

The French EU Council Presidency, European Security, and the EU Mediated Georgian-Russian **Cease-Fire** Agreement

AUGUST 2008

Current State and the Way Forward

Amb. Batu Kutelia
Amb. Vasil 'Dato' Sikharulidze

Foreword by Anna Fotyga

Tbilisi, December 2021

Brussels, 2022



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EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS

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Foreword

Since the beginning of 2008, the late President of Poland Lech Kaczyński was convinced about Russia's aggressive plans against Georgia. He used to monitor the developments closely, anticipating grave scenarios. His bold initiative, the trip to Tbilisi undertaken with other leaders of the Central and Eastern Europe in August 2008 is already a part of history and a point of reference in both Polish and Georgian politics. In 2018, the European Parliament acknowledged that this joint ad-hoc visit of Lech Kaczyński, then-President of Poland; Toomas Hendrik Ilves, then-President of Estonia; Valdas Adamkus, then-President of Lithuania; Ivars Godmanis, then-Prime Minister of Latvia; and Viktor Yushchenko, then-President of Ukraine, to Georgia on 12 August 2008 is a major factor stopping the Russian advance towards Tbilisi when troops were only 50 km from the Georgian capital, and facilitating the brokering of the ceasefire by the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. In this resolution, called Georgian occupied territories 10 years after the Russian invasion, we were also able to deliver an honest assessment of the circumstances leading up to and during the August war. However, especially in the current situation, it is of as much value to focus once more in detail on the events of 2008. Batu Kutelia and Vasil Sikharulidze, the leadership of the Ministry of Defence in 2008 and one of the most credible witnesses of these events, in the report were able to combine political experience, personal courage and analytical skills acquired over their professional careers.

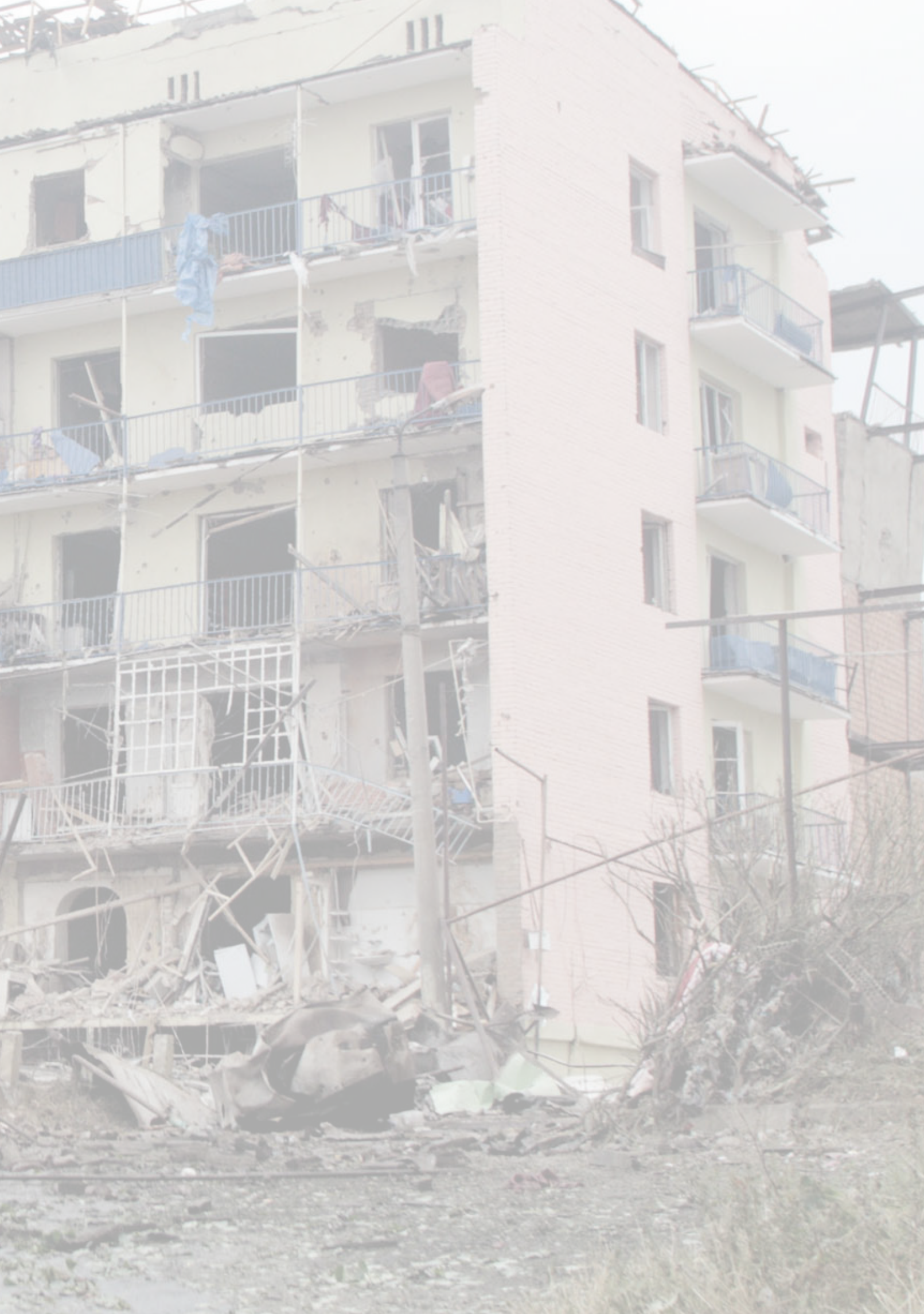
During the years following the Russian war in Georgia political elites in Poland and other countries of the region increased their awareness of dangerous Russian policies and the country's will to re-impose old spheres of influence. Unfortunately, the naivety of the West was visible not only at this time of war and ceasefire negotiations, but also in subsequent years. Regrettably, even despite better knowledge and a more robust resilience of the West, Russia once more decided to threaten Europe with an unprovoked and unjustified invasion of its democratic and peaceful neighbour. Russia, again, has made itself into a rogue state, while Ukraine fights for us all, for Georgians, Poles, Latvians, but also for the French and Italians. They fight for our safety and core principles, defending Western civilization. We should remain united. Although Putin's regime still tends to bid high, we have to sustain the pressure. Important lessons should be learnt from 2008, 2014 and 2022 to unconditionally and forever stop the aggressor.

The French Presidency, but also the collective West, should draw conclusions from the 2008 War and ceasefire negotiations. This is the purpose of this report.

Anna Fotyga



Photo courtesy of the InterPressNews Agency



Executive Summary

The Russian military invasion of Georgia in 2008 has shown that Russian revisionism has been taken up yet another level The Russian military invasion of Georgia in 2008 has shown that Russian revisionism has been taken up yet another level of attempted redrawing of European geopolitical map according to Putin's twisted understanding of the history and spheres of influence as well as undermining the rules-based international order. Kremlin also needed to feed its anti-western propaganda that supports its corrupt authoritarian regime with the victory over the West.

Georgia has been chosen as the target for Georgia's ambitious and rapid modernization, its advancement on the path to European and Euro Atlantic integration and setting the successful example of rapid democratic and governance transformation for others in the region.

Russia's use of military power and hybrid tactics, with its invasion of Georgia becoming the first step of open confrontation with the democratic order, undoubtedly represents not an isolated bilateral conflict, but part of the wider geopolitical context of Russia challenging the Post–Cold War order.

As the past 14 years have shown, Putin's aggressive policies make significant advances only when the democratic world is divided, especially on strategic issues. Now, when this confrontation is at its inflection point, solidarity, unity and individual leadership hold paramount importance. Particularly when it comes to EU and NATO integration policies.

The EU has already demonstrated the superiority of its strategic vision by responding to Russian aggression with the Eastern Partnership platform, which offers more accelerated integrational opportunities those exposed to Russian hybrid aggression.

In this wider context, to construct a values – and principles–based European security architecture, full implementation of the EU-mediated Georgia-Russia cease-fire pact—the so–called Sarkozy-Medvedev Agreement—needs to be given paramount importance by making it part of a holistic "no-to-division" Russia policy.

Anatomy of Russian Aggressive Revisionism – Focus on Georgia

The end of the cold war and the fall of the Soviet Union has been a historical milestone for the entire Euro-Atlantic area. It has liberated more than 300 million people from communist rule. It has created new opportunities for nations in Europe to claim their freedom and liberties, advance prosperity, and strengthen security. Europe became much more secure, stable, and prosperous. The expansion of NATO and the EU strengthened the security and well-being of European nations. The idea of Europe whole, free, and at peace seemed to become reality.

However, this process was soon challenged. The Russian invasion of Georgia in August of 2008 was the foremost sign of it. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Russian armed forces crossed the borders of other countries and occupied territories of another European country. Leading up to it, Putin's administration was using non-military components of the so-called Hybrid war such as trade embargos, manipulations with energy supply, cyber-attacks, or special services against European Allies and neighbors. The invasion of Georgia was a clear signal that Kremlin was challenging the post-cold war order, stability, security, and democracy in Europe and was prepared to use military force. After the Russian military invasion in Ukraine in 2014 and all later developments, the few people in agreement with Russian propaganda believed the war was an isolated episode in Georgian-Russian relations and had a limited effect on Europe and European security even changed their minds.

After the Rose Revolution of 2003, Georgia became an example of success in the very turbulent region for its efforts in democratic transformation and modernization of governance. They were also an example due to their progress in tackling the widespread and one of the most dangerous problems for the emerging democracies and nation-building - corruption. During President George W. Bush's visit to Georgia in May 2005, he called the country the "the beacon of Liberty". The Georgian economy responded to the governance and economic reforms with substantial growth in 2003-2008. Diversification and reforms allowed growth despite a trade embargo from the Russian Federation, which was the largest importer of Georgian agricultural products. For example, in 2007, when all exports to Russia were banned, the Georgian economy grew 11%.

In the late 90s, Georgia declared membership in NATO and the EU as its strategic goal. By 2008 Georgia had already made significant progress towards achieving compatibility with NATO and coming closer to NATO standards. The country also earned the reputation of a dependable U.S. ally and NATO partner for its contributions to NATO and coalition operations in Kosovo from 1999 to 2008 and Operation Iraqi Freedom, with a very large contingent of 2,300 servicemen on the ground by 2008. Georgia's contributions to allied operations continued after 2008 in Afghanistan. It was the largest non–NATO troop contributor and has suffered the most troops killed in action on a per capita basis. By 2008 Georgia was about to take another step toward NATO membership.

The successful democratic transformation of Georgia and its progress toward Western integration could have become exemplary in the region, which would encourage reformers across the region and beyond, including perhaps in Russia too. Progress. Due to democratic transformation, Euro-Atlantic integration made Georgia the target for Vladimir Putin in his war against liberal democracy and the liberal order he was about to move to the next level.

Georgia is an important transit route for trade from the West to Central Asia and an energy transit route from the eastern Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Because of its strategic location, Georgia could play an important role in further developing the energy transit and trade corridor that connects Europe to the Caspian region and beyond. Such projects would have been beneficial for the West, as well as Central Asian states as they add and strengthen alternatives for energy transit and trade routes. However, this has been another irritant for the Kremlin as it sees trans-Caspian and Trans-Caucasian energy and trade route projects as challenges to its dominance over the regional infrastructure.

Even though it seemed that the Russian military invasion of Georgia in August of 2008 caught the world by surprise, all developments in 2006-2008 suggested that the risk of such military action was very high and that Russia was preparing for it step-by-step.



Aug. 14, 2008 file photo, Russian soldiers block the road on the outskirts of Gori, northwest of the capital Tbilisi, Georgia. - Darko Bandic/Copyright 2008 The Associated Press

Georgian – Russian relations in the late '90s and early 2000s

Since the restoration of the independence of Georgia, the Russian Federation supports separatists and secessionism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to undermine Georgian sovereignty and democratization. Russia promotes and supports these regimes militarily, financially, and politically.

After Vladimir Putin came to power, Russia's policy toward Georgia became even harsher. Consequently, Russia's support of separatism and secessionism in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region has become an even more solid part of Russia's policy.

In November of 2000, Russia unilaterally introduced a visa regime for Georgian citizens and simultaneously simplified border crossing for inhabitants of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In the summer of 2002, the Russian Parliament adopted amendments to the legislation that allowed the mass distribution of Russian citizenship to the inhabitants of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara. Russian active-duty defense and special service officers have been appointed at key positions within separatist regimes.

In December 1999, the Georgian and Russian OSCE summit delegates agreed on the withdrawal of Russian bases from Georgia. The agreement was reached in the course of Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty negotiations and has become an integral part of the adapted CFE Treaty. Even though Russia signed the joint statement on withdrawal, it took about five years for Georgia, the USA, and European Allies to overcome Russian resistance to implement the commitments.

The Second Chechen War further strained Georgian-Russian relations due to Kremlin demands to use Georgian airspace and territory for Russian operations in Chechnya. Doing so would have been a disastrous move for Georgia, and could drag Georgia into the Chechen conflict. After Georgia refused to let Russian forces use Georgian airspace and territory for their Chechnya war operations, the Kremlin slandered Georgia for harboring terrorists and threatened the country with military intervention. It was obvious that Russia was trying to find a pretext for the military intervention in Georgia. In August 2002 Russia even bombed Georgian territory.

US assistance to strengthen Georgia's military capabilities was an excellent example of successful security cooperation. At the beginning of the 2000s Georgia was going through a governance crisis. Rampant corruption, ineffective statecraft, and weak institutions heavily affected the country's law-enforcement and defense sector. Corrupt police and a poorly trained and equipped military created the risk of Georgian security failure. In 2002, the George W. Bush administration started the Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP) to enhance Georgian counter-terrorism capabilities. The US sent approximately two hundred marines to train Georgian troops to train four infantry battalions of the Georgian Armed Forces. This program proved to be effective for defusing tension in the region. GTEP's experience was instrumental in the successful transformation of the Georgian Armed Forces.

Rose revolution

At the beginning of the 2000s, widespread corruption within the Georgian government and law-enforcement agencies as well as ineffective governance extremely weakened Georgian institutions and the economy. This undermined the ability of state institutions to perform their basic functions and provide services for the people. Russian political, economic, and military pressure and separatists in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region contributed to Georgia's instability and economic instability as well. As a result, public discontent with the Shevardnadze administration grew. By 2003, members of the international community and critics of the Georgian government believed Georgia was on the path towards becoming a failed state.

According to World Bank, Georgia's economy grew by 5.4% in 2004, 9.5% in 2005, 9.9% in 2006, and 12.5% in 2007

The Rose Revolution began In November 2003, following allegedly rigged parliamentary elections. Georgian citizens began large-scale protests against President Shevardnadze and his party, protesting political and economic corruption in his regime. President Shevardnadze resigned on 23 November 2003; Mikhail Saakashvili, a political leader in the protests, assumed the presidency on 25 January 2004 following a snap election.

The Saakashvili regime introduced large-scale reforms that produced effective results. Saakashvili's reforms are related to improving government regulations, increased transparency, and efforts to decrease corruption in government agencies and law enforcement. Georgia went from being one of the most corrupt countries in Europe to one of the most trustworthy governments in Europe according to the corruption perception index. State institutions and law enforcement became more effective and trusted by the Georgian people. Additionally, reforms transformed the Georgian Armed Forces and brought them closer to NATO standards. Economic reforms and government reforms resulted in substantial growth of the Georgian economy from 2004 to 2008. According to World Bank, Georgia's economy grew by 5.4% in 2004, 9.5% in 2005, 9.9% in 2006, and 12.5% in 2007[1]. In the first half of 2008 before the Russian invasion, Georgia's economic growth was similar to that of 2007. As a result of reforms, the shadow economy decreased radically and state revenues increased by 4-5-fold. These reforms allowed for economic growth despite the trade embargo from Russia which at the time was the largest importer of Georgian agricultural products.

In May 2004, as a result of large-scale protests in Batumi, a city in the Georgian autonomous region of Ajara, regional dictator Aslan Abashidze resigned from power after failing to end protests. Abashidze allegedly had strong ties with the Kremlin. After resigning, Abashidze fled to Moscow. Abashidze's resignation was an important step forward for a stronger Georgian statehood. In May 2005 President George W. Bush called Georgia "the beacon of liberty" during a visit to Georgia due to highly effective reforms made following the Rose Revolution.

1 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=GE

Georgian-Russian Relations 2004-2008, Crisis and escalation

Putin's Munich Speech

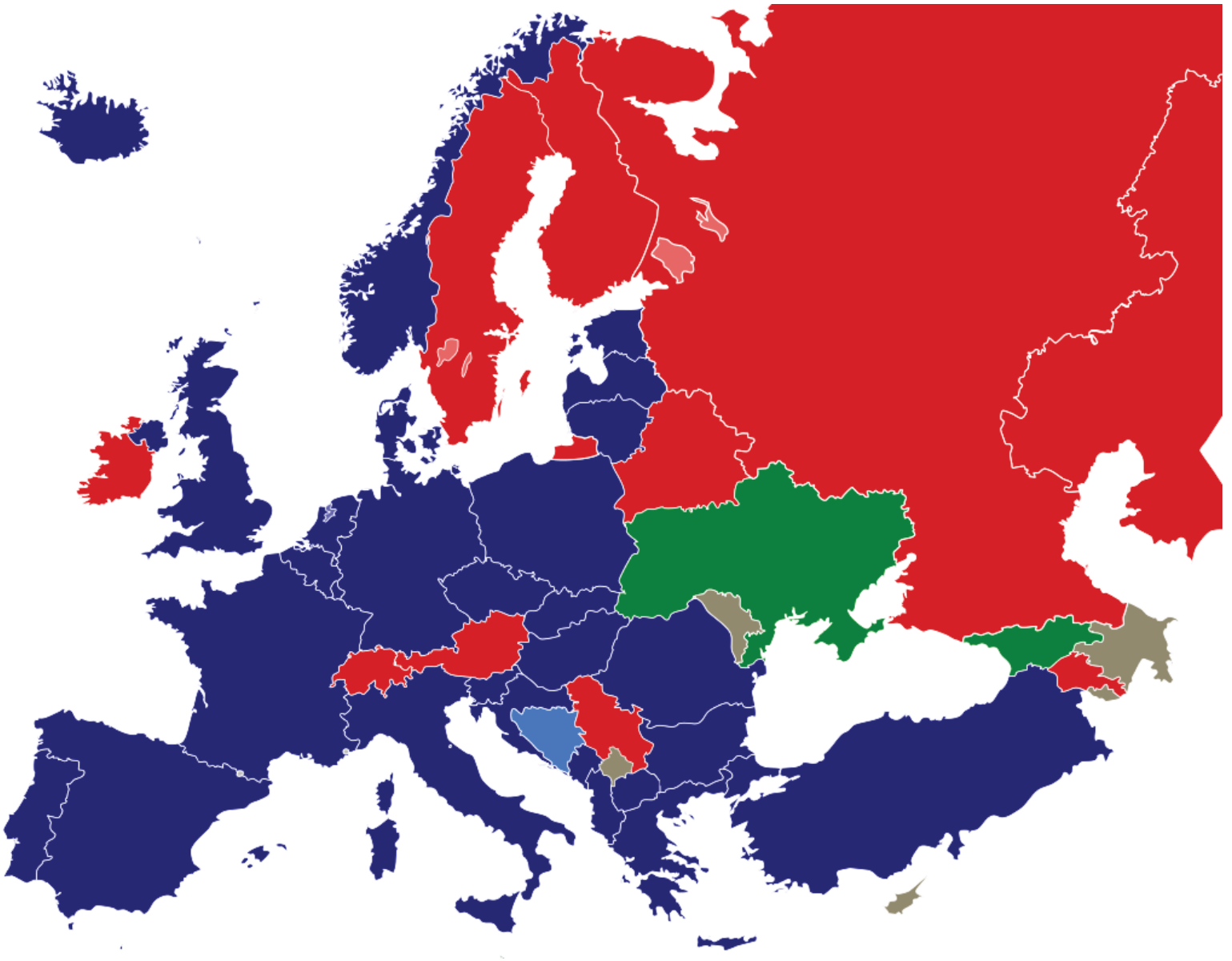
On 10 February 2007, Russian President Putin declared he would seek to change the post-cold world order in a speech at the Munich Security Conference. President Putin's speech, like most Soviet-era propaganda, targeted the American domination of global affairs. Additionally, President Putin denounced the expansion of NATO westward; President Putin claimed the West was behind democratic changes in Georgia and Ukraine which he considered his spheres of influence.

Kosovo Independence

Kosovo declared independence 10 years after NATO intervened to stop attempts of ethnic cleansing of ethnic Albanians by Yugoslav President Milosevich. For 10 years, Kosovo was governed by the UN provisional administration per UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In 2006, The UN-sponsored talks on the status of Kosovo began. In May 2007, UN Special Envoy Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari presented a peace plan proposal that recommended 'supervised independence for Kosovo. The plan was strongly supported by the US and EU, and opposed by Serbia and Russia.
After multiple failed negotiations to reach a consensus on the status of Kosovo, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. The International Court of Justice ruled that the declaration did not violate international law. As a result, the United States, France, Turkey, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, among other states recognized Kosovo as an independent sovereign state. In total, Kosovo's independence was recognized by 97 out of 193 UN states. Georgia refuses to recognize Kosovo's independence.

The situation in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions has nothing in common with the Kosovo case. Even more, the ethnic Georgian population was the victim of ethnic cleansing from these provinces. In March 2008, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice stated "I don't want to try to judge the motives, but we've been very clear that Kosovo is sui generis and that that is because of the special circumstances out of which the breakup of Yugoslavia came. The special circumstances of the aggression of the Milosevic forces against Kosovars, particularly Albanian Kosovars, and it's a special circumstance."

Nevertheless, President Putin described Kosovo's independence as a "terrible precedent that will come back to hit the West in the face". President Putin decided to respond to the West's recognition of an independent Kosovo by punishing the western ally in the region, Georgia. Putin asserted that Russia would consider Kosovo as a precedent with regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In February 2008, during an informal CIS summit meeting, Putin told to Saakashvili: "you should understand that after Kosovo we can't leave the West without an answer. I am sorry, but you are part of this answer".



NATO member countries
Countries in the process of accession
Countries promised invitations
Membership is not the goal
Countries have not announced their membership intentions

On September 15, 2008 a NATO–Georgia Commission was established.
wikipedia.org



President George W. Bush joins Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Ransmussen and German Chancellor Angela Merkel Thursday, April 3, 2008, prior to the start of the afternoon's NATO Summit Meeting on Afghanistan in Bucharest.

georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov

NATO Bucharest Summit

NATO conducted a summit on extending the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine in Bucharest, Romania on 2-4 April 2008. NATO began the MAP process with Georgia and Ukraine due to democratization efforts to improve governance and enhance NATO integration. NATO members viewed Georgia's and Ukraine's eventual NATO membership as an important milestone, a road toward a more secure and peaceful Europe. It was also well-known that Russia was against the membership of Georgia and Ukraine in NATO as it was against expansion and the very existence of NATO in general. The Kremlin also considered Georgia and Ukraine as Moscow's sphere of influence.

In Bucharest, the issue of granting MAP to Georgia and Ukraine has generated intense discussion among the Allies. MAP never was a political issue, but rather a technical instrument to prepare countries for NATO membership. This time it became a political issue. Alongside the issue of whether Georgia and Ukraine were ready to take the next step toward integration, the debate in Bucharest was about if NATO was ready to take the next step toward integration. Finally, the summit reached the compromised decision on the issue - while heads of state and governments issued promises of membership ("We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO"[2]), they delayed the decision for the MAP for these countries for later. It was not exactly what Ukraine and Georgia were hoping for, but still a very important positive decision and a huge step forward for these countries on the way to membership. However, the Kremlin read this decision in a very specific way – as a signal that the Allies were divided between the issue, and Russia could stop the process. As Ronald Asmus wrote: "Had the Alliance stood fully committed and unified behind this goal, Moscow might indeed have backed down"[3]. "… instead of taking the issue off the table, the NATO decision at Bucharest may have invited precisely the kind of Russian escalation vis-à-vis Georgia it was intended to deter. Within two weeks of the conclusion of the Bucharest summit, Moscow launched a series of steps that seriously upped the pressure on Tbilisi."[4]

Saakashvili proposal

As tensions heightened with Moscow on 28 March 2008, President Saakashvili presented its new peace plan for Abkhazia. The plan, among other things, included a substantial level of autonomy for Abkhazia, representation in the central government, and free economic zones in Gali and Ochamchire districts[5]. The de-facto authorities of Abkhazia dismissed the plan.

2 Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm

3 Ronald Asmus. Little War that Shook the World. Palgrave and McMillan 2010 p.110. ISBN-13: 978-0-230-61773-5

4 Ronald Asmus. Little War that Shook the World. Palgrave and McMillan 2010 p.110. ISBN-13: 978-0-230-61773-5

5 https://civil.ge/archives/114726

"Steinmeier Initiative"

In July 2008, tensions around Georgia became more dangerous, and Russian rhetoric and behavior grew more aggressive. In an attempt to move forward on the blocked political process on the conflict in Abkhazia, Western members of the Group of Friends of the UN SG on Georgia (Britain, France Germany, and the United States) came up with a three-point proposal that was presented by German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The proposal was a three-phase peace plan that included confidence-building measures, resumption of direct talks between Georgia and Abkhazia, and the return of Georgian refugees to Abkhazia in the first stage. The second stage included joint economic reconstruction projects in Abkhazia. The third phase included the determination of the future status of Abkhazia. While Georgia agreed on this proposal, Moscow-backed separatists refused it, and Moscow called it "unrealistic" and deferred further discussions on this.

Russian hybrid offensive on Georgia

Economic and political pressure.

In 2005 Russia announced a sharp increase in gas export prices for Georgia, more than doubling the price for natural gas for Georgia and making it equal to the prices for the rest of the European countries. Georgia had been receiving natural gas from Russia for a price lower than other CIS countries. In 2005 Russia selectively sharply increased the price for Georgia. Georgian dependence on Russian natural gas supply by that time was almost total. This step has been made in the hope that a price increase would hit the Georgian economy and make the Government of Georgia more agreeable to Russian demands. However, the Georgian economy not only endured this change but also maintained high economic growth of around 9% in both 2005 and 2006.



Location of South Caucasus Pipeline
wikipedia.org

In January of 2006, in the coldest period in the last few years, a few explosions on Russian territory completely cut gas and part of the electricity supply to Georgia. Georgian President Saakashvili said that the break-in supply seemed designed to put political and economic pressure on Georgia. "We don't think it is accidental in any way," Mr. Saakashvili said in a telephone interview from Tbilisi, Georgia's capital. "The places where it happened, the environment in which it happened, the history in which it happened - this all looks like a policy decision"[6]. Russia has strongly denied any government involvement in this supply cut claiming the explosions could have been set by terrorists and announced the start of the investigation. The results of this investigation are unknown.

By the end of 2006, South Caucasus Pipeline aka Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Gas Pipeline went operational and nullified Georgia's dependence on Russian natural gas, and with this, the Kremlin leveraged to use natural gas supply for political pressure.

6 The New York Times. 22 January 2006.
https://nytimes.com/2006/01/22/international/europe/explosions-in-russia-cut-gas-pipelines-to-georgia.html

Trade embargo.

In March 2006, the Russian government announced an import ban on Georgian and Moldovan wines. For both countries, wine is an important agricultural product for exports. The Russian market accounted for around 80% of both country's wine exports. The ban was initiated by a Russian sanitary inspection, a well-known political tool for banning products from the Russian market for political motives. Russia used this as punishment against the countries for choosing the Western course and to add political pressure on the Georgian government to change its western integration policy. The wine ban was quickly followed by a ban on mineral water and other agricultural products. With these measures in place, the Kremlin thought that the collapse of Georgia's economy would be a matter of time.

Expulsion of migrant workers.

On 27 September 2006, a Georgian law-enforcement agency arrested four Russian officers and ten Georgian citizens on espionage charges in Tbilisi and other cities in Georgia for allegedly working for Russian military intelligence. Georgian law enforcement released publicly some of the evidence in their hands related to the activities of arrested persons. The Georgian side handed over the four arrested Russian officers to the Chairman in the office of the OSCE who arrived in Tbilisi to negotiate their release. The officers returned to Moscow on the same day.



Georgians emerged from a plane at the Tbilisi airport Friday. Russian officials have accused the deportees of breaking immigration laws.
Credit: Zurab Kurtsikidze/European Pressphoto Agency

nytimes.com

This initiated the process in Russia that later became known as an anti-Georgian campaign. Putin called it an act of "terrorism"[7] and suspended air, rail, road, sea, and postal connections to Georgia, and stopped issuing entry visas to all Georgian citizens. In Russian cities, law-enforcement agencies have been ordered to start arrests and deportations of ethnic Georgians. Two Georgians died in Moscow in detention while waiting for deportation. Georgian-owned businesses were raided by tax police. International organizations such as OSCE and the UN as well as the US called on Russia to de-escalate the situation. Human Rights Watch[8] and Freedom House heavily criticized the Russian government for these actions. In 2014, the European Court ruled that Russia's actions in 2006 violated the European Court of Human Rights.

Russia's military escalation



A street in Gori is littered with rubble after a Russian air strike.
rferl.org

Withdrawal from the CFE.

On 14 July 2007, the Russian Federation announced that it was "suspending" its participation in the CFE Treaty, effective as of December of the same year. A formal document explained the main reasons for suspending its participation in the CFE Treaty:

1. The disagreement with the linkage between the Adapted CFE Treaty by the NATO countries and implementation of Russia's commitments to withdraw its troops from Georgia and Moldova;

7 https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5397102.stm
8 https://hrw.org/news/2007/09/30/russia-targets-georgians-expulsion

2. The disagreement with the Baltic countries that agreed to join who adapted the CFE only after it entered into force, i.e. after Russia would implement all its commitments related to troops withdrawal;

3. The Russian demand to remove the flank troops ceilings in North Caucasus on Russian forces by a "political decision" between NATO and Russia, ostensibly to "compensate" Russia for the alliance's enlargement[9]. In other words, Russia demanded to remove troop limits on its forces near its southern border, which includes the border with Georgia.

Military deployment in Abkhazia.

In the spring of 2008, the Kremlin started further militarizing Abkhazia, Georgia. Moscow already had de-facto control over Abkhazia and illegal military deployment in Gudauta Military Base that had to be withdrawn according to the Istanbul Agreement. In addition to a peacekeeping force authorized by the Sochi Agreement in April-May 2008, Russia's Defense Ministry, in complete violation of all agreements and internationally accepted peacekeeping norms, deployed over 1,000 additional "peacekeeping" troops with heavy weaponry into Abkhazia, Georgia. That force included personnel, heavy equipment, and artillery. On top of it, Moscow sent railway troops to Abkhazia[10]. Troops consisted of around 400 personnel and allegedly were tasked to rebuild the railway line. All these deployments were violations of CFE.

In March 2008, the Russian Federation announced its **unilateral withdrawal from the CIS Sanctions Treaty** of 1996 that imposed economic sanctions on Abkhazian separatists. Tbilisi protested Russia's withdrawal and called it a demonstration that Russia is a side in this conflict. The EU expressed deep concerns with these developments.[11]
In 2007 and 2008 Russia committed multiple violations of the Georgian airspace. The most serious incidents were:

1. Attack helicopters bombed the Kodori gorge on 11 March 2007.[12] Russia denied its involvement.

2. The Tsitelubani incident. Georgia's Ministry of Interior reported that a Russian aircraft violated Georgian airspace and fired missiles at a Georgian radar site on 6 August 2007.[13] Moscow denied its involvement, despite independent expert findings proving otherwise.[14]

3. On 8 July 2008, Georgian MoD reported that two Russian military aircraft flew over Georgian territory for 40 minutes.[15] The incident occurred on the eve of the US Secretary of State's visit.[16] The Russians confirmed that it had ordered military flights over South Ossetia. Georgia called it an "act of aggression" and recalled its ambassador from Moscow for consultations.[17]

9 web.archive.org/web/20070930192432 jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372298
10 jamestown.org/program/russia-deploys-railway-troops-to-abkhazia/
11 reuters.com/article/asiaCrisis/idUSL10832593
12 old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=15426
13 reuters.com/article/us-russia-georgia-idUSL0770646320070807
14 rferl.org/a/1078180.html
15 rferl.org/a/Georgia_Says_Russian_Jets_Violated_Its_Airspace/1182635.html<
16 reuters.com/article/us-georgia-idUSL0931046820080709
17 nytimes.com/2008/07/11/world/europe/11briefs-AMBASSADORTO_BRF.html

Military escalation in Tskhinvali region, beginning of War.

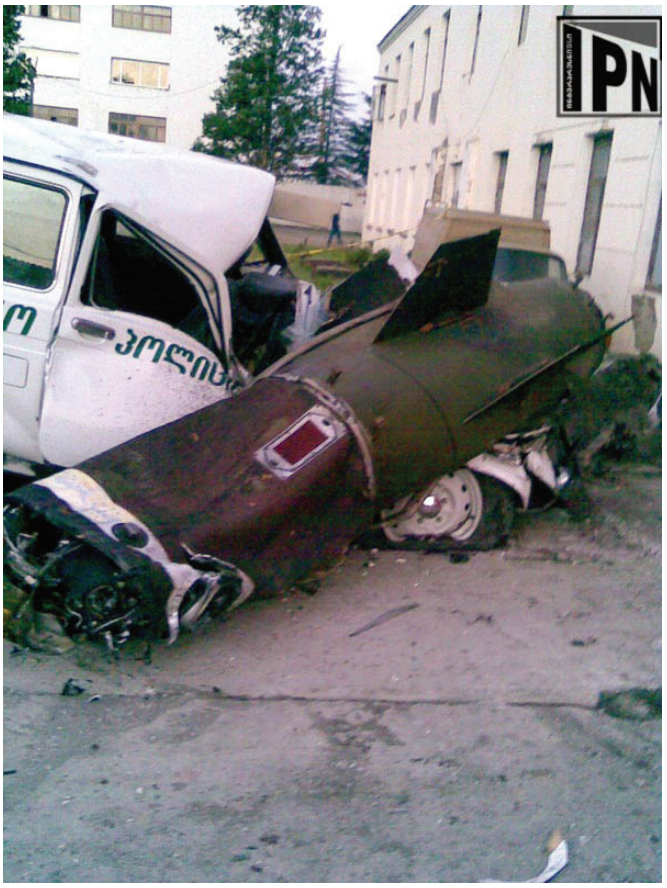
The situation in the Tskhinvali region further escalated on 28 July 2008 after South Ossetian forces fired at joint peacekeeping forces and an OSCE mission, and the next day shelled nearby villages.[18] On 1 August, a Georgian police vehicle was blown up and 5 policemen were seriously injured. That same day, Georgian and South Ossetian forces exchanged fire. On 2 August, a Russian military exercise in Kavkaz officially ended, but troops didn't leave to return to their barracks. In the following days, mobilized "volunteers" from Russia arrived in Tskhinvali. Russian troops of the North Caucasus Military District were deployed at the border, with some units crossing to Georgia and moving in. Russian researcher Andrei Illarionov prepared a table of actions performed by both sides during the crisis that described who started the hostilities (annex 1).[19] South Ossetian authorities evacuated the civilian population from Tskhinvali to Russia.



A Russian tank near Gori moves toward South Ossetia on August 22 as Russian combat forces began a slow withdrawal from Georgia.
rferl.org/

The situation further deteriorated on 7 August, when a Georgian peacekeeping post near the village of Avnevi was shelled by South Ossetian forces, killing two Georgian peacekeepers. Attempts to hold talks to defuse the tension failed. The Russian representative, Popov, and South Ossetian representative did not appear at the pre-arranged meeting with the Georgian Minister for reintegration. The South Ossetians rejected direct talks with Georgians.[20] President Saakashvili requested a phone call with President Medvedev of Russia, but the Russians refused. Around 19:00 on 7 August, President Saakashvili announced a unilateral ceasefire that lasted for about 4 hours. The bombardment of Georgian villages continued. Georgian intelligence reported that on 7 August Russian troops were already on Georgian territory.[21] In response of Russian military and paramilitary troops movement to Georgian territory Georgian army moved into the region.

18 civil.ge/archives/116849
19 The Guns of August 2008. Russia's War in Georgia. edited by Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr. A. Illarionov p. 77-80 M.E. Sharpe.
20 old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18910
21 web.archive.org/web/20170616163055/http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/16/world/europe/16georgia.html



The Russian Military invasion was huge, and the Russian invading forces were three times larger than the entire Georgian Army. The Russian invasion included a large number of land forces, air forces that also included strategic bombers, as well as Naval forces on the Black Sea. Also, as Ronald Asmus wrote, the Russian invasion was "the first time in history that an invasion on the ground, in the air, and at sea was coordinated with an orchestrated online cyber offensive, leading some analysts to term it the "fourth front" of Moscow's invasion".[22] Undoubtedly, the Russian intervention in Georgia was planned well in advance. Later on, Russian President Putin confirmed it himself.[23]

The Kremlin's ultimate objective through the invasion was to remove the elected president and the government of Georgia from power. In doing so, it would punish the nation for its choice to build a democratic, independent state with western integration. On 9 August, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov told Condoleezza Rice during a phone conversation that Saakashvili "must go".[24]

President Saakashvili requested a phone call with President Medvedev of Russia, but the Russians refused

Russian troops advanced toward Tbilisi in eastern Georgia and occupied some cities in Western Georgia including the major Port of Poti. Georgian troops withdrew to the surroundings of Tbilisi and were prepared to defend the capital. The situation was becoming critical. The Georgian public stood firm in the face of Russian aggression, with a large rally taking place in Tbilisi with people standing as a human chain to protest Russian aggression. The international support of Georgia also increased. On 12 August, when Russian troops were approaching the capital, the leaders of six countries, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia traveled to Tbilisi to stand in front of parliament with the crowd in support of Georgia.[25] France was holding the EU Presidency at the time, so French President Sarkozi took charge to negotiate a ceasefire agreement with Georgia and Russia. He traveled to Moscow and Tbilisi; after a lot of efforts and negotiations, a six-point ceasefire agreement between Georgia and Russia was announced. On 15 August, the ceasefire agreement was signed by Saakashvili.[26]

22 Ronald Asmus. Little War that Shook the World. Palgrave and McMillan 2010 p.166. ISBN-13: 978-0-230-61773-5
23 jamestown.org/program/putin-confirms-the-invasion-of-georgia-was-preplanned/
24 reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-un-idUSL937294920080810
25 edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/08/12/georgia.rally/
26 peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/724



On 12 August 2008, President Lech Kaczyński went on a working visit to Georgia. He was accompanied by President of the Republic of Estonia Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Lithuania Mr Valdas Adamkus, President of Ukraine Mr Victor Yushchenko, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia Mr Ivars Godmanis and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Radosław Sikorski.

Photo courtesy of the InterPressNews Agency



President Bush announces sending American troops to Georgia to oversee a "vigorous and ongoing" humanitarian mission

Even though the six-point ceasefire plan was announced, there was no sign that Russia was going to implement it quickly. The US was closely coordinating its efforts to stop the hostilities with other EU countries, and with France first as the EU presidency. On 13 August 2008, US President George W. Bush urged Russia to stop hostilities. Bush announced that he ordered US Armed Forces to deliver humanitarian aid to Georgia. He also announced that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would be sent to France and Georgia for a diplomatic mission.

On 16 August, Medvedev signed the ceasefire agreement. Russian forces stopped advancing, and by 22 August Russia partially withdrew its troops from Georgia as part of the ceasefire agreement.

"Russian Roulette"

The last 14 years of Russian revisionism was announced at the Munich Security Conference by Putin in 2007. Putin's announcement is marked by constant challenges of the various natures orchestrated by Russia. The challenges are as follows: military aggression, military occupation, the annexation of sovereign territories of neighboring countries, revising the history, integration of ideas of theso-called "Russiki Mir" (Russian world), the Orthodox world, the Eurasian Union, economic and energy disruption in the wider Black Sea region, increased military presence in the South Caucasus, attempted interference and obstruction of democracy, state terrorism, subverting the political idea of liberal democracy, state-sponsored cyber-attacks, exporting corruption, disinformation, mercenary forces, and bounties against the killing of American and allied militaries. All of these are well-coordinated means of Hybrid Warfare with the strategic aim to revise the rules-based international order, and establish exclusive zones of privileged influence. One of the main geographical focuses of this strategy is the Wider Black Sea region and South Caucasus, where Russia attempted to create a new geopolitical equivalent of the military Anti-Access / Area Denial (AA/AD)[27] strategy against the West.

In the latest round of the conflict and its resolution, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to a Russian peacekeeping force of nearly 2,000 in Nagorno-Karabakh, affecting Georgia's security and aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic community.[28] Russia now has a military presence in all three South Caucasus states, with bases in Armenia, peacekeeping forces in Azerbaijan, and occupying forces in Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The only non-Russian international mission is EUMM. For now, the West is effectively locked out.

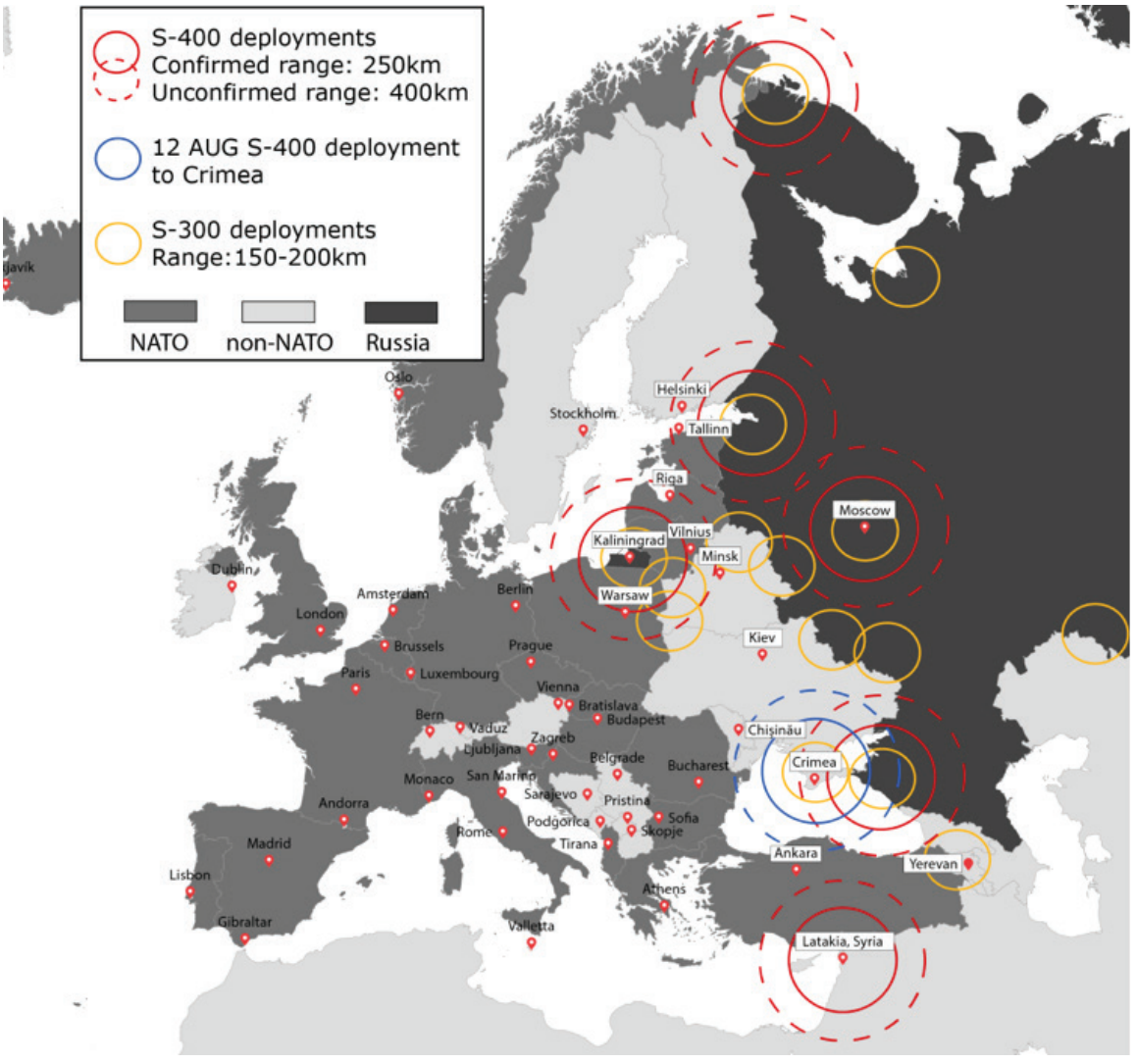
Still, Georgia and Ukraine have been the two missing links in Russian strategy since 2008 – two Black Sea nations with the idea of democratic statecraft and significant public supporters for European and Euro Atlantic integration.Therefore, they are experiencing the most hybrid Russian coercion since 2003. but more vividly since 2008 when NATO demonstrated its stra-

27 sto.nato.int/SitePages/newsitem.aspx?ID=3546
28 gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Kelly%2520and%2520Kramer%2520-%2520Georgia_0.pdf

tegic overextending of the Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia though promising membership perspective. According to the former head of the alliance, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO erred in not immediately granting Georgia and Ukraine a Membership Action Plan in April 2008. This failure sent the wrong signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin and may have contributed to the decision to attack Georgia in August of the same year and Ukraine less than six years later.[29] "Russian Roulette" was fired two times in the hands of the West – Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014.

Western response during these 14 years was largely reactive. In some instances, Western responses were rather delayed, like military assistance or reinforcements at the Eastern flank, or quite controversial, like unsuccessful but repeatedly attempted "resets" with Russia. These attempts were perceived as signs of weakness by Russia, and triggered more mischief until reacted to by tough statements by Western leaders and by sanctions at some instances.[30] Russia's tactic of blackmailing to get concessions has evolved during the last decade.

In 2008, the French-led EU mediated a ceasefire agreement was a prompt and necessary reaction to the ongoing hostilities triggered by the Russian invasion in Georgia.



29 neweurope.eu/article/natos-bucharest-spell/
30 ecfr.eu/article/why-attempts-to-reset-relations-with-russia-always-fail/

In 2016, after 8 years and two major military invasions, occupation and annexation made NATO adjust its threat perception and label Russia as the major threat instead of a partner (as it was considered since 1994 and the PfP program).

Meanwhile, individual EU and NATO member countries made some controversial bilateral decisions. Two of them are worth mentioning: Nordstream 2 by Germany and the Mistral ship by France.

The 2011 sale of two Mistral helicopter-carrier warships equipped with the latest technology has been one of the most controversial deals signed by the French government. Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to secure jobs at the Saint-Nazaire building site and seal his friendship with Vladimir Putin. Against the opinion of the US and most NATO member-states, the French president explained that "the Cold War is over," and he meant to convince the Russians that he trusted them fully as a security partner. The Russian military leadership declared that one of those ships was intended for deployment in the Black Sea, and the Mistrals would have secured the victory over Georgia "in less than an hour in 2008."[31]

Not all the western responses were reactive. There have been few proactive and strategically significant political steps made by the EU and the US after the 2008 major revisionist move by Russia.

The EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) is one of those strategic initiatives proposed by Swedish and Polish Foreign ministers in 2009.[32] The EaP declared a value charter, strategic Geography, andpragmatic deliverables (like Association Agreements, Deep and Comprehensive Free trade Agreements, Visa-free travels)[33] to significantly obstructed Russian strategic plans in this area. Russia immediately declared the Eastern Partnership as an attack against its national strategic interests and exerts its sharp power both overtly and covertly.[34] Since then, most of the Russian actions (war against Ukraine, state capture in Georgia, support Lukashenko regime, engagement in Azerbaijan-Armenia War, attempts of hijacking of democracy in Moldova) in the EaP area could be interpreted as direct retaliation or prevention against their further integration with EU.

The US's Military assistance to Ukraine and Georgia[35] and a recent EU decision to help Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova to improve their defense capabilities,[36] could be considered not only a reaction to the increased Russian threats but also proactive measure to bring those countries closer to NATO and EU defense arrangements.

Regarding NATO, the "Bucharest 2008 spell"[37] did not allow the alliance to move forward with the membership with or without of the MAP, but helped invent various partnership tools and cooperation platforms that could be useful when a political decision is made. Meanwhile, the Black Sea's[38] geostrategic importance became a priority for the US and NATO, resulting in a significantly increased military presence on the Black Sea. This move is not just a reaction on the Russian annexation of Crimea, but part of new strategic thinking to be reflected in NATO's new 2030 strategic concept.[39]

31 css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-130-2-8.pdf
32 civil.ge/archives/123233
33 consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/12/15/
34 europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/651966/EPRS_IDA(2020)651966_EN.pdf
35 defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/10/18/us-georgia-sign-military-training-pact-amid-russian-threat-on-the-black-sea/
36 rferl.org/a/eu-georgia-moldova-ukraine-defense/31590771.html
37 neweurope.eu/article/natos-bucharest-spell/
38 cepa.org/black-sea-security-reviving-us-policy-toward-the-region/
39 nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

The Eastern Partnership

Stronger together



*With regard to the participation of Belarus, and in line with the Council conclusions of 12 October 2020, the EU focuses on intensifying cooperation with non-state stakeholders, including notably civil society, independent media, and youth

KEY MILESTONES

	UKRAINE	GEORGIA	MOLDOVA	ARMENIA	AZERBAIJAN	BELARUS
VISA REGIMES	VL 2017 VF 2014	VL 2017 VF 2011	VL 2014 VF 2011	VF 2014	VF 2014	VF 2020
POLITICAL AGREEMENTS	AA 2017	AA 2016	AA 2016	CEPA 2021	EU AZ	
TRADE AGREEMENTS	DCFTA 2017	DCFTA 2016	DCFTA 2016			

VF Visa facilitation
VL Visa liberalisation
2017 Entry into force

AA Association Agreement
CEPA Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
2017 Entry into force

DCFTA Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
2017 Entry into force

2021
Council partially suspended visa facilitation provisions for officials of the Belarus regime

2017
start of negotiations for a comprehensive agreement

ABOUT THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

EaP | Eastern Partnership

Established in 2009 to **strengthen links** between the EU and its six Eastern neighbours

Encourages **regional cooperation** and **tailor-made bilateral cooperation** between the EU and each partner country

Supports Eastern partners in moving towards **stronger economy, governance, connectivity,** and **society**

Boosts trade exchanges: Trade between the EU and eastern partners exceeded €65 billion in 2020 (+22% in 10 years)

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Official family portrait of the Heads of State and Government of the 26 NATO countries and the three invitees - First row (from left to right): Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada; Sergei Stanishev, Prime Minister of Bulgaria; Yves Leterme, Prime Minister of Belgium; Traian Basescu, President of Romania; Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania; NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer; Stjepan Mesic, President of the Republic of Croatia; US President George Bush; UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown; Abdullah Gül, President of Turkey; José Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain - Second row (from left to right): Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark; Andrus Ansip, Prime Minister of Estonia; Angela Merkel, Federal Chancellor of Germany; Costas Karamanlis, Prime Minister of Greece; Ferenc Gyurcsány, Prime Minister of Hungary; Geir H. Haarde, Prime Minister of Iceland; Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy; Valdis Zatlers, President of Latvia; Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania; Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg - Third row (from left to right): Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Netherlands; Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway; Lech Kaczynski, President of Poland; José Sócrates Carvalho Pinto de Sousa, Prime Minister of Portugal; Ivan Gašparovic, President of the Slovak Republic; Václav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic; Calin Popescu - Tariceanu, Prime Minister of Romania; Sali Berisha, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania; Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia; Janez Janša, Prime Minister of Slovenia; General Ray Henault, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee

Photo credit: © NATO

These proactive steps helped maintain a high public support for the EU and NATO's Integration in Georgia. 80% of surveyed Georgians say they support EU membership, up from 76% reported in June 2020 survey. 8% of respondents disapprove of Georgia becoming a member of the EU, while 12% don't know. Youngsters in the 18-34 age group are the most supportive of EU integration, with 84% approval. Support for NATO integration stands at 74% (up from 69% in June 2020). 9% disapprove of Georgia becoming a member of the North-Atlantic Alliance, while 16% don't know. The 18-34 age group is reportedly the most supportive of NATO integration with 78% approval.[40]

Russian thuggish attempt to push back the West has escalated recently with the new spin by military saber-rattling against Ukraine and demands from NATO to formally commit not to expand further as the security guarantee to Russia.[41] Whether or not the "Russian Roulette" fire now depends on Western leadership, resolve and indivisibility when dealing with Putin.

40 civil.ge/archives/393027
41 politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-demand-western-security-guarantees-end-threat-ukraine-invasion/

"Resets" or "Overloads"[42]

Since 2008, there has been a significant restructuring of leadership on the Western side, while the Russian side is still represented by Putin. Every single Western leader, American and European, has tried some kind of "reset" with Putin. Unfortunately, none of them were successful.[43] Even worse, Putin successfully manipulated these well-intentioned attempts for advancing components of his grand strategy, as well as capitalizing on internal frictions within the transatlantic alliance.

Emmanuel Macron is the fourth French president for Vladimir Putin during his 20 years in power

Emmanuel Macron is the fourth French president for Vladimir Putin during his 20 years in power. France will assume the **Presidency** of the Council of the **EU** from 1 January to 30 June 2022. This will probably be some of the most challenging 6 months in the last decade. President Macron's ambition is to build genuine European sovereignty, meaning Europe's ability to exist in the world to defend its values and interests with the motto: "Recovery, power, belonging".[44] Besides the declared priorities of the EU French presidency, a major challenge Macron must deal with is Russian aggressive revisionism in Europe.[45] Additionally, he must deal with a possible attempt to intervene in France's Presidential elections and Macron's second term for office in Spring 2022, something Russia has already attempted when Macron was elected the first time.

A snapshot of Macron's Russian policy comprises of "right doses of firmness and dialogue". Dialogue with Russia "is necessary for the stability of the European continent, but it will be demanding because we will not give up any of our values." "We cannot stay in a purely reactive logic when it comes to Russia," he said as he arrived for the EU summit, 24 June 2021.[46] The key phrases of this statement are "not giving stability for the values" and "not to stay in reactive logic with Russia". This vision, to be materialized beside the resolve of individual countries, requires European unity and transatlantic strength. With the upcoming French presidency, Macron's special envoy for the architecture of security and trust with Russia Ambassador Pierre Vimont, *expressed his concerns about traditional 'relation privilégiée' with Russia, assuming that, Russia might use this to create frictions between the France and other European nations.* [47]According to him, many in the Russian government currently think that the EU is an irrelevant player. Moscow believes that the EU is not a real geopolitical actor and has no political clout. This is also one of the main reasons why Russia prefers bilateral relationships with individual EU member states and shows no interest in discussing with the EU as a bloc.[48]
Compared to the French Presidency 14 years ago, Macron has the momentum for assuming

42 rferl.org/a/u-s-election-trump-clinton-relations-russia/28100058.html
43 ecfr.eu/article/why-attempts-to-reset-relations-with-russia-always-fail/
44 diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/europe/the-french-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union/
45 euronews.com/2021/12/09/watch-live-macron-to-unveil-priorities-of-french-eu-presidency
46 rferl.org/a/eu-summit-russia-hungary-lgbt-orban-turkey/31323576.html
47 uk.ambafrance.org/Special-envoy-explains-French-approach-to-Russia
48 shrmonitor.org/if-we-want-to-defend-europes-interests-we-have-to-engage-with-russia-dialogue-with-russia/

a truly European leader's role. After Brexit, the new German Government, the relatively good shape of France's economy, and high public support, he can lead Europe to demonstrate its global geopolitical relevance. This requires him to pass the Russian test by making the Russian policy and his European policy coincide.



Photo courtesy of the InterPressNews Agency

EU mediated ceasefire agreement – Legacy of an unfinished job

The geopolitical context in Europe, dynamics of transatlantic relations, Black Sea security dimension, as well as Russian aggressive revisionism, indicates that Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus are the frontline of the Russian Hybrid offensive. Macron's EU agenda is comprehensive, but he has legacies of some unfinished jobs. One of those is the political process of implementing the Sarkozy-Medvedev six-point ceasefire agreement. The principles to which the parties have subscribed are as follows:[49]

1. Not to resort to force.
2. To end hostilities definitively.
3. To provide free access to humanitarian aid.
4. Georgian military forces will have to withdraw to their usual bases.
5. Russian military forces will have to withdraw to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Pending an international mechanism, Russian peacekeeping forces will implement additional security measures.
6. Opening of international talks on the security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

49 eumm.eu/data/file_db/factsheets/.PRES-08-236_EN%20(1).pdf

The framework plan fell short of the original proposal by the EU presidency. The draft had called for the "full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia" and the deployment of an EU or UN peacekeeping force.[50]


Sarkozy and Saakashvili in Tbilisi, August 2008

Notwithstanding its simplicity, the 6-point agreement has become the subject of wide interpretation by the Russian side. Immediately after signing, Russia tried to use its UN Security Council position to legitimize its interpretation of the agreement by introducing a draft resolution. These attempts at the UN were unsuccessful. E.g. in August 2008 U.S. Deputy U.N. Ambassador Alejandro Wolff made clear Washington's opposition to the Russian draft, describing it to journalists as "intended to rubber-stamp a Russian interpretation (of the plan) that we do not agree with."[51]

Until today Russia tries to push its interpretations through a propaganda media campaign. The most "updated" version of this interpretation was voiced by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during the interview with RIA Novosti on 28 April 2021.[52]

In this interview, Lavrov denounces the document as officially signed and refers to it as **"not signed but only discussed"**.[53] He explains that in the earlier version of the document there were important paragraphs that had been agreed upon by Medvedev and Sarkozy, but were struck out by Saakashvili before he signed it later. He particularly mentions the preamble, stating that "Russian Federation and the Republic of France seeking stabilization of South Caucasus (Zakavkazie), offering to Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia the following:" followed by 6 points.

Also, Lavrov, while comparing the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the cases of Donbas (Donetsk and Lugansk), states that Russia preceded with recognition of the former because there were no mechanisms of determination of their further status like it is determined in the Minsk agreement "short of recognition". It is worthy of mentioning that these comparisons by Lavrov have an interesting connotation (operational connection) that proves the Russian hand in both cases. A joint international open source investigation led by Bellingcat has identified conclusively that the Russian citizen Oleg Vladimirovich Ivannikov, the person of interest in connection with the criminal investigation into the downing of MH17, is the active officer of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Ministry of Defense (GRU). Additionally, until the war in 2008, he served as the so-called Minister of Defense and Emergencies of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia. During his term in office, military tensions between South Ossetia and Georgia escalated, with Russian mercenaries joining South Ossetian militias in attacking Georgian peacekeeping forces, and at one point shooting down a Georgian reconnaissance drone.[54]

Understanding the Russian reading/interpretation of the document is important context for understanding its further behavior regarding the six-point agreement and questioning the West's demand to fulfill it, as Lavrov said there are no binding agreements between either Russia or

50 reliefweb.int/report/georgia/background-six-point-peace-plan-georgia-russia-conflict
51 france24.com/en/20080820-russia-circulates-draft-un-resolution-georgia-un-russia-georgia
52 ria.ru/20210428/lavrov-1730231878.html
53 civil.ge/archives/416601
54 bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2018/05/25/mh17-russian-gru-commander-orion-identified-oleg-ivannikov/



Sarkozy visit to Moscow. August, 2008

Georgia and the EU.[55] Reasons might be that Russian policy is not admitting to being part of the conflict and legitimizing de facto authorities on the formal negotiation table of international organizations by bringing as an equal and sovereign participant.

Lavrov's statement contradicts the formal position of his own Foreign Ministry expressed in the official statement to the UN General Assembly dated 6 August 2009. It states that "The main ways for that [constructive cooperation] are laid down by the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan, the provisions of which Russia has been completely and rigorously fulfilling and will continue to fulfill in the future as well." [56] [57]

Russia changing its position from adhering to the agreement in 2009 and completely denouncing it in 2021 is not unique. Twisting interpretations of the international norms and agreements have long been the Soviet tradition, successfully inherited by Russia.[58] Notwithstanding this attitude by Russia, the six-point agreement and official explanations of the modalities of the plan by President Sarkozy and his administration[59] (see Annex) became key pillars of international engagement.

The key question to explore is why Georgia and the 14-year-old unfulfilled ceasefire agreement matters? Before answering this question, it would be useful to briefly review the status of **each point** of the agreement.

1. No recourse to the use of force

The large-scale military operation has been stopped. Georgia additionally issued a unilateral formal non-use-of-force pledge. This has not been done by Russia, which tries to distance itself as the party to the conflict. Russia established significant military bases in both occupied regions, integrated the de-facto regime's military within the Russian joint command and control system, and runs big-scale annual military exercises in Kavkaz, including the participation of Russian military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as de-facto regime's militaries. [60]

2. To end hostilities definitively.

Georgian armed forces have been honoring the agreement in good faith. After signing the agreement, Russia violated the ceasefire with constant shootings and bombings and executed additional land grabs, as well as occupying these additional districts (Akhalgori and Kodori).

55 civil.ge/archives/416601

56 Letter from the Chargé d'affairs a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A/63/938 S/2009/413

57 There is no single sheet of paper bearing the signatures of both Medvedev and Saakashvili. There is one paper in French signed by Medvedev with Sarkozy as "witness." (The signatures of the de facto Abkhazian and South Ossetian authorities, Messrs. Bagapsh and Kokoity, were added later). There is another paper signed by Saakashvili and Sarkozy. The papers are largely similar, but not entirely the same. The translation into Russian refers to the "security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia," whereas the French-language version signed by Saakashvili refers to "security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia." The former suggests protection from external threats (i.e. Georgia) while the latter leaves open that the threat could come from within. ncafp.org/2016/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/implementation-review-russia-and-georgia-aug2011.pdf

58 brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/11/06/did-nato-promise-not-to-enlarge-gorbachev-says-no/

59 smr.gov.ge/uploads/prev/9bbbc7.pdf

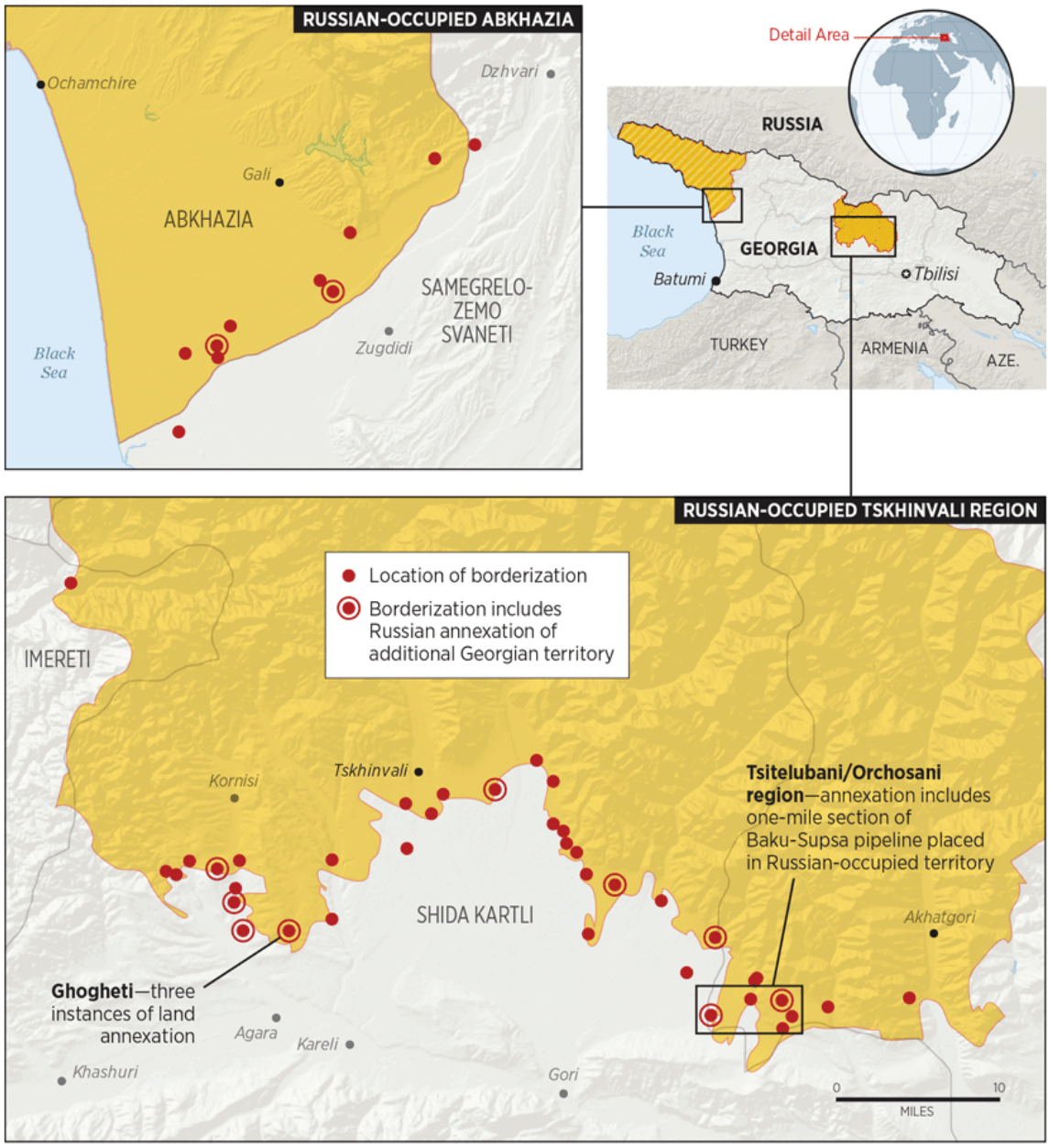
60 jamestown.org/program/russian-army-threatening-georgia-occupied-territories/

Besides that, Russia resorted to the policy of borderization of the occupied territories along the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) and frequent provocations and coercion of the local population of Georgian ethnicity.[61] The current pattern of this coercion and hostilities includes kidnapping (jailing, torturing, and killing) local ethnic Georgians for ransom. Although that might be real motivation for local Russian proxies, the entire process is manipulated by Russian special services to maintain psychological pressure on Georgia.

MAP 2

Russian Instances of Borderization in Georgia

Since 2011, there have been at least 56 instances of borderization—including surveillance cameras, illegal fences, and other barriers—across 48 locations in Georgia by Russian forces. Some of the instances include "creeping annexation" in which Russia has taken additional territory from Georgia.



NOTE: Locations of borderization incidents and boundaries of Russian-occupied territories are approximate.
SOURCES: Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Heritage Foundation research.

SR199 heritage.org

62

61 https://ge.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-statement-on-continued-borderization-activities-along-the-abl-as-well-as-the-disinformation-campaign-against-the-lugar-center-may-27/

62 heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest

3. To provide free access to humanitarian aid.

According to the Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia by the Council of Europe, the UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aided the Abkhaz population, while the Georgian Government supported their response to COVID-19 related challenges. The report however underlined that international engagement remained limited only to the ICRC in Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, with its Kremlin-backed authorities refusing Georgian-offered humanitarian assistance as well.[63] Russia tries to manipulate the humanitarian need of the affected population to achieve its own geopolitical goal of legitimizing de-facto authorities by bringing them as equal interlocutors at the discussion table under the international organizations.[64]

4. Georgian military forces will have to withdraw to their usual bases.

International organizations like the UN and OSCE are designated to monitor the process of the post-ceasefire agreement implementation process. Russia successfully vetoed the presence of them in Georgia. EUMM is the only international organization that Russia was not able to block to have a mission on the ground to monitor the force withdrawal process. Though obstructed, it covers the entire territory of Georgia for monitoring military movements.
Georgia fulfilled its obligation to pull back forces to their usual bases and allowed EUMM to monitor it through Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with the Georgian Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs limiting the deployment of certain troops and equipment within 15 kilometers from the conflict zones, opening facilities for inspection, providing notification of troop or police movements, and allowing for spot checks. There was no violation detected by the EUMM vs. Russian dramatically increased militarization in occupied regions. This dismisses Russian propaganda on the western militarization of Georgia. In some instances, Russia indirectly tried to obstruct the functioning of the EUMM and its leadership.[65]

5. Russian military forces will have to withdraw to the lines held before the outbreak of hostilities. Pending an international mechanism, Russian peacekeeping forces will implement additional security measures.

The Russian militarization of the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia is beyond the reach and sight of the European Union Monitoring Mission, established soon after the war to monitor the ceasefire agreement because Russian authorities prevent it from entering the occupied regions. Even so, in some cases, the construction of Russian military facilities can be seen with the naked eye from the Georgian-controlled side of the occupation line.[66]
Russia has significantly boosted its military presence in occupied territories.[67]

63 ecoi.net/en/file/local/2052736/Inf%282021%2910E.pdf
64 commonspace.eu/index.php/news/putin-meets-leaders-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-10th-anniversary-recognition
65 civil.ge/archives/186321
66 heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest
67 jamestown.org/program/russia-boosts-its-military-contingent-in-georgias-occupied-territories/



68

6. Opening of international talks on the security and stability arrangements in [of -in Russian translation] Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Russia has used simple tricks of altering the content by tailored translation of the document[69] revealing its true intentions: Creeping annexation and incorporation[70] of occupied territories by first recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent on 26 August 2008 (As a number of Russian officials referred to as quid-pro-quo for Kosovo). That was followed by systems of integration in all fields: military, economic, social, telecommunication, financial, energy, infrastructure, and issuing formal security guarantees to them. In 2015, Russia signed so-called integration treaties with the separatist authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In March 2017, the armed forces of South Ossetia were fully integrated into the Russian military. Deployed sophisticated offensive weaponry including tactical ballistic missiles, making them fully operational Russian military bases.[71] Russian action prevented any meaningful international discussions regarding this point of the agreement.

As it was described, the reason for the shortfalls of the six-point peace plan is a complex combination of political, geopolitical as well as international security systems. All of this considered, the agreement and entire political process around it still played a significant role in

68 civil.ge/archives/126296
69 Ibid.27
70 osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-03-12/abkhazias-creeping-incorporation-end-experiment-a-separatist
71 euobserver.com/opinion/142547

2008. It stopped large scale hostilities and possible regime change in Georgia,[72] opened the door for greater EU by peace monitoring mission EUMM,[73] bypassed the Russian veto in UN and OSCE, laid the ground for the Geneva mechanism with wider participation of concerned actors, including the US, and supported the idea of the necessity of the EU's regional engagement platform that resulted in Eastern Partnership.

Today, when the strategic picture in the wider Black Sea area and South Caucasus is greatly aggravated, France has a chance with its EU presidency to reinvigorate this peace deal, making it an integral part of the new comprehensive and holistic process for defending liberal democracy from authoritarians and more importantly putting it on the offensive.

Six Recommendations:

1. **Making six-point agreement part of the bigger European security context/ agenda.** Considering the wider geopolitical context, France, as the new EU President, has an opportunity to pursue holistic policy, consisting of the economy, defense, security, and democracy pillars. Putting democracy on the offensive should be given priority and needs to be backed by EU consensus, as well as US and UK. The EU can make clear that further continuation of violation of the six-point agreement will not stand and Russia will have to face consequences for not honoring its commitments. Economic, financial, personal, and political sanctions could make an impact on the Russian government's behavior with a gradual increase. This would strengthen political efforts by the EU to push for the implementation of the six-point ceasefire agreement.

2. **Reenergize the process of finishing the unfinished business.** Building Europe whole, free, and at peace is business unfinished. Promoting European solidarity and support for democracy is a key component for the EaP. The EaP platform could serve as an important strategic platform for amplifying the significance of democratic transformation and statecraft and increasing the impact on others in the region. In this context, **Georgia is more than Georgia.** It has set the first precedent of rapid democratization and progress in the region with the first peaceful democratic change of Government by elections in 2012. Georgia's geopolitical role is the key for Western Eurasian Strategic connectivity.

3. **Clear road map for NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine.** Making progress toward membership, only dependent on the performance of aspirant countries, should send a clear signal to Kremlin that NATO membership of these countries is irreversible. It only depends on NATO members and aspirant countries and can't be revoked by the aggression of external parties.

4. **Launching EU "No-to-divide" policy under the French leadership.** Further promotion of harmonization and synchronization of bilateral relations of the EU countries with Russia under the "no-to-divide" policy. The focus needs to be given to the opening institutional framework engagement of EaP countries. The policy should consider comprehensive measures against any attempts of history revisions. Fighting with disinformation, propa-

72 civil.ge/archives/117016

73 The EU's Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) maintains the sole remaining set of monitors on the ground and possesses a mandate that extends throughout all of Georgia, although it is denied access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russian and de facto regional authorities csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/Occupation%20of%20Georgia%20Designed%20FINAL.pdf

ganda, and fake news related to history rewriting and misinterpretation is used to ignite dangerous ultra-nationalism and imperialistic sentiments. Putin can't be allowed to re-divide Europe.[74] Russia tried it 14 years ago after invading Georgia and in parallel, offering the so-called "Medvedev initiative". Now, with the second attempt after Ukraine's coercion, Putin's new security order proposal is very similar to the previous one.

5. **Expanding EaP scope to defense/security and peacemaking fields.** This includes an effective approximation of the defense and security policy planning process among EU and EaP countries where possible. All of the following should be reinforced by the coordinated strategic communication policies: Supporting EaP countries to develop multilateral cooperation of various fields, including defense, security, conflicts with Russia, reintegration of occupied territories, reverting annexation. In Georgia, particularly, EU should strengthen EUMM capabilities by boosting EUMM representation, its manpower, and technical means of reconnaissance and monitoring. Strengthening the technical capabilities of the EUMM can allow the Mission to implement its mandate to the maximum possible extent.

6. **Boosting the EU's economic impact and soft power in Eastern Partnership countries.[75]** The sectoral integration should be strengthened between EU – EaP countries to promote strategic connectivity[76] along the Eurasian continent. Clearly stated, the EU membership perspective is a political incentive and means for reconciliation.

74 thebulwark.com/putin-cant-be-allowed-to-re-divide-europe/?fbclid=IwAR2iYye9DxTkznaIpGIlzHqrbhQ-pA4gj84JizKm0hr6JaLTVtabVH-dGvBI

75 journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1781685821999847

76 fpri.org/article/2021/12/strategic-connectivity-in-the-black-sea-a-focus-on-georgia/

Annex 1
Six point agreement

Six Point Peace Plan

Le Président de la République

Protocole d'accord

1/ Ne pas recourir à la force.

2/ Cesser les hostilités de façon définitive.

3/ Donner libre accès à l'aide humanitaire.

4/ Les forces militaires géorgiennes devront se retirer dans leurs lieux habituels de cantonnement.

5/ Les forces militaires russes devront se retirer sur les lignes antérieures au déclenchement des hostilités. Dans l'attente d'un mécanisme international, les forces de paix russes mettront en œuvre des mesures additionnelles de sécurité.

6/ Ouverture de discussions internationales sur les modalités de sécurité et de stabilité en Abkhazie et en Ossétie du Sud.

Pour l'Union européenne,
la Présidence française

Nicolas Sarkozy

Communique of the President of France

Administration of the President of French Republic, in order to ensure more transparency, would like to make public the letter, which clarifies concrete measures related to the point 5 of the six-point ceasefire agreement agreed on August 12 as a result of the meeting of President Nicolas Sarkozy with President Dimitri Medvedev. This letter was sent to President Saakashvili on August 14.

Beginning of citation:
Mister President:

Regarding point 5 of the six-point accord to which you – after President Medvedev – gave your approval 12 August during our meeting in Tbilisi, and which states that "Russian military forces should withdraw to positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities" and that "while waiting for an international mechanism, Russian forces will implement additional security measures," I wish to share with you the following points for the sake of precision:

· As I made clear at our joint press conference in Tbilisi, these "additional security measures" may only be implemented in the immediate proximity of South Ossetia to the exclusion of any other part of Georgian territory.

· More precisely, these "measures" may only be implemented inside a zone of a depth of a few kilometers from the administrative limit between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia in a manner such that no significant urban zone would be included – I am thinking in particular of the city of Gori. Special arrangements must be defined to guarantee the liberty of movement and traffic along the length of the major highways and railways of Georgia.
· These "additional security measures" will take the form of patrols undertaken solely by Russian peacekeeping forces at a level authorized by existing agreements, with other Russian forces withdrawing to their positions prior to 7 August in conformity with the agreed protocol;
· These "measures" will have a provisional character while awaiting the establishment as quickly as possible of the "international mechanism" whose nature and mandate are still the subject of discussion by different international entities, in particular the OSCE, the European Union, and the United Nations.

Armed with these points of precision, I ask that you confirm the agreement that you gave me and that you announced publicly in Tbilisi while affixing your signature at the bottom of the six-point agreed protocol that I had myself signed as a witness and guarantor in the name of the European Union. President Medvedev yesterday assured me that your signature would lead to the withdrawal of Russian forces pursuant to the accord concluded.

I ask that you accept, Mister President, the assurance of my highest consideration.

s/s

Nicolas Sarkozy

End translation

Administration of the President of France would like to make three additional clarifications:

- In the letter accompanying the cease-fire document, the mentioned territory is defined as in the immediate proximity of the zone of conflict, as defined by previous agreements, to the exclusion of any other part of Georgian territory. Any measure referred to in this document shall be implemented within an area not further than a few kilometers, around Tskhinvali within the zone of conflict.
- In no way can these measures limit or jeopardize freedom of movement and traffic along the length of the major highways and railways of Georgia.
- Other aspects of the conflict resolution process will be discussed in the near future.

Annex 2
Andrei Illarionov, Timetable

Table 4.1

Who was first?

This comparison is constructed with the pure purpose to identify which side—the Russia-Abkhazia-South Ossetia Coalition or Georgia—was first in committing actions that can be considered an aggression based on the definition given by the UN General Assembly Resolution #3314 on December 14, 1974. Considering South Ossetia and Abkhazia as de facto actors allied with Russia is an observation of factual relations, which is unrelated to their international legal status.

Out of 46 actions that are believed to be acts of aggression, 45 were performed first by the Coalition (Russia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia). One action was performed first by Georgia before the Coalition.

Actions performed by each party for the first time	Coalition (Russia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia)	Georgia
• Air force bombing of the territory of another party	August 23, 2002	August 8, 2008
• Deployment of battle tanks on the territory of South Ossetia	February 3, 2003	August 7, 2008
• Building of military base on the territory of South Ossetia	May, 2004	Absent
• Artillery shelling of the territory of another party	March 12, 2007	August 1, 2008
• Exit from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)	July 14, 2007	Absent
• Exit from the CIS regime of sanctions in relevance to Abkhazia	March 6, 2008	Absent
• De-facto recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (establishment of direct contacts with the authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia)	April 16, 2008	Absent
• Shooting down of aircraft of another party	April 20, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Deployment in Abkhazia of the regular military forces not agreed with the other party	April 30, 2008	Absent

• Deployment in Abkhazia of military personnel in excess of the agreed limits	May 26, 2008	Absent
• Wounding a serviceman of another party since beginning of 2008	July 3, 2008	August 1, 2008
• Invasion of a group of aircrafts into the airspace of another party	July 9, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Obstruction of the activity of peacekeeping forces of another party	July 27, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Firing in the direction of the OSCE observers	July 28, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Artillery shelling of the territory of another party since beginning of 2008	July 29, 2008	August 1, 2008
• Casualty of a serviceman (law enforcement officer, or policeman) of another party since beginning of 2008	August 6, 2008	August 1, 2008
• Deployment of heavy weaponry in the zone of conflict in South Ossetia	August 1, 2008	August 7, 2008 9:00 P.M.
• Use of heavy weaponry prohibited in the zone of conflict and confirmed by observers	August 1-2, 2008	August 7, 2008, 11:50 P.M.
• Mass evacuation of civilians from the zone of conflict	August 2, 2008	August 7, 2008
• Mass arrival of journalists representing the media of the party into the zone of conflict	August 2, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Arrival of military commanders who would be leading the operation into the zone of conflict	August 3, 2008, morning	August 6, 2008
• Meeting of a security council (or similar type meeting) that would lead to the decision to launch military operations	August 3, 2008, morning	August 7, 2008, 1:00 P.M.
• Beginning of mass mobilization	August 3, 2008	August 8, 2008, 8:00 A.M.
• Confirmed arrival of mercenaries (volunteers) into the zone of conflict	August 4, 2008	Absent/No data
• Presence of regular military forces of Russia and Georgia on the territory of South Ossetia	No later than August 3, 2008	August 7, 2008, 9:00 P.M.

• Arrival of medical units and communication units of the regular military forces into the zone of conflict	August 4, 2008	August 7, 2008 9:00 P.M.
• Regular description of the situation by the media of the parties as a full-scale war	August 3, 2008	August 8, 2008
• Issue of order of a chief of military (or security) body to destroy (to raze down) a settlement (village) on the territory of another party	August 5, 2008	Absent
• Increase in the number of peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia in excess of agreed limits	No later than August 7, 2008	Absent /No data
• Confirmed crossing of Russian-Georgian international border by regular troops of the opposite party	August 7, 2008, 3:52 A.M.	Absent
• Public statement of a political leader of the party to "clean" the members of another ethnic group from the zone of conflict	August 7, 2008, 10:50 A.M.	Absent
• Order to put military forces on the highest alert	August 7, 2008, no later 11:00 A.M.	August 7, 2008, 2:00 P.M.
• Causing death to a civilian person of another party	August 7, 2008, 2:00 P.M.	August 8, 2008, 2:00 A.M.
• Causing death to a serviceman of peacekeeping forces of another party	August 7, 2008, 2:00 P.M.	August 8, 2008, 8:00 A.M.
• Implementation of unilateral cease-fire on August 7, 2008	Absent	August 7, 2008, 5:10 P.M.
• Announcement of unilateral cease-fire on August 7, 2008	Absent	August 7, 2008, 6:40 P.M.
• Shelling positions of another party after implementation of unilateral cease-fire on August 7, 2008	August 7, 2008, 8:40 P.M.	August 7, 2008, 11:50 P.M.
• Order to engage into military operations given to peacekeeping troops	August 8, 2008, 00:30 A.M.	Absent
• Fighting positions adopted by peacekeeping troops	August 8, 2008, 1:00 A.M.	Absent

• Engagement in military operations by peacekeeping troops	August 8, 2008, no later than 06:20 A.M.	Absent
• Use of tactical missile against the other party	August 8, 2008, 7:30 A.M.	Absent
• Announcement of cease-fire, its implementation, creation of a humanitarian corridor for transportation of wounded and civilians out of zone of action	Absent	August 8, 2008, 3.00-6.00 P.M.
• Blockade of maritime routes of the other party	August 8, 2008, 4:40 P.M.	Absent
• Implementation of ethnic cleansing of the opposite party	Since August 9, 2008	Absent
• Marine troops landing into the zone of conflict	August 10, 2008, 1:07 A.M.	Absent
• De jure recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia	August 26, 2008	Absent

Source: http://aillarionov.livejournal.com/70169.html

*Types, dates, and time of actions considered as acts of aggression according to the UN GA #3314 resolution performed by each party for the first time

The French Presidency, but also the collective West, should draw conclusions from the 2008 War and ceasefire negotiations. This is the purpose of this report.

Anna Fotyga