

GDSC PANELS

Nations under Pressure — Deflecting the Threat (Hosted by the Penn Biden Center — PBC)

The small states in Russia's Western and South-Western neighborhood that do not come under Western collective security and defence umbrella are especially vulnerable to political and economic, and at times military, pressure from revisionist Russia aimed at affecting their sovereign choices and forcing them back into Russia's fold. To these ends, Russia employs a whole host of coercive tactics — a mixture of use of military force or threat of thereof, occupying and annexing territories of sovereign nations, creating and maintaining unresolved conflicts, economic blackmailing, aggressive propaganda, cyber attacks and other forms of hybrid warfare. These states share many common elements across the cases, but Russia's tactics are also meticulously tailored to specific vulnerabilities of each target nation. These pressures put a heavy toll on the prospects for steady peaceful and democratic development of these nations. While the level of their ambition and readiness to join a value-based European and Euro-Atlantic family may vary, their overall national aspirations for closer Western integration are firm and their security is closely intertwined both with each others' and with the Euro-Atlantic security.

Considering the Russian aggressive behavior towards its western-oriented neighbors and towards democratic values, what are Russia's ongoing efforts in individual countries? What proximate aims do these efforts serve and how do they relate to Russia's revisionist objectives?

The European and Euro-Atlantic communities are already doing a lot to help these partner nations stand firm against Russian pressure and realize their aspirations, from offering the benefits of socio-economic cooperation to steps aimed at bolstering their resilience and self-defence. Acknowledging the immense value of the current efforts, what additional measures can be carried out to this effect, which are both practicable and effective? At the same time, what steps these nations can take in the face of ongoing Russian pressure to ensure their sovereign right to choose their own destiny and safeguard their aspirations toward closer integration into Western political/military and economic institutions? How can these states maintain their resilience to Russia's coercive tactics? How the West can complement these efforts to make sure they bear fruit?

The issue of the annexation and illegal occupation of Ukrainian and Georgian territories — and specifically the question of what the West can do more to help to achieve real progress on this front — will be addressed during the discussions.

Modern complexities of the Total Defence – addressing challenges and opportunities while translating the concept into practice

During the panel, participants shall discuss Total Defence as a concept, “dissecting” its conceptual and practical sides. This discussion is meant to help honorable guests and attendees to get an in-depth understanding of the concept and most importantly its applicability. A significant portion of the discussion will be devoted to uncovering the most common challenges that countries face when organizing their own defence by using a “Total Defence” approach. Importantly, discussions will also unravel a ball of modern trends and complexities that should be taken into account. The attendees will have an opportunity to analyze the cases of some Nordic and Baltic States and therefore acquire better insights about practical side of this approach. These discussions are extremely valuable to Georgia, since for the last two years it has been taking own steps towards organization of own defence in accordance with total defence principles.

Challenges to Euro-Atlantic Community — Adapting to the Changing Security Environment

Today, the Euro-Atlantic community faces broader range of threats than in the past in different geographic areas. The most serious are related to Russia`s assertive behavior and military build-up practically on NATO`s Eastern frontiers. Moscow`s violation of the international law and the illegal annexation of Crimea shook the European security order at its core. These developments, together with the continuous occupation of Georgia`s territories, pose a direct threat to the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and is bound to have detrimental geopolitical ramifications in the future. The deterioration of security environment in the Middle East and Africa instigates migration and terrorist attacks on European soil. The precarious situation in Afghanistan requires continuous commitment. The widespread and increasing use of hybrid warfare tactics from both state and non-state actors create additional security vulnerabilities that do not lend themselves to traditional solutions. Countering these threats requires enhanced form of cooperation, intensification of the collective efforts and the development of new creative approaches.

This panel will address the existing security challenges and problems to European and Euro-Atlantic security. The panelists will also discuss how Brussels can come up with meaningful solutions and deter these multifaceted and complex threats. The NATO`s revised defence posture and the EU`s new security and defence initiatives (EU Global Strategy, PESCO etc.) will be examined during the session.

Will reinforcement of NATO`s Eastern frontiers be continued? How shall Brussels ensure strong deterrence and defence while engaged in meaningful dialogue with Moscow? Are NATO and EU`s resilience building efforts sufficient? How the Eastern Focus and reviewed European Neighborhood Policy can further contribute to projecting peace and stability? These are few of questions that will be discussed at this point during the panel.

“Open Door” policy in the aftermath of 2018 Brussels Summit – Georgia`s Transformation on path to the membership

The panel will center on analyzing NATO`s strategic agenda after the Brussels Summit 2018 keeping focus on further enlargement and Georgia`s defence transformation. As Georgia moves closer to the Euro-Atlantic community, having of combat-ready, well-equipped NATO-interoperable Armed Forces capable of responding to emerging security threats and contributing to the Alliance`s security efforts is a significant advantage.

The participants are expected to stimulate an interactive debate on strengthening the Alliance with new members, highlighting the beneficial effects of NATO enlargement on wider security and its deterrent factor. Recent accession of Montenegro is a clear demonstration of the NATO`s continuing commitment to Open Door policy under the Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. The panel will refer to the importance of unity and consensus among member states while having performance based approach in treating aspirant countries. At the same time, attendees will find out more about the ongoing defence transformation of the Georgian Armed forces, achievements and future prospects.

On the one hand, Georgia greatly aids to Alliance`s security and stability efforts, being recognized as an aspirant and one of its most trustworthy and capable partners. Georgia has been the largest per capita contributor to both NATO missions in Afghanistan and provides company size unit for NATO Response Forces. Moreover, it has been significantly contributing to EU led operations (under CSDP umbrella), which is another clear demonstration of the Georgian Armed Forces` readiness, high level of interoperability and professionalism of the military servicemen. On the other hand, experts from NATO the EU and strategic partner countries provide significant support to Georgian Armed Forces making them more capable, resilient and institutionally fit to their purpose. One of the most significant achievements of Georgia is that it has managed to transform itself from recipient to a security provider. Conference guests will reflect on the beneficial nature of NATO-Georgia relationship and why and how Georgia`s success in defence transformation can be applied to other nations as a role-model.