Moving Forward with a Societal Security Framework in Georgia

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Introduction

Over the past thirty years, Georgia has encountered various security challenges that have exposed the limitations of its traditional defense strategies. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the use of complex hybrid warfare tactics have highlighted the inadequacy of relying solely on territorial defense. Contemporary threats now extend beyond physical borders, targeting public institutions, undermining societal values, and manipulating public perception. Addressing these hybrid threats has become increasingly difficult for Georgia, as its existing security model struggles to adapt. This situation underscores the urgent need for Georgia to adopt modern security strategies tailored to address evolving, multi-dimensional threats and enhance societal resilience.

In response to the need for innovative security approaches, this research represents the second phase of the 2021–2022 study, „Perspectives of Societal Security in Georgia," conducted with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.[1] The first phase of the study introduced the concept of societal security into Georgian discourse, contextualizing it to the country's specific security environment. It suggested that societal security could significantly benefit Georgia by not only emphasizing traditional defense, but also by promoting social welfare, decentralization and enhanced societal resilience. Embracing these principles could enable Georgia to develop a robust security model better suited to deterring the complex conventional and unconventional threats it faces.

The first phase of this study also highlighted the unique advantages of societal security within the Georgian context, proposing that prioritizing social welfare and inclusiveness would strengthen societal resilience. This shift could substantially improve Georgia's ability to address the diverse and complex security threats that disproportionately affect small states.

As the second phase of the research, this document explores specific barriers and opportunities within Georgia's security sector, identifying pathways for the gradual integration of a societal security model.

Methodologically, the study employs qualitative research methods, conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with individuals working in various state security institutions and involved in institutional decision-making processes. The respondents, who remain anonymous for confidentiality, provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Georgia's existing security model.

The study is structured in two main parts. The first part offers an overview of societal security within the Georgian context, while the second part analyzes the legal framework, strategic documents, and respondents' perceptions and observations. This latter section identifies practical barriers, opportunities, and potential entry points to advance societal security within Georgia's security sector.

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1   Abramashvili, I. (2022) Perspectives of Societal Security in Georgia. FES. Tbilisi. Available at: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/19633.pdf

Main Findings

→ The concept of societal security incorporates a wide range of threat containment mechanisms and is effective in curbing threats from both state and non-state actors. In this process, societal security is not an alternative to military defense, but is a complementary component as a pillar of national security and as an effective tool for deterring modern threats.

→ From a security-oriented perspective, poverty and inequality generate systemic risks that, if left unmanaged, may compromise societal stability. High poverty rates and significant inequality can lead to unrest, as marginalized groups become increasingly susceptible to radicalization, external manipulation, and misinformation campaigns. Additionally, socio-economic disparities can erode public trust in government and defense institutions, thereby diminishing their legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing threats.

→ In Georgia, the approach to security remains largely rooted in a military-centric framework, limiting the scope for addressing broader societal issues. Despite growing recognition of the importance of societal security, significant barriers hinder progress in this area. The persistence of poverty and inequality creates structural divisions that obstruct reforms, particularly in traditionally opaque sectors such as national security. These challenges are compounded by the alignment of the security sector with the interests of ruling elites, who may resist framing poverty and inequality as security threats due to the potential disruption of existing power dynamics.

→ Political parties in Georgia also exhibit low interest and competence in addressing security sector reforms, further impeding progress. Efforts to promote the key pillar of decentralized action face resistance within the prevailing vertical decision-making system. Even progressive initiatives, such as the introduction of Mission Command in the Georgian Defense Forces, are often viewed narrowly as tactical frameworks rather than as catalysts for broader political transformation. Additionally, limited public awareness and insufficient investment in research and development within the security sector exacerbate these challenges, leaving significant gaps in the country's ability to comprehensively address societal security.

→ Introducing a societal security framework into Georgia's defense and security sector requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses both conceptual understanding and practical implementation. A valuable first step would be to organize a high-level academic and political conference within Georgia, bringing together key stakeholders including policymakers, academics, defense experts, and civil society representatives. This event would provide an opportunity to present the concept of societal security, explore its relevance to the Georgian context, and encourage collaborative discussions on its potential impact and integration into existing security structures.

→ The process of "politicization" is crucial in preparing the groundwork for the securitization of issues such as poverty and inequality. Engaging the media and political parties is essential in this phase. Media outlets could play a pivotal role in raising public awareness by framing societal security as integral to national resilience and stability. Concurrently, political parties could elevate the discourse by integrating societal security into their platforms, emphasizing its importance in addressing systemic challenges like poverty and inequality.

→ Institutionally, the Parliament of Georgia is responsible for advancing this agenda. By initiating political and legal discussions around societal security, Parliament can lay the foundation for broader reforms and ensure this framework is embedded within the country's strategic priorities. Together, these efforts can create a conducive environment for successfully introducing and adopting societal security principles, aligning Georgia's defense and security policies with the broader goal of societal resilience.

Societal Security: brief overview and contextualization in Georgia

Globalization and rapid technological advancement have undermined the traditional state-centric model of international security, blurring the lines between domestic and foreign actors, as well as between war and peace. Security challenges now extend beyond the direct control of states, especially in the realms of information, cybersecurity, energy, climate, and economic issues, making small and open societies more vulnerable. Threats that were once confined to national security and military responses increasingly require civilian involvement and support. At the same time, challenges that were previously viewed as civilian responsibilities now have international dimensions, further complicating the security environment. Attacks are no longer confined to state territory, sovereignty, or infrastructure. Hybrid threats frequently target public institutions, undermine values, influence public attitudes, and manipulate minorities and vulnerable groups.

In the current geopolitical climate, traditional threats remain significant, particularly as militarism resurfaces. The rise of a new wave of conventional threats has not diminished the importance of non-military challenges. Instead, the combination of conventional and hybrid threats has further complicated the modern security environment, compelling states to devise innovative strategies.

Today, traditional military defenses often prove ineffective against modern threats without substantial civilian support. States are increasingly struggling to respond to these challenges using outdated methods that rely solely on state-led efforts and limited societal engagement, especially in contexts where deregulation and privatization have diminished state control over critical infrastructure.

The number of non-traditional and non-military threats and challenges has grown considerably. While these threats do not pose an immediate danger to a country's existence or territorial integrity, they can still disrupt the function of its state and society. This evolution in the nature of threats has transformed our understanding of security. The traditional, hard security driver approach has gradually been replaced by a broader perspective that includes economic, social, cultural, and value-based factors in the formulation and implementation of international and national security policies.

In this context, states increasingly find it challenging to address threats unilaterally using traditional military methods, which often depend on a significant amount of civilian support. Consequently, security policy is shifting toward a more inclusive approach that emphasizes not only public protection but also active societal participation in security planning and implementation. The concept of Societal Security is particularly relevant here, advocating for a unified public approach to security and highlighting the importance of close collaboration between the state and society.

As a paradigm of security governance, societal security encompasses the formulation and implementation of security policies, as well as the assessment of threats and the systems for response and preparedness. This approach strengthens capabilities in early warning, risk analysis, contingency planning, training, resource stockpiling, infrastructure maintenance, public awareness, crisis management, resilience building, recovery, and reconstruction. By integrating a wide range of threat mitigation strategies, societal security effectively counters challenges posed by both state and non-state actors while reducing the impact of natural disasters.[2]

At first glance, societal security, with its principle of self-sufficiency in addressing threats, may seem similar to the concept of resilience. However, societal security encompasses a broader framework that includes resilience as a key component, alongside prevention, crisis management, and risk assessment systems.[3]

Societal security is grounded in the belief that societal threats require a security policy that is implemented through active engagement and participation, which involves collaboration between military and civilian sectors, and public and private entities. In this context, the state is a vital and adaptable coordinator, responsible for managing and reinforcing traditional institutions, mobilizing resources, developing infrastructure, and shaping narratives and strategies. The state will no longer be the sole actor in security matters, especially in countering hybrid threats, where responsibilities are distributed among various societal groups.[4]

2   Bailes, A. (2008). What Role for the Private Sector in 'Societal Security'? Brussels: The European Policy Centre. p. 13

3   Rhinard, M. (2021). Societal Security in Theory and Practice. In S. Larsson, & M. Rhinard, Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence (pp. 22-43). New York: Routledge. p. 37

4   Morsut, C. (2018). Societal Security and Safety in Norway: The Duality of Samfunnssikkerhet. In M. Aaltola, B. Kuznetsov, A. Sprud, & E. Vizgunova, Societal Security in the Baltic Sea Region (pp. 60-83). Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs. p. 61

Societal security underscores the importance of enhancing the role of public institutions in shaping and implementing security policies while recognizing the significance of traditional state institutions (such as defense forces) as the primary providers of national security. It also highlights the necessity for broad, voluntary, and qualified community participation in security processes. To ensure effective engagement, the state should not only encourage civil actors' involvement in security policy, but also invest in enhancing their capabilities and qualifications. This interconnectedness between security policy and socioeconomic factors is evident, as socioeconomic hardships can diminish social groups' willingness and competence to contribute to security efforts, thereby increasing their vulnerability.

Welfare programs are essential for enhancing public resilience, facilitating deradicalization, and reducing vulnerability. While their implementation can be delegated, the state plays a crucial role in providing these programs through political will and structural support. Despite delegating certain security policy functions, the state retains a monopoly on ensuring socioeconomic conditions such as social justice, welfare distribution, and inequality reduction. Therefore, only the state has the necessary resources to integrate social welfare into security policy.

In practice, societal security is closely associated with the Nordic region. The theoretical foundations and development of the concept are linked to academic and research centers in the region, and its core principles are reflected in the security management models of Nordic countries. While interest in modern security policies is not unique to the Nordic region, the distinct combination of state organization, socio-economic systems, and political culture has created a favorable environment for societal security. Even before the concept was formally introduced, the principles guiding Nordic countries in planning and implementing security policies closely aligned with the later-developed framework. Their emphasis on safeguarding civil liberties, ensuring human rights, and upholding democratic and social justice values facilitated the integration of societal security principles into existing security models.[5]

Despite historical, political, and cultural differences, societal security is highly relevant to Georgia. As a small country with limited resources, Georgia faces a critical geopolitical environment with complex internal challenges.

An assessment of Georgia's primary security challenges reveals issues such as Russian occupation, economic instability, and underdeveloped state institutions. Domestically, public security is threatened by poverty, unemployment, emigration, and increasing social and political polarization.[6]

Examining Georgia's current security policy-making and in-

ter-agency coordination, several problems stand out: an unsystematic approach, outdated national security concepts, and inadequate political and institutional support. Despite some procedural improvements, parliamentary oversight and control of the security sector remain insufficient, largely due to the low priority given to security-related issues and weak institutional and political traditions. Additionally, local governments have a limited role in Georgia's security framework, constrained by broader structural factors and concerns about diminishing central control, particularly within security services.[7]

From a societal perspective, poverty and social inequality present significant, multi-dimensional threats to Georgia, especially when inadequately addressed within the defense and security framework. The effects of poverty go beyond mere economic deprivation, contributing to a decline in human capital as individuals struggle with limited access to quality education, healthcare, and job opportunities. This deterioration in human capital undermines societal resilience, weakens democracy, and increases emigration rates as people seek better prospects abroad. Furthermore, poverty erodes public trust and engagement, which are crucial for a resilient, cohesive society and an effective defense force.

From a security standpoint, poverty creates vulnerabilities that external actors can exploit. Populations experiencing economic hardship are more susceptible to misinformation and propaganda, which can deepen social divides and exacerbate political instability. This vulnerability also increases the risk of radicalization, as desperate individuals may turn to extremist ideologies in response to perceived poverty, inequalities, and a lack of opportunity. Additionally, widespread poverty hinders the development of defense forces by limiting the pool of skilled and educated individuals available for service, ultimately weakening the country's security capabilities.[8]

Social inequality intensifies these threats by fostering societal fragmentation and increasing tension between different socioeconomic groups. The resulting social divisions weaken the state's role as a unifying institution and erode the legitimacy of public institutions (including defense forces) reducing public trust over the long term. Inequality fosters an environment where marginalized groups feel excluded from national security policies, further deepening societal divisions and challenging the cohesion necessary for effective national defense.

Integrating poverty reduction and social equality into Georgia's security and defense framework is essential for building societal resilience, strengthening democratic foundations, and safeguarding against the broader threats posed by socio-economic instability. Addressing these issues within a comprehensive security strategy would promote

5 Valtonen, V., & Branders, M. (2021). Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model. In S. Larsson, & M. Rhinard, Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence (pp. 91-109). New York, Routledge. p. 92

6 Abramashvili, I. (2022) Perspectives of Societal Security in Georgia. FES. Tbilisi. Available at: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/19633.pdf

7 Ibid.

8 Abramashvili, I. (2022) Perspectives of Societal Security in Georgia. FES. Tbilisi. Available at: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/19633.pdf

inclusiveness, foster public trust, and mitigate the risks of societal fragmentation, thereby enhancing Georgia's overall security framework.

Viewing poverty and social inequality through a security lens highlights their potential to destabilize society and undermine national resilience. This perspective frames these issues not only as economic or social challenges, but as critical vulnerabilities that could threaten national security if ignored. Securitizing poverty and inequality means recognizing them as fundamental threats that require immediate action and resource allocation, similar to traditional security concerns like military defense. This approach compels the state to mobilize resources, implement preventive measures, and prioritize poverty reduction and social cohesion within the national security agenda.

From a security-oriented perspective, poverty and inequality generate systemic risks that, if left unmanaged, may compromise societal stability. High poverty rates and significant disparities can lead to unrest, as marginalized groups become increasingly susceptible to radicalization, external manipulation, and misinformation campaigns. This vulnerability can be exploited by various actors seeking to destabilize the country, transforming the situation from an internal issue into a matter of geopolitical security. Additionally, socio-economic disparities can erode public trust in government and defense institutions, diminishing their legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing threats.

The following chapters will offer an in-depth analysis of the barriers and opportunities that affect the state's ability to integrate these issues into its security framework. This examination will consider institutional and resource constraints, societal perceptions, and potential pathways for reshaping policies to incorporate socio-economic vulnerabilities into the national security agenda. By tackling these challenges and exploring possible solutions, the analysis aims to identify strategies for a more inclusive security model that acknowledges and addresses the root causes of societal instability.

Assessing the current landscape for advancing a societal security framework within the defense and security sector in Georgia

According to Georgia's law on "Planning and Coordination Rules of National Security Policy," planning occurs through conceptual and organizational documents. There are three types of national-level conceptual documents: a) national security concept, b) threat assessment document, and c) national strategies in the security field.[9]

The national security concept is a fundamental document that outlines national values and interests, establishes a vision for the country's safe development, and identifies the threats, risks, and challenges facing the state. It also sets the primary direction for national security policy. All national and departmental documents related to national security policy planning must align with the national security concept. The Government of Georgia is responsible for developing and presenting this concept to the Parliament of Georgia for approval.

The Georgian threat assessment document outlines threats and challenges from military, foreign political, domestic political, transnational, socio-economic, natural, and human actors that significantly threaten national security. Unlike the concept, this document is approved by the Government of Georgia.

National strategies in the security field are designed to achieve the goals set by the state in specific areas of national security policy.

None of the above-mentioned documents directly addresses poverty and social inequality in the Georgian context. Two significant aspects of societal security—holistic approach and decentralization—can, however, be indirectly identified in the Ministry of Defense's documents: the Strategic Defense Review 2021-2025[10] and the Georgian Ministry of Defense Vision 2030.[11] It needs to be mentioned that these documents are limited in scope, as they are not part of national conceptual documents, but institutional ones.

The Vision 2030 document outlines a holistic approach, which incorporates the principles of Total Defense, including a Whole-of-Government Effort, Military Effort, Civil Effort, and International Effort:

→ **Whole-of-Government Effort** involves the coordinated planning and engagement of all responsible agencies during crises and wars. This approach ensures the distribution of responsibilities while aiming for the uninterrupted delivery of essential governmental functions.

→ **Military Effort** enhances national deterrence and defense through the Georgian Defense Forces (GDF). The GDF maintains high combat readiness and conducts military operations to achieve defense policy objectives, supported by other state agencies and society.

→ **Civil Effort** consists of activities provided by civil agencies and organizations to support the GDF while ensuring the continuous functioning of the state. This includes maintaining civil safety, upholding the functionality of essential services and critical infrastructure, preparing the population for informational and psychological resilience, and ensuring comprehensive cyber defense from peace to war.

→ **International Effort** involves mobilizing international support—military, political, diplomatic, economic, material, informational, and intelligence-related—during pre-conflict and conflict phases. The aim is to exert increased pressure on adversaries, compelling them to abandon hostile intentions and reach favorable terms for Georgia.

Regarding security decentralization, the Ministry of Defense emphasizes adopting a long-term mission command philosophy, transitioning from a hierarchical command and control approach.

Mission command is a philosophy that empowers subordinates to take initiative in achieving mission objectives based on a clear understanding of the commander's intent. Instead of relying on strict top-down instructions, it promotes decentralized decision-making, enabling individuals closer to the situation to act decisively within the overall mission framework. The key principles of mission command include:[12]

9   Law of Georgia on "Planning and Coordination Rules of National Security Policy. Available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2764463?publication=10
10 Ministry of Defense of Georgia. Strategic Defense Review 2021-2025. Available at: https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2021/november/Strategic_Defence_Review_2021-2025.pdf
11 Ministry of Defense of Georgia. Vision 2030. Available at: https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/ModVision/MOD__Vision_2030.pdf
12 Finney, N. K., & Klug, J. P. (2016). Mission command in the 21st century: Empowering to Win in a Complex World. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: The Army Press.

→ **Competence:** Commanders must have a clear understanding of their roles and the ability to execute tasks confidently. They should also be able to justify their decisions to subordinates.

→ **Mutual Trust:** Trust between commanders and subordinates is essential for effective decentralized execution.

→ **Shared Understanding:** Both commanders and subordinates should have a unified understanding of the mission, situation, and each other's roles.

→ **Clear Mission Intent:** The overarching purpose and goals of the mission must be clearly communicated to ensure that all actions align with broader objectives.

→ **Initiative:** Subordinates are encouraged to act based on their interpretation of the mission without needing explicit orders.

→ **Risk Acceptance:** The inherent uncertainty of decentralized decision-making requires leaders to accept some level of risk, trusting that subordinates will make sound decisions.

These principles, originally designed for the battlefield, provide a valuable framework for navigating the complexities of security policy planning, which requires both strategic oversight and tactical agility.

Analyzing Mission Command Principles in Security Policy Planning

1. Clear Mission Intent in Policy Objectives
In security policy planning, it is essential to define objectives clearly and provide guidance while allowing flexibility in execution. Just as a military commander articulates clear intent to direct decentralized actions, policymakers must establish overarching goals that inform the actions of multiple agencies and stakeholders. For instance, national security policy may prioritize safeguarding critical infrastructure against cyberattacks. Although the specific tactics employed by different agencies (such as intelligence gathering or cybersecurity measures) may differ, they should all be aligned with the broader objective of infrastructure protection.

Clear policy intent ensures coherence across sectors, agencies, and levels of government, even in the face of unexpected threats. It also helps prevent the drawbacks of micromanagement, which can stifle creativity and initiative when addressing emerging security challenges.

2. Decentralization of Authority
The current security environment is often too complex for centralized decision-making structures to respond effectively. In mission command, decision-making authority is decentralized to permit those closest to the situation to act quickly and precisely. This principle directly applies to security policy planning, where threats may emerge suddenly, and require a rapid response from local authorities, intelligence agencies, or other operational units.

For instance, when confronted with a terrorist threat, law enforcement or local military units may need to make immediate decisions without waiting for approval from centralized authorities. Decentralizing authority empowers individuals and agencies to act swiftly and appropriately within the framework of overarching policy objectives. This approach can enhance the resilience of the security apparatus by minimizing bottlenecks in the decision-making process.

3. Fostering Mutual Trust among Agencies
A fundamental principle of mission command is mutual trust, which allows leaders to delegate authority confidently, knowing that subordinates will act in the mission's best interest. Similarly, trust among security agencies is critical for effective security policy planning and execution. In many countries, the fragmentation of security services—from national intelligence agencies to local law enforcement—can impede a coordinated response to threats.

By fostering trust through regular collaboration, information sharing, and joint training exercises, policymakers can enhance inter-agency cooperation. Trust reduces the need for micromanagement and promotes a shared understanding of both overarching security objectives and the flexibility required to achieve them.

4. Encouraging Initiative and Innovation
In security policy planning, much like in military operations, the ability to act independently and innovatively is crucial when confronting complex and unpredictable threats. Mission command empowers subordinates to take initiative, allowing them to adapt their actions to specific circumstances while keeping the overarching mission in focus. In the context of security policy, this principle can be implemented by encouraging local actors and agencies to develop context-specific solutions to emerging threats.

For instance, local law enforcement may develop community-based counterterrorism strategies that leverage local knowledge and relationships to identify and disrupt terrorist networks. By cultivating an environment that rewards initiative, security agencies can remain agile and responsive to evolving threats.

5. Accepting Risk in an Uncertain Environment
A significant challenge for mission command is the readiness to accept risk. In a decentralized decision-making framework, there is always the possibility that subordinates will make mistakes. However, in dynamic and complex environments, the alternative—centralized micromanagement—can be even more dangerous, resulting in a slow and rigid response.

In security policy planning, accepting risk entails trusting agencies and actors to make real-time decisions, even if those decisions do not always align with the anticipated outcome. For instance, counterterrorism operations often require local commanders to make quick, high-stakes decisions in volatile situations. While not every choice will be correct, empowering actors to take calculated risks within the broader mission framework is essential for maintaining flexibility and responsiveness.

Based on interviews with professionals in Georgia's security sector, there is a clear consensus on the importance of societal security and the urgent need to address poverty and social inequality through securitization. However, their analysis identifies significant barriers that hinder this process.

First and foremost, the current paradigm in Georgia still revolves around a military-centric understanding of security. This perspective has been entrenched for decades, requiring a cultural shift in security policy thinking to look beyond guns and soldiers. Additionally, the Russian military occupation of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region, along with the ongoing war in Ukraine, reinforces the belief that there is little room for alternative views beyond a hard security approach.

Secondly, the societal structure in Georgia today is marked by persistent poverty and inequality. This feature inherently produces division and poses a barrier to progressive reform, especially in traditionally closed areas such as national security. This dynamic is further exacerbated by deep-rooted connections between political and economic elites that have shaped the post-Soviet landscape, resulting in a fragmented society where these elites contribute to social division. Benefiting from the existing status quo, they often lack the genuine motivation to implement transformative changes, particularly regarding framing poverty and inequality as urgent national security issues.

Intertwining political and economic power fosters a governance structure that prioritizes elite interests over inclusive security policies. As a result, the security sector, aligned with the interests of the ruling class, may resist recognizing poverty and social inequality as security threats, since doing so could disrupt established power dynamics. Additionally, the current security model is limited by its focus on traditional defense issues, often neglecting non-military risks such as economic exclusion and social inequality. This

narrow perspective hinders the sector's ability to adapt to modern security challenges, where social cohesion is vital to societal resilience. Without the political will, societal division continues, leaving the country vulnerable to both internal and external threats.

Respondents also discussed the barriers of low interest and the competence of political parties in Georgia regarding security. An environment in which security policy reform proposals and alternative views are not developed or injected into political discourse leads to the government's lack of motivation to take responsibility for exploring uncharted territory. This creates a closed loop with no political will, and new ideas do not flow upwards. One respondent noted "the old Soviet saying — initiative is punishable — is still relevant for Georgia's security bureaucracy."

Mobilizing support around one of the key pillars of societal security—decentralized action—is also challenging within the current vertical decision-making system. Despite introducing mission command to the Georgian Defense Forces, it is perceived as an isolated tactical framework rather than a political philosophy within the security sector. According to research respondents, the level of centralization in Georgia's state institutions is so high that the security sphere cannot become an "oasis within the desert." Commitment should be equally and horizontally shared among all sectors.

A final important hurdle to introducing a societal security framework is low awareness of it and a general lack of investment in research and development in the security sector. Since new security concepts are primarily explored within larger partnership programs funded by Georgia's western partners, there is a shortage of proactive approaches to researching and adapting different models of security governance in Georgia

Recommendations for potential entry-points for the systemic advancement of societal security in Georgia

To successfully introduce a societal security framework into Georgia's defense and security sector, a multi-faceted approach is essential. By fostering awareness and support among the sector's professionals, a strong foundation is necessary for its gradual adoption. Simultaneously, elevating societal security as a key political priority and ensuring that legal frameworks align with its principles will provide the necessary political and regulatory backing.

Developing a comprehensive strategic document will serve as a roadmap for implementation, outlining goals, strategies, and resource requirements. Through these concerted efforts, Georgia can effectively integrate societal security into its defense and security sector, enhancing its overall resilience and ability to address emerging threats.

As previously discussed, the novel nature of societal security and its limited awareness pose significant challenges to its adoption. To address these hurdles, a strategic approach is necessary. A high-level academic and political conference in Georgia that convenes all relevant stakeholders could serve as a useful starting point. This gathering would provide a platform for introducing the concept, fostering understanding, and initiating discussions on its applicability within the Georgian context. Additionally, a series of non-formal training programs tailored to defense and security professionals would equip them with the knowledge to comprehend societal security principles and develop relevant analytical and policy frameworks. Early engagement with bureaucracy is crucial, as their potential influence, including the ability to exercise institutional de facto veto power, cannot be overlooked. Involving them from the outset will help secure their support and cooperation, facilitating a smoother introduction of societal security into Georgia's defense and security sector.

The next step in promoting societal security, particularly before the securitization of issues like poverty and inequality, involves the process of „politicization." To effectively address these critical concerns, security must be framed not just as a concept, but as a central policy issue that invites robust political discourse in the public arena.

If media and political parties were actively engaged in discussions about societal security, it would significantly elevate the importance of this framework in addressing poverty, inequality, and broader societal challenges. Media involvement could raise awareness by framing societal security as essential to national resilience and stability. Moreover, prioritizing societal security will lead to the development of inclusive policies that consider poverty and inequality not only as social issues but as critical components of national security. Showcasing successful examples from other countries would inspire innovative policy solutions uniquely tailored to Georgia's challenges.

This engagement will strengthen democratic institutions by promoting collaboration among government, civil society, and the private sector. Redefining societal security to prioritize inclusiveness and equity will reduce polarization and foster greater trust in public institutions. Addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities within a broader security framework will also enhance the country's capacity to counter emerging threats, such as misinformation and hybrid warfare, thereby building resilience at all levels of society.

Integrating societal security into political and public discourse will lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and secure society. Aligning national security with welfare ensures that socio-economic challenges are treated as strategic priorities, empowering communities and institutions to navigate the complexities of modern security threats effectively.

From an institutional perspective, the Parliament of Georgia plays a crucial role in initiating political and legal discussions surrounding societal security. To effectively launch this dialogue, several strategies can be employed. Firstly, a comprehensive legal analysis of security laws in both Nordic countries and Georgia could provide valuable insights. This comparative approach allows for the development of concrete recommendations tailored to the Georgian context, drawing upon best practices and lessons learned from nations that have successfully navigated similar challenges.

From an institutional perspective, the Parliament of Georgia faces significant challenges as a key actor in security oversight and policymaking. Historically, its ability to effectively lead and manage security policy has been undermined by limited resources, weak institutional frameworks, and a lack of expertise addressing complex and evolving security threats. These issues have resulted in fragmented policymaking and a reactive approach to national security rather than a proactive one.

To adopt and implement a societal security framework, Parliament could conduct comprehensive reviews, drawing on best practices from Nordic countries known for their successful integration of societal security principles. By doing so, Parliament could develop tailored recommendations that address Georgia's unique challenges. This approach might prioritize inclusiveness, decentralization, and social welfare in security laws. Ultimately, enhancing Parliament's capacity and commitment to societal security could posi-

tion it as a driving force for policy innovation and oversight, ensuring a more robust and inclusive response to Georgia's security challenges.

One effective strategy involves the expert community in Georgia submitting an independent legal initiative to Parliament. This initiative could be based on the principles of societal security and propose necessary modifications to existing legislation, including the defense code, public safety law, local self-government code, and other relevant areas.

Additionally, collaborating with Western partners could significantly enhance this effort. Establishing a network of focal points, advisors, or liaison officers within the Georgian Parliament would facilitate engagement with the Defense and Security Committee. This network could focus on strengthening human resources to ensure the committee is well-equipped to participate in legal discussions and policymaking related to the societal security framework.

Alongside fostering political and legal commitments, developing a comprehensive document that articulates a holistic vision of national security is crucial. For this initiative to be effective, it is essential to have a current conceptual framework. Since the National Security Concept and Threat Assessment Document have not been revised in over a decade, assembling a dedicated group of experts to develop this vision from a civilian perspective is imperative.

This expert group can produce a document highlighting the urgency of adopting a comprehensive approach to security, especially regarding the securitization of social and economic issues. Such a document would create a platform to advocate for prioritizing these matters within both Parliament and the government, while also providing an opportunity to evaluate specific ideas through public review.

Furthermore, this document should analyze security beyond Georgia's immediate environment. It could examine the defensive strategies employed by Ukraine against Russian aggression, extracting valuable lessons from this conflict. As Georgia's military posture is predominantly oriented towards defensive operations, understanding the dynamics and tactics observed in Ukraine can provide critical insights and enhance Georgia's strategic readiness.

Once completed, this document can be presented for discussion to both the Defense and Security Committee of the Georgian Parliament and the National Security Council, which is responsible for national security policy planning and is chaired by the Prime Minister. Facilitating these discussions will help align Georgia's security policies with contemporary challenges and promote a broader understanding of the interconnected nature of security, encompassing social and economic dimensions.

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The study examines the Societal Security framework, emphasizing its potential as a transformative framework for Georgia's defense and security policies. This approach broadens the understanding of security by highlighting society's critical role, advocating for stronger social welfare components within security strategies, and promoting decentralization. Given Georgia's experience with a wide array of threats since regaining independence, societal security offers a promising avenue for fostering resilience and addressing systemic challenges. By shifting the focus from traditional, military-centric paradigms to a more inclusive model that prioritizes societal well-being and participation, Georgia can better navigate its complex security landscape and build a more stable and cohesive future.

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Successfully introducing a societal security framework into Georgia's defense and security sector requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy. Building awareness and garnering support among professionals within the security sector is a critical first step in establishing a solid foundation for its gradual implementation. This process involves education, dialogue, and capacity-building to ensure key stakeholders understand and embrace this concept.

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In tandem, societal security must be elevated as a political priority, with efforts to integrate it into national discourse and policy agendas. This includes engaging political leaders, parties, and the public to highlight its importance in addressing systemic challenges like poverty, inequality, and social cohesion. Furthermore, aligning legal frameworks with societal security principles is essential to provide the regulatory structure necessary for its institutionalization. Together, these measures can foster a holistic and sustainable approach to embedding societal security into Georgia's defense and security policies.

Further information on this topic can be found here:
↗ **www.southcaucasus.fes.de**