defence capabilities. The package also aimed to enhance the capabilities of Georgian Armed Forces by including them in NATO trainings. Professor Robert Hand (2017, March 28) believes that “Substantial Package” most importantly established international bona fides for Georgia and therefore it opened the gate for NATO membership and enabled more space for working with NATO countries and working closely with the US.

Indeed, another tangible outcome Georgia has reached through the significant contribution to the Afghanistan missions and with its compliance process with NATO standards is the democratization of Georgian Armed Forces. Georgia has truly shown a further desire to democratise the military and to develop a democratically run country with a democratically characterised military. That will gradually lead the change of mindset among soldiers, and a long-term benefit will be translated into Western thinking, more progressive style military (R. Hand, personal communication, March 28, 2017). In fact, the same factor is also highlighted by ex-minister of defence. Sikharulidze (personal communication, May 04, 2017) believes that nowadays, at the Georgian government, Ministry of Defence is one of the most westernized institutions.

Furthermore, relationships with Georgia and NATO were positively extended on Wales summit. Based on the NATO decision, in the framework of the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, Georgia became the member of the “Interoperability Platform” and the “Opportunity Partner Group” together with Australia, Finland, Jordan and Sweden (Office of the Minister of Georgia on European & Euro-Atlantic Integration, 2017).

After the NATO Wales Summit, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visited Georgia and communicated a number of key messages. First, U.S. Secretary of Defense stated that U.S. was planning to provide a considerable contribution to the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package and promised that Washington would continue the bilateral cooperation with Georgia. Additionally, On September 2, in Tallinn, the former U.S. President Barack Obama highlighted that NATO would provide more assistance to Georgia (Janashia, 2014).
Second, Hagel (cited in Janashia, 2014) stated that given the situation in Ukraine, were caused by denial of MAP, hence he concentrated on the Georgia’s “special partnership” status, which would give Georgia new choices, new expansibility, and new opportunities.

Those initiatives, being part of “Interoperability Platform” and “Opportunity Partner Group” allowed Georgia to take part in strategic level discussions with NATO, also participate in NATO exercises and get more Georgian staff officers in the Alliance structures (Janashia, 2014).

In the Final Communiqué of the Wales Summit, Georgia’s Alliance membership was once again reaffirmed, consequently endorsing the NATO decision take in Bucharest. Apart from this, the final Communiqué specified that Georgia's relation with the Alliance covers all the necessary instruments for Georgia to continue moving towards membership. These instruments were the NATO-Georgia Commission, the Annual National Programme, and the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package. On this meeting, Georgia was once again named as one of the most major contributors to the Euro-Atlantic security, because of its huge involvement in NATO-led operations( Office of the Minister of Georgia on European & Euro-Atlantic Integration, 2017).

Noteworthy, it was the first time when the Allies confirmed that Georgia has all the necessary instruments to get ready for the Alliance membership. Furthermore, the Allies once again stressed their promise in regards to Georgia’s NATO membership that was given at the 2008 Bucharest Summit (Office of the Minister of Georgia on European & Euro-Atlantic Integration, 2017).

Soon, in the framework of the NATO-Georgia Substantial Package, the Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC) were established in Georgia. The Allied Command Transformation has been actively working to associate the JTEC with the Alliance training and exercise work. Additionally, the fact that there are more the than 30 allied and partner states security experts that are assisting Georgia in carrying out the Defence and security reforms. Moreover, the Defence Institution Building School was launched in Georgia in 2016. The School is open to NATO partners and is holding NATO-Georgia trainings and exercise (Office of the Minister of Georgia on European & Euro-Atlantic Integration, 2017).
Georgia’s significant contribution is always on daily agenda during the talks held between Georgian and the Alliance officials. In 2017, during the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission, a current Secretary of the NATO Stoltenberg highlighted Georgia’s progress regarding implementing the “Substantial NATO-Georgia Package” (Agenda.ge, 2017). Stoltenberg(Agenda.ge, 2017) also stressed that NATO would continue to work closely and to offer the practical instruments in order to help Georgia become the Alliance member and it strongly supports Georgia’s territorial integrity.

Along with extensive cooperation with NATO, Georgia’s bilateral relationships with NATO-member states, especially with the US and France has moved to the new level. In 2016, on Warsaw summit, Georgia’s significant contribution was once again praised, and alliance made a promise that member states (including France) would assist Georgia to develop air defence and surveillance systems. According to the joint statement made after Warsaw summit (Civil.ge, 2016a), all of these initiatives are directed to develop Georgia’ Defence capabilities and compatibility with NATO standards and to help Georgia eventually become an Alliance member.

According to the former Minister of Defence of Georgia Tinatin Khidasheli, the NATO-Warsaw Summit decision would help Georgia to improve its Defence capabilities especially by incorporating Georgia’s Air Defence system with the Alliance (Civil.ge, 2016).

Possessing an access on modern defence technologies is has been a big issue form Georgia since August war, 2008. Most of the countries of the Euro-Atlantic zone unofficially banned the selling of weaponry to Georgia (Civil.ge, 2016b). In 2016, a memorandum was signed between the US and Georgia, which officially lifted abovementioned ban over purchasing military equipment. This was a huge step for Georgia since the country cannot develop its military sector without having modern technologies.

According to the Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili (Civil.ge, 2016b), the memorandum was focused on expanding the security and defence collaboration. The memorandum also included more joint trainings and exercises that were vital for enhancing Georgia’s Defence competences. Thus, the document is another endorsement of the strategic partnership between Georgia and the U.S (Civil.ge, 2016b). Indeed, an existing bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Georgia is exceptional. As Michael Carpenter (cited in Tskhvitava, 2016), deputy assistant secretary of Defence stated, since 2008 has already
received more than 481 million dollars, as a part of the bilateral security assistance, in order to help its flexibility against foreign forces.

Another initiative developed between US-Georgia relationships was “The Noble Partner” (Tskhvitava, 2016), which is a joint U.S. and Georgian-NATO exercise. The goal of the exercise is to adjust the Georgian soldiers to the NATO standards and to prepare for future NATO missions, which includes a situational training, a field training and a live fire exercises.

This exercise is a vital part of Georgia's preparation for its light infantry unit support to the NATO Response Force (NRF), which also increases Georgia’s territorial self-defense ability. Along with the U.S. and Georgia, British troops have also participated in the “Nobel Partner” (Tskhvitava, 2016).

As the current evidence reveal, strong partnership between Georgia and the U.S. are further extended under the power of newly elected president Trump. Recently, members of the Congress of the United States (2017) sent an official letter to the President Trump and asked to more actively assist Georgia and continue “U.S. historical support for Georgia’s bid join NATO”. They explained the role of the country with less than four million people play in military operations launched in Afghanistan and named Georgia as one of the most committed and reliable U.S. partners (Congress of the United States, 2017).

Indeed, on May 07, 2017, Trump’s administration (Tabula, 2017) published an act in which America prohibits financial support towards the states which recognize the independence of Georgia’s breakaway regions. Furthermore, during the very last visit of Prime-Minister Kvirikashvili to the White House, Vice-President Mike Pence and President Trump once again thanked Georgia for its significant contribution to Afghanistan and assured the US sponsorship (the White House, 2017).

The suggested facts disclose that neither Membership Action Plan, nor membership itself was achieved since Georgia’s deployment to International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Missions. In fact, Turmanidze(2017, April 06) sees this attitude conceptually wrong, since he believes that that Georgia through taking part in ISAF mission could never guarantee membership of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Although, taking part in the mission did not allow Georgia to take big steps towards joining NATO, Turmnidze does not want to underestimate smaller steps Georgia has made through this process and this particular study
has shown. In total, he believes that taking part in ISAF mission was successful for Georgia, for instance, the establishment of joint training facilities and training enabled the country to have connections with the Alliance. Being part of support mission put Georgia on the radar of international communities. It can be said that participating in ISAF mission was successful for Georgia but towards NATO membership is still long. Georgia’s strong commitment to supporting missions is a way of showing that Georgia is very serious on becoming NATO member (T. Turmanidze, personal communication, April 06, 2017).

It can be said that Georgia has shown its commitment to NATO and its member states by participating in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Missions significantly. Country has launched various reforms in the field of defence in order to reach comparability with NATO standards. Although success reached by Georgia is necessary for eventual NATO membership, there are some other sufficient factors. First and foremost, a political will from other 28 NATO member states. Without their support, Georgia will never become a member of NATO (D. Sikharulidze, personal communication, May 04, 2017).

The absence of any actual consequences over NATO membership creates skepticism in public. Citizens of Georgia frequently raise questions over sending Georgian Armed Forces to Afghanistan. In fact, Georgia’s commitment to supporting international forces has come at a price. Since 2010, 31 Georgian servicemen have died, all in the Helmand campaign, and over 400 wounded, including 35 amputees. (Georgian Association, 2016).

An official discourse towards this issue is very clear. Politicians from position or opposition publicly state that Georgia’s significant presence in Afghanistan is vital. Yet in 2011, leader of the one of the oppositional party, the Member of Parliament, MR. Targamadze (2011) claimed that Georgia’s security and stability is guaranteed by “being closer and more integrated into the network of our partners and allies”. Fighting along with British, French, American and other allies for common good increases the security of Georgia and deters threats from its neighbors. (Targmadaze, 2011).

Ex-President Saakashvili (Civil.ge, 2012) was very sharp in his official speeches in this term. “Those who say that we should not be part of this ISAF operation are footmen of Putin and of Russia no matter if they state that they support NATO and EU. If we want to have the state, we should have the army and if we want to have the army we should be in the international combat missions no matter how painful it might be. Those who say that we should not turn
the country into a battlefield, they forget one thing and they hide one thing from the public – our country has already been turned into a battlefield by the invader of our country,”.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

The primary objective of the dissertation was to outline and explore Georgia’s significant participation in International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Missions, study the factors and determinants that affect deploying the largest per capita contingent choice among NATO and non-NATO member states. As the review of the existing literature revealed, the majority of the authors discuss Georgia’s foreign policy focusing on the historical foundation of the identity of Georgia, elite-driven policy, therefore leaving a gap in the academic literature to further analyse the issue. Moreover, the dissertation aimed to study Georgia’s foreign policy towards the specific dimension Georgia’s deployment in Afghanistan rather than Euro-Atlantic foreign policy in general.

As the analysis of the documents, speeches and the relevant foreign policy behaviour showcased, the component of security and identity are related. However they only explain the reasons behind the deployment and fail to answer why Georgia makes such a huge contribution.

Georgia made a bid on integration in NATO in 1994. Due to political and economic instability, the country was unable to reach any tangible success in relationship with NATO in the 90s. Later, after the Rose Revolution, integration in the Western institutions gained a new momentum and prevailed on the foreign policy agenda. Country has shown dramatic progress in terms economy, establishing strong political institutions, increasing prestige globally and managed to be set as an example for all post-Soviet states regarding embracing democracy and respecting democratic values.

It was hoped in Georgia that in 2008, in April, Georgia would be given a Membership Action Plan, but as it was later revealed, certain countries, including Germany and France showed some skepticism, and by refusing MAP for Georgia and Ukraine, they attempted to avoid any confrontation with Russia. Later, Russian-Georgian war was followed and all progress Georgia had reached, its stable market for foreign investment, as well as the credibility of the ruling party, was at stake. After the defeat with Russian Army, Georgian Armed forces were demoralized, more territories were occupied which led more refugees flow and further political and economic instability. Internationally, one of the prominent allies of Georgia, the
U.S. started a policy of “reset” and rational fears of abandonment appeared among representatives of Georgian political elites. Georgia had to find a solution for above-mentioned problems in order to reach its goals and objectives which were directly connected to the security and restoring territorial integrity, developing its army capacities and ensuring allies’ sponsorship.

Hence, deployment of the extraordinary huge number of troops by a small state, with population of approximately 4 million could work as a solution for existing threats and challenges Georgia had to cope with in 2009.

In fact, one of the primary goals of Georgia - developing its military forces and obtaining real combat skill are certainly achieved. Around 15500 soldiers have already been deployed in both International Security Assistance Force and Resolute Support Mission. A country with only 37000 active duty servicemen has managed to give a real combat experience to almost half of its contingent.

By deploying Georgian soldiers in especially hard and dangerous provinces of Afghanistan, Georgia has shown its citizens, as well as the international society that the former ones are capable of handling even the hardest tasks they are assigned to and are able to reach the desired outcome. On every meeting held in Georgia or abroad, the bravery and professionalism of Georgian soldiers are constantly highlighted; hence the reputation of Georgian soldiers is restored and their professionalism highly appreciated. Indeed, Georgia has been strongly committed to going beyond being just a beneficiary of efforts to achieve international stability and security. Georgia has proven that it is a reliable and capable partner serving in the most dangerous areas of Afghanistan without caveats and sharing the disproportionally high burden of contribution.

Fears of abandonment from the most prominent ally - the U.S., stemming from the policy of “reset” towards Russia, immediately disappeared. Soon after the deployment, ex-president Obama thanked Georgia for its significant contribution, demonstrated, inter alia, by an official visit of the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during which she once again channeled the message of Washington’s assurance to a small Caucasian state regarding assistance and support.
Ensuring security and stability of Afghanistan and of the whole region was one of the goals Georgia tried to achieve by its significant presence under the flag of the NATO mission. Although this goal is not fully achieved yet, Afghanistan is much stronger, with more stable governmental institutions and armed forces than it was in 2009. The mission is still going on, and the consequences will more easily be analysed when all NATO and non-NATO member states withdraw their forces and handover the power to the Afghan military personnel. In fact, this particular aim does not solely depend on Georgia and the success or failure of the whole mission is very much due to combined effort on all participant nations.

After the 2012 elections, even though the new government’s foreign policy direction was debated, Euro-Atlantic choice remained prevalent, and the process initiated by the previous government was successfully continued and even intensified by the “Georgian Dream”. Therefore, the foreign policy towards the North Atlantic Treaty Organization gained new characteristics and also moved to the new level.

Although the one of the most important explanations beyond Georgia’s significant deployment, an aspiration towards NATO membership has not been fully achieved yet, the progress above-mentioned stakeholders have reached since 2009 in their relationships, shows a tremendously positive trend. Despite the fact that Georgia has been given the Membership Action Plan neither during Bucharest, Chicago, Wales and Warsaw summits, the country has strong relations with NATO that includes the Annual National Program, the NATO–Georgia Commission (NGC) and the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package. The latter one has been significantly beneficial for the Georgian Armed Forces.

Moreover, Georgia is part of the NATO Response Force and is one of the five countries of the Enhanced Opportunity Partners’ Group - the most interoperable and reliable partners of NATO.

To conclude, by sending troops to international peacekeeping missions, Georgia: (a) became not only a beneficiary of international stability, but an active contributor to global security; (b) Georgian militaries have immensely increased their capacity through intense trainings and, currently, Georgia is at the highest level in terms of compatibility with NATO standards.

Along with strong ties obtained in the relationship with NATO, Georgia’s bilateral cooperation with NATO members’ states, particularly with France and the U.S. has
strengthened. An informal ban over purchasing weaponry was lifted, and Georgia made an agreement to buy long desired air defense system.

It is profoundly hard to measure to what extent Georgia has reached its goals, however as the study has revealed, there are various tangible and long-term benefits future generations will later embrace. Based on the facts and evidences, Georgia’s extraordinary huge presence in ISAF and RSM have definitely served to country’s interests, increased its defence capacities, prestige globally and most importantly moved its relationship with NATO to the new, the closest level.

For the future research, it will be interesting to create data of soldiers served in Afghanistan and observe to what extent they developed Georgian Armed Forces. How many of them stayed in the army and how they transferred knowledge and skills obtained in Afghanistan to their fellows.


**Online**


Annex I

Interview with an American scholar and team leader at the General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) and Senior Advisor to the Vice Rector of the National Defense Academy of Georgia professor Robert Hand (March 28, 2017).

Q: How would you describe Georgia’s decision over sending troops to Afghanistan in 2009?

A: The decision was born out of lots of factors, not the least of which was in 2008. So we can never think of that decision as a stand-alone item. It had its root in the unfortunate problems of 2008 the War with Russia. The war with Russia brought up several shortages not just in equipment but in training. So we cannot look at this as a stand-alone option, what we have to look at is the series of events that not led up to 2008 but resulted from 2008. So we knew that there were severe shortages in modern weaponry, we knew that there was problems with lots of systems underneath, like maintenance. We knew that the discipline and training of the Units of soldiers was not up to standard. And all this was coming at a critical time with Saakashvili and with the development of democracy and democratic issues, structures here inside of Georgia that made it very natural for the Georgian ministry of defence to outwards and see where we can import or get the best help from. That coincided at the same time with the US president election and everything else that was happening and the US taking very much of an outreach position to places like Georgia and Ukraine where there were always good intentions with Russia. At this particular case, before 2008 there was a lot of work in Georgia done with Turks, for example, and a lot of close ties but some of that work even though it wanted good work and good things done proved in 2008 not to be good enough. So the Ministry of Defence made a decision that, well the US is biggest and best player on the block in military issues and that sort of how, the US started bringing to the game lot of foreign assistance money to Georgia and part of that part of the mechanism was to justify this in the form of spending money to help Georgia modernise and professionalise its military and you do that by becoming part of these contingency operations. An Afghanistan being a NATO operation, which was also a stability deciding factor for Georgia, would fit the bill pretty much perfectly. So in some ways, it was the most logical decision Georgia could make.
Q: What kind of geopolitical challenges did Georgia have to face when making a decision over sending troops?

A: We still have on-going problems; we have the Russian political in reach, shall we say, into Georgia, of course, we are talking about Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We still have tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. You still have other geopolitical threats that are of different nature not militarily, for example, you have a certain amount of dependence energy dependence, luckily here in Georgia, we have great hydroelectric facilities but you still have a dependence on oil. You have a very good neighbour next door Azerbaijan, which makes it a little bit easier, plus you have a pipeline running through all the way through from Baku and it makes energy dependence a little bit less of a problem. So you have to look at a certain amount of petrochemical dependence as being a liability for geopolitical security, you have an economic vulnerability, in that, there is really no heavy industry in Georgia at this point in time. This is a problem because without heavy industry, yes you do have heavy industries, you have places that do things and built machines. But without heavy industries more modern machines needed to do the building of structures and building the facilities and to grow the economy. You are always importing so there is the economic liability for you. You have an agricultural liability, which is a geo problem. The problem is that you have a lot of small holdings that are left over and with these small holdings they cannot use the efficiency of scale that could be done with a larger holding. You also have a problem, most of the land is used in grape and wine production. And the argument there is well we are doing this because we can produce wine its good quality wine and we can export it, that’s true but the difficulty in exporting Georgian wine is that the competition is very high, in the one thing you think you have a comparative advantage. The last thing could run Georgia into the problem would be climate change. The big problem is that Georgia is based in a dry area relatively and has its water resources based on snow melt in Caucasus; Tbilisi Sea is a good example of difficult is to maintain the water levels adequately.

Q: How did sending troops to Afghanistan help Georgia to overcome these security challenges?

A: In a direct way it did not help, directly sending troops out of the country don't necessarily help you. In many other ways indirectly it helped. First, it was a mechanism for better training and professionalisation. Some of those soldiers that went did come back and stayed in the military and continued. It was also an indirect benefit because it established international bona
fides for Georgia and therefore it opened the gate for NATO membership, and working with NATO countries and working closely with the US. The other indirect benefit is that it showed a further desire to democratise the military and to develop a democratically run country with a democratically characterised military. That’s a huge difference because it’s the change of mindset and therefore over time the decision would eventually have to lead to where we are today, which is a much more western thinking progressive style military. So there were a lot of benefits that did not immediately show but showed in next generations.

Q: How different Georgia’s participation in ISAF and RSM missions is in comparison with other states?

A: Georgia is, I think, the second largest contingency in ISAF of non-NATO contributing nations. The Georgians operate extremely well with the Americans, extremely well with the Germans and French and they are well spread, and I guess, what I can say is that Georgians have honourably taken their position as non-NATO contributors and in many ways their whole dedication to this mission has become on par with the NATO members so they play the key role in that they are proof to everybody else out there that even if you are not NATO member you can still play the game and help and be part of something that is so much bigger.

Q: How does this difference help Georgia to reach its security goals?

A: The dedication to fulfilling this contingency mission as part of NATO-led or American-led contingency mission pushes the respect, the international prestige of Georgian military higher, so by doing that and by learning the procedure and sharing the military information and education by improving its quality and more closely approaching that of its NATO allies. All of that contributes to the improvement of the quality of the forces overall and in the margins of those contingency operations remember that there is a lot of that goes on, that constantly goes on, to support the continuing educations and the continuing training. With all of these military delegations and contractors and improving the facilities like the JTEC centre. All of these things contribute to the overall part. And it’s all part of why Georgia is looked at in a special light when you say contingency mission and that is important in an international relations game.

Q: Why did Georgia remain troops in Afghanistan for the Resolute Support Mission after ISAF mission?
A: I can’t answer this authoritatively because it was a political decision. But from perspective, the natural condition of showing and wanting to be part of NATO by this time you have to remember the progress had moved along and we are looking for MAP, and we are looking for continued security and do not forget even back then there was still problems in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, so these problems were all playing on the minds of the politicians and as a result they are bringing historical content in, and it made sense to.

Q: From your point of view, how would you evaluate overall Georgia’s participation in those missions: was it successful, did Georgia reach its goals or what is your point?

A: I think for the immediate purpose that is was meant to be it has been super successful in proving to the world Georgia's resolve, proving to NATO Georgia's desire, proving to the allies that Georgia is a legitimate and serious partner in doing the right things, it certainly proved US administrations that Georgia wants to be a modern western looking democratic country and just the mere action what the country has done. I think in some ways it failed a little bit, because of the method, the mechanics of how they do it. They will select a certain group of people to be the command structure and they will select the best of organisations and individuals from various places around the countries and put together the composite forces and then train and then send them for the contingencies. In some way its good, when they come back that brings and spreads out some of the influences. But is some ways that are bad because you will never have that unit cohesion and you will never work as whole unity except during the contingency operation. The units here still stay at a relatively uneven training situation, uneven quality of training. Partly because, also remember, it is just not that people come back and go back to the unit but after time the leave the military service, and since you don’t have unit going as such, you don’t have a unified collective memory on how to do all that training, just to preserve and keep the processes running. But if you had unit do all this, then the unit would have written books that it took with it to Afghanistan did and came back and did here. But when you have individuals it’s like everything is created just for that mission, and when it comes back the individuals go and over time they dwindle away and all of that unit cohesion and unit standing operating procedures and regulations, the things they knew worked in combat they have lost and it gets recreated by the next group.
Annex II

Interview with an Expert in American Foreign Policy, Mr. Giorgi Khatiashvili (April 02, 2017)

Q: How would you describe Georgia’s decision over sending troops to Afghanistan in 2009?

A: It was very important decision for Georgia, because you know Georgia is largest per capita ontributor of the Armed Forces for Afghanistan. And 2009 is after August war, after Obama became a president and we have witnessed the politics of reset, with Russia American reset. And one of the few things Georgia could do to be still interesting for NATO and US was to send troops to Afghanistan and show that we are not only demanding our security we are also providers of security.

Q: What kind of geopolitical challenges did Georgia have, for this time when they made a decision over sending troops?

A: It was right after the war, 20% of territories occupied; more or less Georgia was under mild isolation nobody soled us weapons. Still the investigation was on-going, there was no consensus, even today there is no consensus who started the war, and especially in 2009 there was no consensus the blame was for both sides.

Q: How did sending troops to Afghanistan help Georgia to overcome these challenges?

A: After 2009, Georgia received significant security and military assistance, in recent period NATO training camp was opened in Georgia and in every statement of every NATO official they always underscored that Georgia is one of the largest contributors of military forces and our military presence in Afghanistan is highly regarded and respected.

Q: You partially answered my next question on - How different Georgia’s participation in ISAF and other missions is in comparison with other states? You have already mentioned that Georgia is presented as the biggest per capita. How does this comparison help Georgia to reach its goals and what these goals are?
A: The intermediary goals of retraining army and having more professional army, having international presence and having some sort of international reputation, these goals more or less are achieved, also have close (closing) relation with NATO. But if our ultimate aim is to join the NATO on this front the military contribution to Afghanistan did some job but we are not even on our half way.

Q: Why did Georgia remain troops after ISAF mission, as you know lot of NATO countries have withdrawn their forces?

A: Because we have international commitment to the security of Afghanistan and we remain loyal to this commitment first of all. Second of all, still there is a moral projection that we are not parasites that want free ride to NATO. We are contributors to the security. This time we have to show this by concrete examples, and Afghanistan is a concrete example to show this, so we remain loyal to the security, independence and democracy of Afghanistan. We remain loyal partner of US in fighting terrorism. We had, have and will have one of the largest presence in the Afghanistan as long as the western world needs it.

Q: As you mentioned, after sending Georgian troops to Afghanistan, Georgia gained numerous benefits from NATO. Do you think that this benefits or rewards might have fostered Georgia to stay in Afghanistan after the ISAF mission?

A: Definitely yes! It is obvious that our presence in Afghanistan helped us to gain some prominence in NATO, so I would not deny this.

Q: From your point of view, how would you evaluate overall Georgia’s participation in those missions: was it successful, did Georgia reach its goals or what is your point?

A: It’s based on the definition of goals. Retraining of military yes, more professional military yes, is Afghanistan stabilised in a way but Georgia alone cannot stabilise Afghanistan, so partially yes we have reached our goals, but if the goal was to end the mission then I don’t think that Georgia is capable of stabilising Afghanistan solely or entirely.

Q: As you mentioned from the beginning, Georgia’s initial goal is to be a full member of NATO. How does this participation help Georgia to become NATO member?

A: It is helping us on the road of gaining status of aspirant country, we are not yet aspirant country but every pro-Georgian argument that is voiced on the NATO table is based on the
issues that we are fighting their wars in Afghanistan, so we are providing our friends with arguments to fight for us behind closed doors in NATO meetings.
Annex III

Interview with a High Ranked Military Personal of the Georgian Armed Forces General Staff
(April 05, 2017)

Q: How would you describe Georgia’s decision over sending troops to Afghanistan in 2009?

A: This was a political decision and I do not have enough competencies to answer that question.

Q: How did sending troops to Afghanistan help Georgia to improve its security perspectives?

A: While participating in international operations, Georgian servicemen receive professional military trainings and get unique combat experience. Since 2009, around 15500 (More than 11800 in ISAF and approximately 4000 in RSM) Georgian soldiers gained a real combat experience. Taking part in international missions alongside with military forces of NATO member-states significantly contributes to the development of Defence capacity of Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) and the achievement of full compliance with NATO STANAGs and operational requirements. Additionally, in order to handle threats coming from Russia the integration in the NATO is very important for us. Hence sending troops in Afghanistan helps Georgia not only to develop its military forces but also to show NATO that Georgia is very serious when it comes to joining the Alliance and at the same time it will be a serious partner.

Q: How different Georgia’s participation in ISAF and RSM missions is in comparison with other states and what does it mean for Georgia and for NATO?

A: This is also a political question. However, from my point of view I can say that no one forces us to have particular amount of troops in Afghanistan. But we want to show NATO that we are not only using NATO’s power but we are also providers of security (which is reflected in the manpower we send to Afghanistan) and contribution in NATO’s mission in order to promote peace and stability. The military support Georgia provides for NATO is an
“ace” for us on the path of Euro-Atlantic integration. For today, we have 872 military personnel in Afghanistan, which includes 1 platoon with German contingent, 1 battalion with Americans and several officers hold various positions with the Staff. With this amount we are number one among non-NATO member countries and I think (If I am not mistaken) third among NATO member countries. NATO representatives are very satisfied with Georgia’s performance and they always mention this during different high level meetings. Our military personnel are very qualified and they conduct wide spectrum operation.

Q: Why did Georgia remain troops after compilation of ISAF mission?

A: After the ISAF mission, there was RSM mission in which supporting countries simply continued their participation. However, the number of military personnel deployed for the RSM mission was reduced. We also continued our participation in the RSM mission because despite the fact that ISAF mission was over, the fight for security and stability still continues in Afghanistan.

Q: From your point of view, how would you evaluate overall Georgia’s participation in these missions?

A: While participating in NATO-led operations, Georgian servicemen receive professional military trainings and get unique combat experience. Taking part in international missions alongside with military forces of NATO member-states significantly contributes to the development of Defence capacity of Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) and the achievement of full compliance with NATO STANAGs and operational requirements. At the tactical level, it helps commanders in increasing their skills to take decisions in crisis response operations. By participating in peacekeeping operations Georgia proved to be a reliable partner to NATO, which has been repeatedly emphasized by the Alliance and its members. Conducting and participating in NATO exercises (including joint NATO-Georgia exercise) facilitates to share experience and improve efficiency of the Georgian Armed Forces through practical application of NATO exercise planning and execution processes. Training forces together and enabling them to act coherently is further contributing to both the Allied and Partner forces’ capability development and enhance interoperability with NATO and its member countries. Periodically conducting joint NATO-GEO exercises in Georgia will support to further develop and promote the JTEC to become a regional hub for best practice in military training and evaluation.
Annex IV

Interview with an Expert in Small States Foreign Policy Studies, Professor Tornike Turmanidze (April 06, 2017)

Q: How would you describe Georgia’s decision over sending troops to Afghanistan in 2009?

A: The decision to send Georgian troops in Afghanistan and before that in Iraq was directly or indirectly related to Georgia’s wish to become NATO member, since ISAF was NATO’s mission, however from the beginning the US was a major actor in Afghanistan but after 9/11 it became an ISAF mission led by NATO forces. The main factor behind this decision was to help Georgia become NATO member as soon as possible.

First, the decision to send troops in Afghanistan helped Georgia to show NATO that it does not only require security but also provides support and security for NATO missions. Within our military capabilities, we can help bigger countries to reach their security goals. Given the situation, that there are not a lot of countries that want to participate or send a large number of troops in this type of missions. Georgia took this step to show NATO and US that Georgia can support international security. Generally speaking, there is always a question of why small countries choose to get involved in such missions with bigger countries, the main purpose is to gain some sort of benefits. We sacrifice certain things so that in return we can get the benefits, for instance being NATO member. In our case, there is no quid pro quo benefit for small countries but this attempt, sometimes successful or unsuccessful, for Georgia was to show NATO member countries that it deserves and has a strong ambition to become the member of the Alliance. The outcome of this decision (sending troops to Afghanistan) is stretched out over time, meaning that we (Georgia) will help you when you need our support, hence participation in ISAF mission but we also require your help (NATO) when we need. However, this is no guarantee for Georgia that NATO will help us but it gives them a moral responsibility to show support towards us.

The second benefit that this decision has provided for Georgia is more tangible one. Participating in peacekeeping operations such as ISAF enabled Georgian military personnel to gain more experience. The Army needs to be constantly in action in order to always be ready. As a result taking part in this mission was very beneficial for GAF in order to gain combat
experience. On the other hand, the mission helped GAF to gain experience of working and fighting along with other NATO members.

The third benefit is that this way Georgia can get some sort of military assistance from the Alliance. For a small country, like Georgia, it is always good to have a support of outside military forces, especially like NATO. We want to be members of the Alliance but unfortunately, we are not, so on our way to membership we want their support in terms of training, military equipment, combined training.

There were lots of benefits for Georgia as a result of participating in ISAF mission. However, it is expected that Georgia will leave the mission in 2019.

**Q: What kind of geopolitical challenges did Georgia have, for this time of deployment?**

**A:** The biggest challenge for Georgia is Russia, 2008 August War, the occupation of Georgian territories. There is an indirect connection between the challenges Georgia currently faces and sending troops to Afghanistan. Taking part in ISAF indirectly will not increase Georgia’s ability to protect our territory. However, indirectly the experience gained during the ISAF mission will help GAFs to better protect Georgian integrity, especially, since protecting territorial integrity is the main task of any AF. On the other hand, sending troops in ISAF has a political subtext. It shows that, despite being a small country, Georgia is actively participating in international peacekeeping operations. This was an attempt to help Georgia not to be isolated when it will face potential threats from Russia. Of course, this does not guarantee that NATO will provide support for Georgia; they do not have any obligation since we are not the Alliance members. But this increased Georgia’s potential and will influence NATO member countries to take Georgia into consideration and in the case of the threat, they will be a high probability that international community will provide support for us.

**Q: Why did Georgia remain troops after ISAF mission?**

**A:** In my opinion, we should look at this from Georgia’s internal political point of view. When “Georgian Dream” came to power some thought that they were pro-Russian, so as a result to contradict this notion Georgian government decided to leave troops in Afghanistan, maybe they did not want to leave troops but they think that it is important for Georgia to be seen as pro-Western. This is also an opportunity for GAF to gain more combat experience and
to work closely with NATO member countries. This opportunity should not be lost; we have to use it as long as we are allowed to.

Q: From your point of view, how would you evaluate overall Georgia’s participation in those missions: was it successful, did Georgia reach its goals or what is your point?

A: the main mission (becoming NATO member) as I have already mentioned was not achieved. But at the same time, it should not be seen that Georgia thought that taking part in ISAF mission would be a guarantee of becoming NATO member country. However, by taking part in the mission did not allow us to take big steps towards joining NATO but at the same time, we did make smaller steps. In total, I think that taking part in ISAF mission was successful for Georgia, for instance, the establishment of joint training facilities and training enabled us to have connections with the Alliance. Being part of support mission puts Georgia on the radar of international communities. It can be said that participating in ISAF mission was successful for Georgia but we still have a long way to go in order to become NATO members. However, the threats Georgia faces were not changed by the participation in supporting missions. Georgia’s strong commitment to supporting missions is a way of showing that Georgia is very serious on becoming NATO member.
Q: How would you describe Georgia’s decision over sending troops to Afghanistan in 2009?

A: There were three components that influenced Georgia’s decision. First is that Georgia sees itself as a part of Euro-Atlantic Alliance. National borders are not guarantee of security any more. The threat of terrorism creates similar challenges for Georgia as it does for any other country. Second, being a NATO member will provide lots of advantages for Georgia. I would like to point out that the Ministry of Defence of Georgia is one of the most westernized institutions in Georgia government at this point. However, there still is a lot of work that needs to be done. It is very important for Georgia to become a NATO member. We are not only users of security but also producers and contributors. Georgia is always mentioned as one of the best NATO partner countries. Third aspect is that participating in NATO-led missions allows GAF to gain more experience. They also learn how NATO operations work. These are the main arguments that support Georgia’s decision to send troops in ISAF.

Q: How did the decision to send troops in ISAF help Georgia to reach its goals and what are these goals?

A: Georgia still has to undergo lots of reforms and changes in order to become the member of the Alliance. The membership decision is made by 28 member countries if they feel that Georgia meets all the criteria. I firmly believe that Georgia’s inclusion in NATO will significantly improve the overall international security. It will also be an example for other countries that if Georgia managed this then there is opportunity for others. Participating in multinational operations helped GAF very much in terms of improving their combat skills. The performance of Georgian troops is always highly evaluated by NATO member countries. Georgia was also actively involved in Kosovo operations promoting peace and stability. In overall, the decision had positive impact on Georgia. I think that Georgian government made right decision in this regards. Participating in these missions moved Georgia to the front on NATO radar. NATO member countries are now familiar and have experience of working with GAF. And being member of these missions supports Georgia to become an Alliance member. And in return NATO provides great support for Georgia, especially in 2008. Georgia is not a
secure country, we have a ceasefire agreement but we do not have a Peace Agreement. In my opinion, the current stability in Georgia is directly resulted from participating in this mission and being a NATO partner country.

**Q: Why did Georgia remain troops after ISAF mission?**

A: The same reasons that influence Georgia’s decision to send troops in Afghanistan are applicable for the RSM. Partnership with NATO is vital for Georgia in order to guarantee its stability. In case of Georgia, our military personnel are going to this mission based on their wishes. They are not required to go. So this clearly shows that our troops are willing to provide international security.