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Confronting the Russian Bear After the Georgian War

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Last month, Russian aggression reasserted itself in the form of Soviet-era T-62 tanks rolling through the streets of Gori. The Russian–Georgian war rocked the geopolitical landscape, unearthing both dormant and new challenges. In the days and months ahead, the international community—sovereign nations and transnational organizations alike—will face numerous diplomatic, economic, political and even military challenges. The Heritage Foundation has issued several *WebMemos*¹ addressing these issues at length and this *WebMemo* provides a summary of the policy recommendations designed to guide the world community's efforts to preserve Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity while sending a clear message to Moscow that Russian aggression will not be tolerated.

Diplomatic Challenges. Russia's military muscle-flexing poses difficult questions to nation states such as the United Kingdom, and transnational organizations like the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO.

As the U.N. continues its efforts to address the Caucasus conflict, it will be under tremendous pressure to “do something.” The U.S. and its European allies must not take action simply for action's sake. Circuitous negotiations would yield a progressively weaker resolution and subsequently embolden Moscow to game the international system to justify its illegal and immoral invasion of Georgia.² It has already failed to abide by the terms of the EU-negotiated cease-fire multiple times.

Instead, the U.S. must veto any resolution that fails to meet the three following redlines:

- The territorial integrity of Georgia must be affirmed;
- Russia must be required to immediately withdraw all of its military personnel in Georgia proper to their status quo ante positions; and
- Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia and Abkhazia must be replaced with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, EU or U.N. peacekeepers (excluding both Russian and Georgian citizens) within a stipulated timeframe.³

Additionally, the U.N. must continue to uphold its existing resolutions which support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, and therefore oppose Russia's illegal, unilateral recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁴

Economic Challenges. The EU, led by French President Nicholas Sarkozy, insisted on taking the lead in attempting to resolve the Georgian war. In addition to taking the matter to the United Nations, President Sarkozy personally negotiated a six-point cease fire between Tbilisi and Moscow, and contin-

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ues to be the public face of the European Union pertaining to this issue.

The EU initiated an emergency summit on September 1, 2008, which yielded a completely inadequate response to the crisis. It temporarily postponed talks with Moscow on an EU–Russian trade and investment treaty until Moscow withdraws its troops from Georgian territory. However, only continued economic pressure will matter in the long run.

As noted by spokesman Martin Selmayr, the EU is an economic, not a military, force.⁵ Yet, if used correctly, economics can be a sanction against Russian aggression and, subsequently, the EU should take the following actions:

- Withdraw its support for Russia’s membership of the World Trade Organization;
- Permanently suspend any negotiation of an EU–Russian trade and investment treaty until all the terms of the cease-fire are implemented, including renouncement of Russia’s recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence; and
- Announce that France will sponsor a move by the International Olympic Committee to transfer the Winter 2014 Olympics from the Russian resort of Sochi, which is 20 kilometers from the Russian–Georgian border, to a location outside of Russia.⁶

By helping Georgia rebuild essential infrastructure, the EU can also use its economic power to support a country recovering from a short, but brutal war. Specifically, the EU should:

- Work with U.S. assessors in Georgia to discuss a long-term strategic plan to rebuild Georgia;
- Expand its feasibility study exploring the possibility of establishing a free trade agreement between the EU and Georgia;
- Transfer its entire aid budget for Russia to Georgia;
- Use ECHO experts stationed in Georgia to act as liaisons between Brussels and Tbilisi on Georgia’s rebuilding efforts.

Military Challenges. NATO is an essential component of the transatlantic alliance architecture that can be used to face down the Russian threat in the short and long term. While direct military confrontation with Russia is undesirable, there are several steps NATO can take to counter Moscow’s geopolitical maneuverings.

NATO must accelerate Georgian (and Ukrainian) accession to its Membership Action Plan (MAP). At the April 2008 NATO Summit, in an attempt to avoid provoking Russia, German Chancellor Angela Merkel led a Franco–German coalition to defer Georgia’s membership in NATO until December 2008. Despite engaging in shameful appeasement, NATO now must contend with a revitalized Russian bear—hungry to reclaim geopolitical influence—menacing its allies.⁷ If the West needed another example that appeasement is an unacceptable diplomatic stance, Russia has provided one. By itself, suspending NATO–Russia Council meetings is insufficient.

Such actions must be accompanied by a revitalization of both NATO and the U.S.’s traditional

1. See Heritage Foundation *WebMemos* at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe> and <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia>.

2. Sally McNamara and Brett D. Schaefer, “U.S. Should Ensure That Georgia’s Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity Are Not Undermined by the United Nations,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2034, August 22, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/wm2034.cfm>.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Jeanne Whalen, “Russian Forces Outline Plans for Major Military Presence,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 2008, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121923076375956371.html> (September 5, 2008).

6. Sally McNamara, “Europe’s Catalogue of Failures in Georgia,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2033, August 21, 2008 at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm2033.cfm>; Sally McNamara and Ariel Cohen, “The EU Must Express Solidarity with Georgia at Its Emergency Summit,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2036, August 27, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm2036.cfm>.

7. McNamara, “Europe’s Catalogue of Failures.”

robust capacity to meet conventional threats. Specifically, both the U.S. and NATO must:

- Marshall the “strategic enablers” that allow for the projection of military power including gaining and maintaining sea control, air supremacy, rapid strategic transport, expeditionary logistical support, and the means to defeat “anti-access” strategies that seek to prevent the deployment of forces into a theater;
- Improve the capability to rapidly strike mobile armored forces;
- Develop the means to defeat mortar, artillery, rocket, and missile forces that can be targeted at both military forces and civilian populations;
- Have sufficient forces to meet multiple deployment requirements on short notice;
- Improve capacity to conduct both offensive and defensive cyberwarfare;
- Recognize that future conflicts will be an admixture of “asymmetrical” or “unconventional” threats as well as conventional threats; and
- Place renewed emphasis on psychological operations, deception and other forms of information warfare in all types of conflicts.⁸

The United States plays a unique role in NATO and therefore can take specific action designed to resurrect NATO’s role as part of an integrated geo-strategic effort opposing naked territorial aggression, including:

- Re-unifying NATO by bringing together all members with shared defense concerns;
- Proceeding with the building of a missile defense system in Central Europe;
- Acceptance of Ukraine’s offer to include its early warning radars into the ABM system;
- Proceed with issuing NATO MAPs for Georgia and Ukraine.⁹

The U.S. must also revitalize its traditional robust capacity to meet conventional threats in order to both provide a model for NATO military reform and to be ready if NATO requires U.S. military assistance.

The Future of the West. Through its actions in Georgia, Russia has made clear that it has little faith in—or respect for—the West’s diplomatic, military, political or economic resolve. Thus far, the West’s response has done little to invalidate Moscow’s geopolitical assessments. The above-cited policy recommendations should serve as a roadmap, guiding both the West’s short-term and long-term economic, military and diplomatic responses to Russian aggression in the 21st century.

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8. McNamara, “Europe’s Catalogue of Failures;” Ariel Cohen, James Jay Carafano, and Lajos Szasdi, “Russian Forces in the Georgian War: Preliminary Assessment and Recommendations,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2031, August 20, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/wm2031.cfm>.

9. Cohen, Carafano, and Szasdi, “Russian Forces in the Georgian War.”