

**‘THE NEW COLD WAR’:  
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF NATO IN THE RUSSIA-GEORGIA  
CONFLICT**

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## **Introduction**

Nearly six decades since its establishment in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) role has evolved, its functions shaped by the ever-changing nature of the international security environment. One of the major policy objectives of NATO during its founding years was to contain the growing power, global influence and hegemony of the post second World War Soviet Union which was deemed as the Alliance's main adversary, especially in Europe. Thus far into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO has maintained its original purpose of restraining Russia's growing power and global influence. While retaining their original purpose of preserving the shared values of democracy, liberty, and the rule of law, NATO's role has evolved in recent years in line with the geo-political environment. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it the emergence of new transnational threats, such as global terrorism, fear of possible clandestine nuclear proliferation, energy security and regional instability. This new development has necessarily caused a shift in NATO's policy objectives and security alignment, challenging the security interests of both NATO and Russia. In light of this new global environment, NATO and Russia have realized the significance of reclassifying the NATO-Russia relationship to enhance cooperation in order to be more effective in their efforts in facing these common challenges. This shift in NATO's security policy resulted in a more conciliatory approach to Russia, culminating in the establishment of a NATO-Russia Council (NRC). Tension and suspicion between the two old adversaries, however, remain under the surface.

Presently, NATO's reach extends beyond its original Euro-Atlantic focus. It now includes the greater international arena as well, mainly due to the Alliance's growing membership through its enlargement policies and increased global security interdependence. The NATO-Russia relationship still remains strained with Russia's strong opposition to the Alliance's enlargement policies, which move into its neighboring eastern territories, previously controlled by Moscow. Russia perceives this as an attempt to surround and isolate it as it gradually regains and enhances political and economic strength. In the wake of the recent Russia-Georgia conflict, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev announced that Russia was not afraid of the prospect of a 'New Cold War'.

This aggressive position by a nuclear-powered Russia poses threats to the peace and security of NATO's member states and its allied emerging democracies. Through an

examination of the recent Russia-Georgia conflict over the independence of South Ossetia, this paper seeks to analyze the effects of the conflict on the deteriorating NATO-Russia relationship and the implications of this for global peace and security. This paper illustrates the significance of the conflict's historical context (ties with Russia) and its value within the international arena (oil resources). What began as a civil war in Georgia several hundred years ago has recently evolved into a catalytic event drawing international attention and concern, reigniting bubbling tensions between NATO and Russia. The consequence is that the stage may be set for a prospective "New Cold War".

It should be noted that by "New Cold War," this paper does not prophesize Russia regaining the Soviet-era power associated with the "Old Cold War." Nor does it draw parallels between Georgia and the Cuban Missile Crisis, leading to a new Cold-War-like environment of the 'clash of ideologies'. Rather, this paper draws attention to the severity of the Georgia conflict, and its transition from a domestic level clash of interests for self-determination to a greater resurfacing battle at the international level, pinning Russia against the West, namely NATO. Instead of a 'race for arms,' the two old adversaries are in a 'race for allies,' as will be further illustrated in this paper. Russian leaders warned of the possibility of an 'open Pandora's box,' highlighting NATO's unilateral recognition of Kosovo's independence as setting precedent for other separatist movements; for example, Nagorno Karabakh within Azerbaijan, Transnistria within Moldova, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia within Georgia. In these cases, Russia has drawn parallels of Kosovo's independence backed by the Western Alliance, with their own backing of the attempted secession of South Ossetia.

### **Georgia and South Ossetia Conflict: Historical Background**

The instability that Europe faces in the aftermath of the Cold War is illustrated by the most recent incident that took place on August 7, 2008, between Russia and Georgia over Georgia's ongoing internal turmoil with its breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The secession of the breakaway regions is a result of the sentiments felt by the South Ossetians,<sup>1</sup> who identify themselves with their Northern neighbors (the North Ossetians), an autonomous republic within Russia. For historical reasons and legal ties with the territory,

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<sup>1</sup> South Ossetia is an autonomous Farsi-speaking territory of approximately 4,000 square kilometers, situated within Georgia at the bottom of the Greater Caucasian Mountain, bordering Russia.

Georgia places significant value in keeping South Ossetia within its borders, thereby refusing to acknowledge or concede to the region's call for autonomy, leading possibly to independence. Moreover, the recently developed multi-million dollar pipelines running through South Ossetia serve as a key (and practical) route for oil and gas reserves coming from the Caspian and central Asian regions to Western Europe, without going through Russia or Iran.<sup>2</sup> Russia, on the other hand, has had historically good relations with the South Ossetians, both as a trading partner and as strong supporters of their secessionist movements; a majority of whom are Russian passport holders.<sup>3</sup>

Russia provides two-thirds of South Ossetia's annual budget revenue (30 million dollars) and has vested interests in the region due to the multiple pipeline development projects.<sup>4</sup> The significance of the development of these pipelines in connection with this conflict will be discussed in further detail in the subsequent sections of this paper. The civil unrest between South Ossetia and Georgia has been a long-standing contentious issue for at least a hundred years. This has been fueled by a series of interactions and attempts by South Ossetia and Abkhazia towards independence and a systematic and persistent rejection of recognizing such a status by the Georgians. For the purposes of providing some clarity and a better understanding of the historical background and context of the conflict, this paper highlights four time-periods in which these interactive events played a major role in leading to the development of the current Eurasian crisis between Georgia and Russia today.

Tensions between the South Ossetians and the Georgians date back as early as the 1920s. Civil unrest erupted due to ethnic dividing lines between Georgians and the South Ossetians. The latter view themselves as distinct people from the rest of Georgians, with differing cultures, dialects and ethnicity. "South Ossetia made abortive attempts to declare its independence but ended up as an autonomous region within Soviet Georgia after the Red Army conquered Georgia."<sup>5</sup> South Ossetia received recognition, while under Soviet rule, as an independent territory named the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (SOAO) within Soviet

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<sup>2</sup> "Analysis: energy pipeline that supplies West threatened by war Georgia conflict." Times Online. 8 August 2008.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4484849.ece>

<sup>3</sup> "Regions and territories: South Ossetia." BBC News. 28 August 2008.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/3797729.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3797729.stm)

<sup>4</sup> "Factbox: What is Georgia's Rebel South Ossetia Region?" Reuters. 8 August 2008.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/europeCrisis/idUSL8557850>

<sup>5</sup> Nichol, Jim. "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South-Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests." Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division: Congressional Research Service Report, September 22, 2008.

Georgia; however, this status was not officially recognized by Georgia.<sup>6</sup> In the 1990's, as the Soviet Union disintegrated, Georgia established itself as an independent republic. Taking this as an opportune moment to break away, the South Ossetians, led by secessionist leader Eduard Kokoity,<sup>7</sup> once again pursued their goal to gain independence from Georgia with hopes to possibly unite with the North Ossetians in Russia. In view of the Ossetian majority calling for independence, the Georgian Supreme Council put in place a law in 1990 that barred regional party representation in subsequent parliamentary elections. In response, the South Ossetian secessionists held their own referendum whereby they proclaimed themselves as a de facto independent republic within the Russian Federation; no longer under the control of Georgia – administratively, politically or militarily. The Supreme Council of the Georgia Republic viewed this as an attempt to change the existing nation-state and administrative-territorial arrangements of Georgia, and thereby a gross violation of its constitution and sovereignty:

“The session was held under intense pressure of those persons who are not deputies and in gross violation of the constitutional and procedural norms. Such a decision, taken in gross violation of the Constitution of the Republic [of Georgia] is groundless and unacceptable not only in legal terms, but also runs counter to the best interests of all people residing in Georgia and may provoke inter-ethnic tension.”<sup>8</sup>

This strongly opposing position from Georgia caused further civil unrest. Riots and violence broke out in 1991 between the South Ossetians and Georgians with periodic involvement from the Russians [supporting the secessionists]. Georgia fully retracted its recognition of the status of the SOAO in response to the Ossetian declaration of sovereignty. In 1992, an agreement was reached and a Joint Control Commission (JCC) was formed with peacekeeping troops deployed from Georgia, and South Ossetia, also with a majority of troops from Russia. This agreement was monitored under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The JCC was created to: “supervise the observance of the agreement, draft and implement conflict settlement measures, promote dialogue and political settlement, devise and carry out measures to facilitate refugee and [the

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<sup>6</sup> "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," International Crisis Group, Europe Briefing N°159. Brussels: November 26, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> In 2006, to rival Eduard Kokoity's leadership in the separatist region, Dmitry Senakoyev was brought in as a rival leader in the territory through an election set up by the Georgian government.

<sup>8</sup> Decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic on Decision Taken on 20 September 1990 by the Oblast Council of the People's Deputies of the Autonomous Oblast of the South Ossetia

return of] internally-displaced persons.”<sup>9</sup> This peacekeeping mission was successful in maintaining relative peace within the zone of conflict. The “Rose Revolution”<sup>10</sup> in 2003, led by the radical nationalist administration under Mikheil Saakashvili, brought with it a renewed drive to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity. Saakashvili had a programme geared towards the reunification of what was perceived to be a divided state. Simultaneously, Saakashvili’s policies also targeted closing down the trade route between South Ossetia and Russia’s North Ossetia, used primarily for smuggling narcotics and arms: a strong support element for South Ossetia’s political economy and trade investments. Consequently, this further fueled the South Ossetian flames of apprehension aimed at the Georgian government, over their aspiration towards eventual separation, thus continuing the tensions and conflicts.

### **August 2008 Russia-Georgia Conflict over South Ossetia**

With the deployment of peacekeeping troops and numerous settlement discussions since 2003 between Georgia and South Ossetia, the internal effort to resolve the conflict was regarded as relatively ‘frozen’: stalemated at an untenable position. However, the boiling pot of tensions overflowed on the evening of August 7, 2008, with an intense overnight exchange of artillery fires between Georgian Federalist Forces and the secessionist militia. Russia accused Georgia of attacking its own citizens in an attempted ‘genocide’ of the separatist South Ossetians. In response, Georgians declared, “the operation [was] intended to ‘restore constitutional order’ to the region, [and] the troops [were] ‘neutralizing separatist fighters attacking civilians.’”<sup>11</sup> Georgian leaders claimed that Russia was meddling in Georgia’s internal affairs and was encouraging the destruction of Georgia’s territorial integrity. Within the first 48 hours of the first launched attacks, Russia with its sizeable and relatively disproportionate counter-attack succeeded in forcing a Georgian retreat (acting as peacekeepers and the historic protectors of South Ossetian interests), as well as blocking off the Georgian Black Sea ports. Sharing the South Ossetian breakaway sentiments, conflict also broke out in the Kodori Gorge of Abkhazia against Georgia, also supported by Russian troops.

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<sup>9</sup> “Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia,” International Crisis Group, Europe Briefing N°159. Brussels: November 26, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Mikheil Saakashvili overthrew the Eduard Shevardnadze government in Georgia in 2003 and won the elections in 2004 elections with the ‘bloodless’ Rose Revolution.

<sup>11</sup> “Day-by-day: Georgia-Russia Crisis.” BBC News Online. August 21, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/7551576.stm>

International fears and concerns were raised when Russia's massive, heavily disproportionate armament was also deployed to raid Georgian territories. The Russians "extended their offensive into Georgia proper, attacking on two fronts. One was south from South Ossetia to the Georgian city of Gori. The other drive was from Abkhazia. These moves brought Russian forces to within 40 miles of the Georgian capital, while making outside reinforcement and resupply of Georgian forces extremely difficult should anyone wish to [do so]."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Russia stationed approximately 8,000 troops within South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This was under the pretence that it was within their responsibilities to remain as peacekeepers in the region – deemed a security buffer zone - under the previously established mandate of the Joint Control Commission.<sup>13</sup> Realizing that Georgian forces were no match to the Russian tanks and troops sent into the Caucasian mountains to protect South Ossetia, and specifically as forces drew nearer to the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, Georgia was compelled to withdraw its forces from South Ossetia and call for a ceasefire. Three days into the conflict, a delegation of peace envoys (US, European Union and the OSCE) made their way to Georgia to broker negotiations for the ceasefire agreement.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, acting under French presidency of the EU, was successful in his attempts to broker a six-point ceasefire peace agreement<sup>14</sup> between Russia and Georgia, where both sides agreed to withdraw their troops to their pre-war positions. The six-point agreement was outlined as follows:

1. Discontinuation of any further use of force.
2. Cessation of all military actions for good.
3. Unrestricted access to humanitarian aid.
4. Georgian troops return to their places of permanent deployment.
5. Russian troops return to their pre-conflict positions – with the provision allowing Russia to temporarily implement additional security measures, before the arrival of the international mechanisms, such as the EU ceasefire monitors [Appendix II].
6. International talks about future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

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<sup>12</sup> Friedman, George. "Georgia and the Balance of Power." *New York Review*, Volume 55, Number 14. September 25, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> This claim is contested by the Georgian government, however, as the JCC mandate also calls for all decisions to be made jointly between the Ossetians, Russians and Georgians. In this case, neither the EU, OSCE, nor the Georgians recognize the 'buffer-zone of responsibility,' called by Russia and consisting solely of Russian troops, denying entry to anyone else.

<sup>14</sup> "Russia Signs Up to Georgia Truce." BBC News Online. August 16, 2008.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7564776.stm>

Tensions remained as foreign aid from Western supporters made their way into Georgia, while Russia maintained their troops within Georgia's breakaway regions, despite international concerns and condemnation of their placement. Both Georgian and Russian leaders accused each other for alleged violations of the ceasefire agreement.

Amidst this tension, Russia announced that due to the clash of positions between the West-supported Georgians and the Russian-supported South Ossetians, all military cooperation between Russia and NATO was to be suspended. "NATO had to decide what was more important to it – supporting Georgia or developing a partnership with Russia."<sup>15</sup> Within days of suspending military cooperation with NATO, Russia aroused further international criticisms when on August 26, 2008, Russian parliament formally recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia,<sup>16</sup> signed friendship treaties with the breakaway regions. The purpose of these new friendship treaties was to pledge military support from Russia through the development and enhancement of military bases in the two regions. This would ensure that "Russia and the breakaway regions would [be able to take] joint necessary measures to eliminate the threat to peace, address problems in [the] sphere and resist acts of aggression."<sup>17</sup> Under international pressures and the threat of imposed sanctions, Russia held up to its end of the EU-brokered ceasefire agreement and withdrew its troops from their self-established 'buffer zones' outside of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia still maintained their 8,000 troops within the breakaway regions.

As the conflict stands today, it appears to be at yet another stalemated position whilst Russia and Georgia clash in their pre-negotiation conditions. Whereas Russia emphasizes the importance of having representation from South Ossetia and Abkhazia in any international dialogue with Georgia, Georgian leaders maintain their stand in not recognizing the secession of these two regions. "Pro-Western Georgian President Saakashvili had proposed a peace deal under which South Ossetia and Abkhazia would be given a large degree of autonomy within a federal state. The separatists [have responded] that they would settle for [nothing] less than full

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<sup>15</sup> "Day-by-day: Georgia-Russia Crisis." BBC News Online. August 21, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/7551576.stm>

<sup>16</sup> Since Russia, Nicaragua and Belarus have followed suit in recognizing the status of independence of these breakaway regions.

<sup>17</sup> "Russia in Georgia Separatist Pact." BBC News Online. September 17, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7620972.stm>

independence.”<sup>18</sup> As a result, while reconstruction efforts and the return of those displaced are taking place within the war-affected areas, in the meantime, peace talks between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway regions have been suspended until November 18, 2008. This illustrates how the domestic level clash of interests within Georgia has revealed the greater resurfacing battle at the international level, pinning Russia against the West, namely NATO.

### **Russian and Western Interests in South Ossetia**

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, former Soviet bloc republics of the Caspian Sea basin opened their doors to the international energy market, seeking trading partners to export their production of oil and natural gas resources to countries other than Russia. “To avoid exclusive reliance on Russian conduits, President Clinton sponsored the construction of an alternative pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan to Tbilisi in Georgia and then onward to Ceyhan on Turkey’s Mediterranean coast.”<sup>19</sup> Despite its size as a small nation, Georgia plays a largely fundamental role in the global energy market. While Georgia itself has no key oil or gas reserves, energy pipelines of crucial global significance (namely the West and Russia) run through its territories. The most critical importance of the 1,770 km<sup>20</sup> long Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is the fact that it serves as the “only practical route from this increasingly important producer region that avoids Western reliance for oil from both Russia and the Middle East.”<sup>21</sup> The pipeline infrastructure cost the West \$3 billion to build and delivers approximately 1 million barrels of oil a day to Western markets. With the intentions of maintaining a monopoly and dominating the exports of energy resources within Europe and into the international market, Russia has set the goal for securing itself a relative European financial and political advantage. Western sponsorship of the development of further pipeline infrastructure thereby poses a threat to Russian objectives.

In addition to Russia’s historic ties to the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia also holds strong interest in the regions due to the sizeable population of Russian passport-holders, thereby Russian citizens. While the rest of Georgia under

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<sup>18</sup> “Background: South Ossetia and Abkhazia.” Australian Broadcasting Corporation. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/11/2330936.htm> August 11, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Klare, Michael. “Russia and Georgia: All About Oil.” Foreign Policy in Focus. August 13, 2008. <http://www.fpiif.org/fpiftxt/5462>

<sup>20</sup> “Analysis: energy pipeline that supplies West threatened by war Georgia conflict.” Times Online. 8 August 2008. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4484849.ece>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Saakashvili's government has expressed interest and support to the Western Alliance. At the same time, Russia has heightened the importance of paralleling the security of South Ossetia and Abkhazia with that of its own borders. In response to the Western Alliance placement of missiles and armament in NATO's East-European member states (Poland and Czech Republic, for the protection against the so-called rogue states like Iran), Russia too has taken advantage of their allies and set up military bases within the breakaway regions. Therefore, Georgia's geopolitical location as a Western ally, bordering Russia, on one of the most significant energy transit routes of the post-Cold War era plays a crucial role in the stability and accessibility of European energy security – both within Europe and the international energy marketplace.<sup>22</sup> As a result, international concerns have been raised fearing the risks to the pipelines placed in the line of fire between Russia and Georgia, thus upsetting Europe's current energy security system. Given Georgia's regional and international significance (with both its historical worth to Russia as well as the current value in the energy marketplace) and the divisive nature of the South Ossetia conflict, the domestic civil war has transitioned into a battleground between Russia and NATO.

### **NATO's Enlargement Policies: Georgia as Russia's 'Tipping Point'**

'To keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and...': this was the original purpose for which NATO was founded following the end of the Second World War, as stated by the alliance's first Secretary General, Lord Ismay. The Alliance of 12 was primarily set up to provide collective military defence against the regional threat of Soviet expansion within the Euro-Atlantic region. Today, it has grown to its current membership of 26 member states<sup>23</sup>, all sharing an objective for maintaining democracy, freedom, respect for human rights, and the rule of law within the larger global arena. Since NATO's successful elimination of the Soviet expansionist threat with the end of the Cold War, redefining its existential purpose and identity, as well as the significance for restructuring its relationship with Russia, has been the subject of

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<sup>22</sup> J. Blank, Stephen. "The NATO-Russia Partnership: A Marriage of Convenience or a Troubled Relationship?" Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2006. *An expanded, updated, and revised version of a paper presented to the "Intergovernmental Conference on Russia in Paris, France, on December 7, 2005."*

<sup>23</sup> Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States and Canada were the 12 founding nations of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. In subsequent years, membership within the Alliance became more appealing to nations who sought the benefits of protection within the Alliance and applied for accession: Greece and Turkey (1952), the Federal Republic of Germany (1955), Spain (1982), Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004). Following the April 2008 Bucharest Summit, Albania and Croatia signed accession protocols in July.

numerous debates within NATO and the international forum. Russia was perceived as the main adversary for majority of the duration of NATO's existence. It is no wonder why any slight change in the NATO-Russia relationship is regarded as a historical and fundamentally transformational shift.

The realization that global security was no longer a zero-sum game of leaders battling each other for absolute gain called for a new relationship to be developed between a renewed Russia and a transitioning NATO; a relationship in which collaboration was the only option. Within the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges like global terrorism, Russia emerges as a powerful and cooperative partner within Europe. Therefore, developing a NATO-Russia cooperative relationship<sup>24</sup> has been a necessary requirement of critical significance for the stability of a comprehensive economy and security system within Europe. This is a challenge as Russia still views NATO as a symbol of unwanted Western influence next to its borders and within broader European Security matters, from which Russia has felt (and continues to feel) alienated. This was further aggravated by recent events in the Balkans especially by the disintegration of former Yugoslavia - a strong ally traditionally and ethnically linked to Russia. The situation further deteriorated with the recent independence of Western supported Kosovo from Russian ally Serbia and by NATO's post cold War enlargement policy of encouraging post Soviet emerging democracies in the periphery of Russia to join the Alliance (NATO). These threatened sentiments have resulted in the re-emergence of a Security Dilemma. Instead of an arms race, NATO and Russia are racing against each other to acquire more allies, for a greater global influence.

There was apprehension and a lack of enthusiasm among most of NATO's European member states for the expansion of NATO to Russia's bordering states. Beyond assurances from Russia that the EU would continue to get stable access to oil and gas from the region, European powers are divided. This is due to the fear of disrupting the existing European Security system in the face of a hostile re-emerging Russian power. As such, concerns were expressed that this move would be perceived as a confrontational approach against resurging Russian influence, particularly in regions previously under Russian spheres of influence. This is mainly a result of Russia's adamantly opposing stance on NATO's enlargement policies. The

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<sup>24</sup> NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002, to deal with all areas of common interest between NATO and Russia. This included banding military forces in the war against terrorism, non-proliferation of nuclear weaponry, arms control, etc.

conflict in Georgia over South Ossetia has proven this apprehension correct and has served as the final straw for Russia's tipping point. NATO's relationship with Georgia first began in 1992 when Georgia signed on with the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)<sup>25</sup> following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Georgia's responsibilities and participation in NATO initiative grew in subsequent years with their involvement in 1994 in the Partnership for Peace programme.<sup>26</sup>

Over the years, a West-supported Georgia developed upon its relations with NATO with the intention of eventually joining the Alliance, despite Russia's vehemently opposed stance to this development. Most recently, Georgia's position, as a potential applicant for becoming a member state of the Alliance, was a topic of great debate at the April 2008 Bucharest Summit. NATO's enlargement policy has taken the shape of an open-door policy; open to any country capable of fulfilling its responsibilities associated with NATO membership as outlined in the Membership Action Plan (MAP).<sup>27</sup> In response to the erupted conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia, a NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) was established to supervise and assist Georgia with its MAP, set out for Georgia's future role within NATO, as well as to oversee the implementation of security measures within the conflict-ridden areas.<sup>28</sup>

The fear of encroachment and isolation from the rest of Europe has characterized Russian security sentiments since the breakdown of the Soviet empire. As a result of NATO expansion, the Black Sea (formerly under the control of the Soviet navy) now houses the naval forces of three of NATO's member states (Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania – and could potentially include the candidate states: Georgia and Ukraine). Russia therefore fears a situation in which its Black Sea coastline is surrounded by West-aligned NATO member states. Consequently, Russia's foreign policy has been shaped to face the security threats it perceives from an expanded NATO. "Evolution in Russian policy has been accompanied by growing Russian interference in the affairs of Abkhazia and South Ossetia through financial subsidies to the de facto authorities of these secessionist regions, secondment of military personnel, and the

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<sup>25</sup> The NACC was renamed to be the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997.

<sup>26</sup> The PfP programme seeks to provide increased security and defence cooperation between NATO and individual Partner countries.

<sup>27</sup> NATO-Georgia: History of NATO. Information Centre on NATO. 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

grant of Russian citizenship to residents of those regions."<sup>29</sup>

As NATO expands eastward into territories that were previously under Soviet control and edges closer to Russian borders, there is a fundamental shift in European security dynamics as an already tense Russia is placed on guard in its defence. President Medvedev made an explicit shift in Russia's foreign policy following the conflict with Georgia, stating that, "while Russia does not seek isolation, and desires friendly relations with Europe and the US, it cannot accept a world order that places a single state – even the US – as sole global decision-maker."<sup>30</sup> This point was reiterated through a five-point 'Medvedev Doctrine,' illustrating how Russia's foreign policy would take shape in light of the recent tensions with the West-supported Georgia. The five-point foreign policy that President Medvedev developed addressed:

1. Russia's recognition for international law providing definition of relations between sovereign nations;
2. The significance of having a multi-polar world, in which uni-polarity was not an acceptable world order;
3. Russia's plans of maintaining its global relations with no isolationist intentions;
4. Highlighting the crucial importance of protecting their citizens, wherever they are and responding to aggression with aggression;
5. Indication that Russia has spheres of influence within regions of particular interest to Russia (those with historical, economic, and security connections with Russia).<sup>31</sup>

In view of Russia's shifting foreign policy in response to its conflict over South Ossetia, Georgia has been pushing harder for NATO membership as a means of protection and a security guarantee. While supported by the US, Georgia has faced reservations regarding its membership to the Alliance from other NATO member states like Germany, France and other smaller member-states. Calling Georgia's move towards joining the Alliance as a 'destabilizing factor,' Russian President Medvedev questioned what "NATO [could potentially] gain by drawing in nations that are still at a crossroads, where the elites and people are split, where there has been no referendum, and where there is a major risk of separatism."<sup>32</sup> NATO's enlargement policy puts the Alliance's existential purpose within Europe at risk into doubt and

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<sup>29</sup> J. Blank, Stephen. "The NATO-Russia Partnership: A Marriage of Convenience or a Troubled Relationship?" Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2006. *An expanded, updated, and revised version of a paper presented to the "Intergovernmental Conference on Russia in Paris, France, on December 7, 2005."*

<sup>30</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7549736.htm>

<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, Paul. "New Russia World Order: the five principles," BBC News Online. September 1, 2008.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7591610.stm>

<sup>32</sup> Steele, Jonathan. "Medvedev describes Georgia attack non-Russia's 9/11," The Guardian Online. September 13, 2008.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/13/russia.georgia>

questioned, especially when applied to a civil war torn nation like Georgia.

### **Conclusion: Prospects of a "New Cold War?"**

Critical of a hegemonic US-led global order, Russian President Medvedev called for the establishment of a new European security treaty; one in which Russia would have a prominent and less isolated role. President Medvedev expressed his country's interest in reshaping the existing world order and voiced his concerns about the Georgian conflict, comparing it to the September 2001 attacks on the US' World Trade Center in terms of gravity and therefore deserving equal response.<sup>33</sup> This standpoint on the effects of the Georgia conflict with Russia over South Ossetia, has serious global implications. This could potentially result in yet another shift in the global security environment, since the 9/11 attacks, resulting in the emergence of a new European security system – one in which the West has potentially decreased influences. The war in Georgia may result in the re-emergence of Cold War-like tensions between Russia and the West. It may also raise questions about the legitimacy of NATO and its exact role within Europe.

Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Russia has been on high-alert against countries hostile to Russian interests as it gradually found its security buffer zones disappearing around its borders, while its neighboring countries joined the Alliance. It can be argued that inviting Georgia to join the Alliance was the final straw to cause Russia's invasion of Georgia, "the Kremlin's first military assault on foreign soil since the Soviet Union's Afghanistan intervention of the 1980s."<sup>34</sup> With the European countries' dependence on its energy exports, Russia is setting itself up to become a regional power once again. Regaining its global stature through its economic recovery as a result of the high petroleum dollar, Russia has gradually re-emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the struggle for global influence. This counters the US's existing position as the sole dominating international actor. Russia is set to re-assert its pre-Cold War era influences within the international arena once again, and has caused its periphery nations to re-evaluate their positions as to which they align themselves with: a

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<sup>33</sup>Steele, Jonathan. "Medvedev describes Georgia attack non-Russia's 9/11," The Guardian Online. September 13, 2008.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/13/russia.georgia>

<sup>34</sup> "Georgia, Russia Plunged Into War." National Post Online. August 9, 2008.

<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=710605>

NATO-centric security system with heavy Western influences, or the one proposed by President Medvedev for a renewed united Europe Security System Pact.

The global implications of the latest conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia, is that there has been a significant downturn in Russia's relationship with the West particularly with NATO. Combining its efforts to gain global influence along with the recent demonstration of its army's strength in the conflict with Georgia, Russia is driving home the point that it is prepared, economically, politically and militarily for a possible 'New Cold War'. This is exemplified through recent actions taken by Russia in response to security threats perceived from NATO enlargement. "As the US positions missiles in Russia's neighbors Poland and the Czech Republic, Russia is preparing to hold joint naval exercises with US neighbor Venezuela and station long-range anti-submarine patrol aircraft there."<sup>35</sup> Russia has also indicated an interest in restoring its military and intelligence ties with Cuba, in light of NATO's expansionist movements. Further manifestations of the Russian eagerness to regain their sphere of influence within the global arena is the 2007 race to the North Pole incident, where a Russian submarine laid claim to the international territories of the Arctic deep sea-bed, a move widely criticized by Canada, among other nations with interests in the Arctic Ocean.

Most recently, following the Georgia-Russia conflict, the US and India signed a Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act on October 8, 2008.<sup>36</sup> This is an indirect blow to Russia; as India, although not a member of NATO, did have a quasi-alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. This recent nuclear agreement between India and US demonstrates Russia's diminishing influences in South Asia, and thus fuels further motivation to re-establish its global influence. Russia's conflict with a West-Alliance-backed-Georgia over the independence of South Ossetia reasserts the Russian position that a security system mainly dominated by a single power actor is no longer an acceptable global order. Russia's high petroleum dollar allowed for the resurgence of its global power economically, militarily, and politically. Viewing Georgia (NATO's invitation to join the Alliance) as the final 'line drawn in the sand,' perhaps Russia used the conflict over South Ossetia as a proxy illustration (in combination with its other recent movements) to manifest its preparedness for a

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<sup>35</sup> Walberg, Eric. "Russia is determined to bring NATO's Expansion Eastward to a Halt: The Ghost of Stalingrad," Centre for Research on Globalization. September 16, 2008. <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=10237>

<sup>36</sup> Karon, Tony. "The Georgia Crisis: A Blow to NATO," Times Online. August 15, 2008. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1832988,00.html>

new Cold War-like environment. It can also be argued that this conflict sends a message to former Soviet blocs to re-evaluate their alliances, in the face of a resurging regional power. Thus, foreign policies of all key actors in this conflict (NATO members and Russia) are being shaped by what could be argued to be a brewing "New Cold War." With the emergence of this new security dilemma, NATO can ill afford to encourage military confrontations leading to the development of yet another hot spot, and rather should push for solutions that are more diplomatic. Canada, utilizing its leadership role within NATO, should globally advocate for an UN-monitored plebiscite to honor the right to self-determination with the South Ossetians and Georgia. This is just as was practiced in the case of Kosovo referendum leading to its independence, and Canada's own experiences with the Quebec referendums in recent years (which resulted in Quebec staying within the Canadian Confederation). These developments will have an impact in reshaping the future foreign policies of Canada vis-à-vis its relationship with fellow NATO members and other powerful global actors.

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30. APPENDIX I



\*Map taken from BBC News Online: August 16, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7564776.stm>\*

**APPENDIX II**<sup>37</sup>

*16 August 2008 - Letter from Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy on six-point ceasefire agreement*

*For the sake of transparency, the Presidency of the Republic wishes to make public the letter that specifically establishes the arrangements for the implementation of point 5 of the six-point ceasefire agreement, such as these points emerged from the meeting on 12 August between the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Russian President, Dmitri Medvedev. This letter was sent to President Mikheil Saakashvili on 14 August.*

== beginning of quote ==

Mr. President,

With respect to point 5 of the six-point agreement to which you gave your agreement on 12 August—after that of President Medvedev—at our meeting in Tbilisi, which stipulates that “the Russian forces must withdraw to the lines prior to the outbreak of hostilities” and that “pending an international mechanism, the Russian peacekeeping forces shall implement additional security measures,” I wish to inform you of the following points:

As I stated at our joint press conference in Tbilisi, these “additional security measures” could only be implemented in the immediate vicinity of South Ossetia, to the exclusion of any other portion of the Georgian territory;

Specifically, these “measures” may only be implemented within a zone a few kilometers deep inside the administrative boundary between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia, such that no major urban centre is included in this zone—I am thinking particularly of the city of Gori; special arrangements must be defined to guarantee freedom of movement and circulation along Georgian road and railways;

These “additional security measures” shall consist of patrols carried out exclusively by Russian peacekeeping forces at the levels authorized by the existing arrangements, the other Russian forces withdrawing to their positions prior to 7 August in compliance with the protocol agreement;

These “measures” shall be provisional, pending the establishment as soon as possible of the “international mechanism” whose nature and mandate are already under discussion in various international bodies, in particular the OSCE, the European Union and the United Nations.

Based on this information, I request that you confirm the agreement that you gave me and that you announced publicly in Tbilisi by signing at the bottom of the six-point protocol agreement that I myself signed as a witness and guarantor on behalf of the European Union. Yesterday, President Medvedev assured me that your signature would lead to the withdrawal of Russian forces in compliance with the concluded agreement.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurance of my very high consideration.

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from French President, Nicolas Sarkozy on EU-brokered six-point ceasefire agreement. August 16, 2008. France at the United Nations website: <http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article2279>

Signed: Nicolas Sarkozy

== end of quote ==

The Presidency of the Republic wishes to add the following 3 points:

In the letter accompanying the document relating to the ceasefire, the territory referred to is to be understood as the immediate vicinity to the conflict zone, such as it is specified in prior arrangements, to the exclusion of all other parts of the Georgian territory. The measures defined in this document can only be implemented within a zone a few kilometers deep, around Tskhinvali in the conflict zone. □ In no way can the measures mentioned in the letter be limited or jeopardize freedom of movement and circulation along the Georgian road and railways. □