

WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 2036
August 27, 2008

The EU Must Express Solidarity with Georgia at Its Emergency Summit

Sally McNamara and Ariel Cohen, Ph.D.

Over a week ago, French President Nicholas Sarkozy threatened to convene an emergency EU summit to deliberate on the Georgian–Russian War.

On Monday, Sarkozy made good on his promise, announcing that precisely such an extraordinary meeting of EU leaders will occur in Brussels on September 1.

Russia has recognized independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the EU needs to address this violation of international law. Subsequently, the summit is intended to discuss two key issues:

1. The EU's aid and reconstruction package for Georgia; and
2. The EU's future relationship with Russia.

It would be appropriate for the EU to add a third agenda item to the summit—non-recognition of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence—and to take steps opposing unilateral state boundary changes in Europe through the use of force.

The Georgian–Russian War has demonstrated deep divisions among European powers about how to handle Russia, with Central and Eastern Europe and the Nordic states on one side and Continental Europe led by France and Germany on the other. Next week's EU summit will take place under the most trying of circumstances as the Kremlin has formally recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Therefore, it is important that the EU, working together with the United States, sends Moscow an unequivocal message: Actions have consequences.

Neutrality is no longer an option for Europe. The EU must make sure its summit's conclusions are as much about Georgia as Russia and extend the hand of friendship to a nation with clear Euro–Atlantic aspirations.

Aid, Trade, and Reconstruction. Both the United States and the EU were quick to offer humanitarian assistance to war-torn Georgia. The *USS McFaul* recently docked in the Georgian port of Batumi with aid supplies, thus complementing USAID's immediate humanitarian effort. U.S. aid to Georgia in the past week alone totals more than \$10 million.¹ The EU has also authorized an additional €5 million in aid money on top of the €1 million released within days of the outbreak of the conflict.²

More significantly, the head of the U.S. European Command and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, U.S. Gen. John Craddock, recently pledged U.S. military aid for Georgia to rebuild its depleted capacity during his visit there last week. Although the U.S. has not stipulated the amount of military aid it will send, Russia calculatingly destroyed a significant part of Georgia's war-fighting capacity, and any serious attempt at rebuilding it will

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm2036.cfm

Produced by The Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002–4999
(202) 546-4400 • heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

Current U.S. Security Assistance Funding to Georgia

In Thousands of Dollars

Account	FY 2007 Actual	FY2007 Supplemental	FY 2008 Estimate	FY 2008 Supplemental	FY2009 Requested
Foreign Military Financing	\$9,700	None	\$9,000	None	\$11,000
International Military Education and Training	1,160	None	761	None	1,000
Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs	5,115	None	3,210	None	2,200

Source: 2009 Congressional Budget Justifications for Foreign Operations, at <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/64766.htm> (August 27, 2008).

Table I • WM 2036  heritage.org

exceed the current level of security assistance the U.S. provides to Georgia.

There has been significant damage to Georgia's infrastructure, including its railways, bridges and other transportation routes. Subsequently, there needs to be strategic thinking on the long term rebuilding of Georgia. The EU, in partnership with other relevant actors, should work with the top-flight team of U.S. assessors currently in Tbilisi to discuss a longer-term strategic plan for Georgia's reconstruction.³ The planned EU assessment mission should work with the U.S. to make a full inventory of the level of reconstruction aid that will be required.

Upon its request for emergency assistance for Georgia at the outbreak of the conflict, the EU received immediate responses from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, France, Greece, Hungary, Austria, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Slovakia. Emergency supplies such as tents, sleeping bags, and medicines were dispatched straight away, overseen by EU experts from the Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

The EU should harness this generosity by basing permanent ECHO experts in-country to liaise

between Brussels and Tbilisi on Georgia's long-term rebuilding efforts. Although the EU has a pitiful record on managing aid—a record that led a British minister of state to describe the European Commission as “the worst [aid] agency in the world”—the organization has an opportunity to demonstrate at least some relevance in this conflict by working with its member states in managing a well crafted aid strategy, in cooperation with other international actors, for a country recovering from the horrors of war.⁴

Such a strategy could well mean that the EU is simply a forum for coordinating donors or a focal point for generating international giving. For instance, the U.K.'s Department for International Development has a far superior record in managing large aid projects and would work well alongside the EU rather than sending its money through them as a middle man. The EU should not play power politics here to become the only European aid actor but rather use its penchant for soft power to garner added value. For instance, the International Crisis Group has called for an international donors conference to be convened sooner rather than later.⁵ The EU could play a valuable coordination role at such a conference.

1. David Rising, “Displaced Georgians Look to US for Hope, Aid,” Associated Press, August 21, 2008, at <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5iAaxBz9DkU37JkqSdYI2hHBILQkAD92MP9IG1> (August 26, 2008).
2. “EU offers more aid for Georgia,” *EU Business*, August 22, 2008, at <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1219403821.73> (August 26, 2008).
3. “Interagency Delegation to Assess Economic and Reconstruction Needs in Georgia,” Media Note, Office of the Spokesman, Washington, D.C., August 25, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/aug/108863.htm> (August 26, 2008).
4. “Short Attacks EU Aid Agency,” *Birmingham Post*, May 18, 2000.
5. “Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout,” International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 195, August 22, 2008, p. 24, at http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/195_russia_vs_georgia_the_fallout.pdf (August 27, 2008).

The EU also has another important weapon that can be used to express its solidarity with Tbilisi. When it adopted the EU–Georgia Neighborhood Policy Action Plan in November 2006, it stated: “The European Union takes note of Georgia’s expressed European aspirations.” It explicitly affirmed its respect for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and looked at extremely detailed ways to increase its trading relationship.⁶ The EU must use this opportune time to fulfill its commitment to Georgia by expediting its feasibility study exploring the possibility of establishing a free trade agreement between the EU and Georgia. Working in conjunction with Europe’s aid policies, it can help facilitate trade by directing reconstruction projects such as rebuilding the port facilities at Poti.

Additionally, in a show of solidarity with Georgia, the EU should transfer its entire aid budget for Russia to Georgia. Since 1991, €2.7 billion of assistance has been provided to Russia through the European Commission. As Russia accumulated approximately \$600 billion in hard currency reserves and boasts a GDP of over \$1 trillion a year, it hardly needs EU aid. Even though the level of assistance has “considerably diminished” in recent years, between €60 million and €100 million per annum has been made available to Russia over the next few years to develop EU–Russia relations in areas of security, justice, and, ironically, crisis management.⁷ In reality, this money is designed to elicit cooperation and international compliance with a range of pointless European regulations by a country that has shown itself to be more of an antagonist than a partner. In fact, Russia has promised \$420 million in aid for South Ossetia, making a mockery of EU generosity.⁸ In light of the recent Russian aggression and geopolitical bullying, the EU should send a message to Moscow by terminating the aid.

Europe’s Leverage over Russia. Under the leadership of Nicholas Sarkozy, Europe has thus far steered an unsuccessful path in meaningfully resolving the Georgian crisis. By recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Moscow signaled that it is not interested in de-escalation, is not (so far) impressed by the West’s response, and may be taking Europe for granted. If Russia is not stopped now, it may decide to pursue similar policies in Ukraine and possibly even the Baltic states—all to the great detriment of European security.

Having negotiated a six-point ceasefire, Russia missed two deadlines for withdrawal and destroyed much of Georgia’s infrastructure in the interim. Sarkozy then took the case to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where he intensified diplomatic efforts to find a peace agreement. If France is to remain in the driving seat, it must accept that meaningful resolution in the UNSC is unlikely. As a permanent member of the UNSC, Russia has the ability to veto council resolutions, and it has demonstrated that it is quite prepared to do so.

The EU must therefore be prepared to use alternate leverage to pressure Russia. As EU spokesman Martin Selmayr noted, “We can’t send stormtroopers, but we have a trade and economic policy we can discuss. We are an economic force.”⁹ In addition to its commitment on trade and aid, France should begin now to convince its EU partners to take the following concrete measures:

- Withdraw its support for Russia’s membership of the World Trade Organization;
- Disinvite Russia from future G-8 meetings;
- Announce that France will sponsor a move in the International Olympic Committee to transfer the Winter 2014 Olympics from the Russian resort of Sochi, which is 20 kilometers from the

6. EU/Georgia ENP Action Plan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Georgia, at http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=156&lang_id=ENG (August 26, 2008).

7. “Financial Co-operation,” European Commission External Relations, at http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/russia/financial_cooperation_en.htm (August 26, 2008).

8. “Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout,” International Crisis Group, p. 24.

9. Jeanne Whalen, “Russian Forces Outline Plans For Major Military Presence,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 2008, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121923076375956371.html> (August 21, 2008).

Russian–Georgian border, to a different location; and

- Suspend negotiation of an EU–Russian trade and investment treaty.

These steps would send a powerful signal to Moscow that the West stands together in confronting Russia’s illegal recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and immoral actions in Georgia. Such steps would also undermine Russia’s longer-term strategy of dividing the West.

Countering the Bear. It should come as no surprise that “New” Europe wants to see a stronger reaction to the reawakening of Russian aggression. As military strategist Fred Kagan stated, Russia has “established a precedent in Georgia where they think they can use force to defend Russian minorities in other countries.”¹⁰ This is the stuff that two world wars, which started in Europe, were made of. Violent conflict is not a thing of the past for Europe,

and the sooner Europe equips itself to confront the challenges of a resurgent Russia, the better.

President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel have taken a far too ambiguous line against Russia since the start of this conflict, acting in a mixture of roles from mediator to honest broker. Sitting between two chairs may not work any longer. If Europe is to take Moscow’s belligerence seriously, it needs to be ready to act—and act with enough toughness to stop the Russian bear in its tracks.

—Sally McNamara is Senior Policy Analyst in European Affairs in the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, and Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., is Senior Research Fellow in Russian and Eurasian Studies and International Energy Security in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, a division of the Davis Institute, at The Heritage Foundation.

10. Colin Freeman, “Troop Surge strategist Fred Kagan Calls for Beefed-up Baltic Defences Against Russia,” *Sunday Telegraph*, August 23, 2008, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/2609100/Troop-surge-strategist-Fred-Kagan-calls-for-beefed-up-Baltic-defences-against-Russia.html> (August 26, 2008).