

Ukraine and Georgia: Entry into NATO Put Off Indefinitely

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NATO ministers in Brussels have decided to ignore US wishes and to delay the admission of Ukraine and of Georgia in effect indefinitely in what the Washington Administration is sheepishly trying to claim is a positive 'compromise.' The decision, following EU member state alarm last August over the prospect of European states having to go to war at some point against Russia over an incalculable despot in the Caucasus or in Kiev who decided to provoke Moscow to react, was simply too much.

The Germans have a far too deep and painful collective memory of the last war with Russia to be willing to treat such a prospect as lightly as Condi Rice or Washington seems willing to do. The decision deepens growing tectonic fault lines across the Atlantic, as the 'Made in USA' financial crisis deepens and the dollar looks more and more vulnerable once hedge fund repatriation effects by yearend wind down. The year 2009 will be clearly more turbulent even than 2008 in world geopolitics.

The Brussels decision is the more remarkable as an indication of the slipping power of Washington over European NATO members. The December 3 NATO Foreign Ministers Brussels meeting issued what to the naïve observer might appear a masterpiece of diplomacy. They unanimously agreed to sidestep the usual Membership Action Plan vote for Georgia and Ukraine, the first concrete step towards NATO full membership. Instead, NATO will expand the activities of two existing bodies – the Nato-Georgia Commission and the Nato-Ukraine Commission – basically to oversee the same reforms as would have been contained in the action plan. As well NATO ministers agreed in their communique to renew ties with Russia 'in a conditional and graduated manner.'

Translated into real political language, Washington has undergone a stunning setback in its agenda of encircling Russia with NATO. Despite the fact President-elect Obama retained Bush Administration Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and named a person to be Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who is strongly on record for bringing Georgia and Ukraine into NATO, key European NATO members, led by Germany and France, blocked what must be a unanimous membership decision.

The real reasons

The real reason for the refusal is the growing realization within the European officialdom that it was Georgia's incalculable President, Mikhail Saakashvili, and not Moscow who initiated the adventure of sending Georgian troops to try to occupy the breakaway province of South Ossetia, that on evident encouragement of Washington.

On November 28 in Georgian official Parliamentary Commission testimony, on the background to the August events, which saw Russian troops march into parts of Georgia to repel the attack on Ossetians, Saakashvili made the surprising announcement that he had indeed initiated the war.

According to Saakashvili, the attack on the South Ossetian capital, which involved night shelling of residential areas with multiple rocket launcher systems, was aimed at protecting Georgian citizens. He said it was a response to Russia's "intervention" in the region. "We did start military action to take control of Tskhinvali and other unruly areas. But we took this difficult decision to fend off our territory from intervention and save the people who were dying. It was inevitable," Saakashvili said.

The Georgian President claims Russia moved tanks into South Ossetian territory before Georgia launched its attack. He said: "The issue is not about why Georgia started military action – **we admit we started it**. The issue is about whether there was another chance when our citizens were being killed? We tried to prevent the intervention and fought on our own territory."

Saakashvili's surprising admission came only hours after the testimony of Georgia's former Ambassador to Moscow, Erosi Kitsmarishvili, who testified for three hours before he was shouted down by pro-Saakashvili members of Parliament.

A former confidant of President Saakashvili, Kitsmarishvili said Georgian officials told him in April that they planned to start a war in Abkhazia, one of two breakaway regions at issue in the war, and had received a green light from the United States government to do so. He said the Georgian government later decided to start the war in South Ossetia, the other region, and continue into Abkhazia.

He refused to name the officials who he said had told him about planned actions in Abkhazia, saying that identifying them would endanger their lives. The official US line has been that they had 'warned' Mr. Saakashvili against taking action in the two enclaves, where Russian peacekeepers were stationed.

Kitsmarishvili's testimony in front of the parliamentary commission, was shown live on Georgian television. The chairman of the commission, Paata Davitaia, said he would initiate a criminal case against Kitsmarishvili for "professional negligence." Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria, who was called on short notice to comment on Kitsmarishvili's testimony, called the allegations "irresponsible and shameless fabrication," and said they were "either the result of a lack of information or the personal resentment of a man who has lost his job and wants to get involved in politics." Mr. Kitsmarishvili was fired in September by the president.

Mr. Kitsmarishvili walked out amid the furor on Tuesday. "They don't want to listen to the truth," he told reporters. Two days later, Saakashvili proved Kitsmarishvili right.

Full Spectrum Dominance

As I detail at some length in my book, due out in January 2009, ***Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order***, the strategy of

bringing Georgia and Ukraine into NATO is part of a far larger and more dangerous strategic long-term plan of Washington to ultimately encircle, confront and dismember Russia as a functioning state. Russia, even more than China, is the most formidable obstacle to a Washington-centered sole Superpower Pax Americana.

Russia's understandable refusal to abandon its nuclear strike force in the face of US violations of agreements made in 1989 between the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev and then-US Secretary of State James Baker III, namely that NATO would not expand east to the former states of the Warsaw Pact or USSR, presents a dilemma for any planned sole US superpower domination.

The Bush Presidency was a raw attempt to remedy this by brute military force. The militarization of Iraq and the Middle East oilfields was but one step. The creation of a US 'missile shield' in Poland and the Czech Republic, was another, a major step.

The misnamed 'missile defense shield' would be in reality an offensive capability that when installed by perhaps 2012, that will put the world, especially Western Europe on a hair-trigger to nuclear war, combined with entry of Russian border states Georgia and Ukraine would simply present Moscow with de facto defeat. This is not about Russia returning to old Soviet-style rule under Putin or Medvedev. It's about the ultimate survival of Russia as a nation, as Moscow rightly sees it, not about the fine points of democracy.

No one in either Berlin, Paris, London nor Brussels, and certainly not in Washington, is ignorant of that reality. European NATO members are increasingly nervous about the prospect of a military confrontation with Russia. Last August's swift Russian response to act in aid of South Ossetians against the Georgian invasion sent a reality shock through Europe. Neither Germany nor France wish to admit unstable states like Georgia or Ukraine only to be forced to act militarily in their defense in event of a repeat of the madness of last August.

That, simply stated, is the real, unspoken reason that Washington on December 3 in Brussels was forced to accept a face-saving compromise. The NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine to all intent and purposes is dead. As one NATO military official stated, 'Nato has lost the glue that once held it together.'

The statement of Rice following the NATO meeting was telling. She was forced to tell press, *'...there is a long road ahead for both Georgia and Ukraine to reach those standards. The United States stands resolutely for those standards, meaning that there should be no shortcuts to membership of NATO.'* Rice added.

Polish motorcade shoot was 'Georgia stunt'

Further adding to the atmosphere of almost Laurel & Hardy comic farce around Georgia's erratic President, who was filmed shortly after the Russian invasion in August by BBC actually swallowing and chewing on his tie, it has now emerged that an alleged shooting incident a week before the Brussels NATO meeting, involving the motorcade of the Georgian and Polish presidents was a staged 'stunt.'

Special services in Warsaw say the alleged attack near the South Ossetian border was a provocation staged by the Georgians. A report by Poland's Internal Security Agency

(Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego – ABW), published by the *Dziennik* newspaper, claims Georgia staged the incident for propaganda purposes.

The incident took place on Sunday evening when Georgian President Saakashvili was showing his Polish counterpart Lech Kaczynski the area near the border with South Ossetia. After the convoy stopped at a checkpoint, there was gunfire, which the Georgians claimed was an ‘attack by Russian troops.’

Lech Kaczynski’s personal security chief was dismissed. Colonel Krzysztof Olszowiec was accused of failing to ensure proper security for the president during his trip to Georgia. Olszowiec was dismissed despite objections from Kaczynski, according to the Polish media.

The trip to the border area with Russian-backed South Ossetia was the result of a last-minute invitation from Saakashvili, according to Polish Foreign Ministry spokesman Piotr Paskowski.

Initially, Warsaw blamed Russia for the incident. But now Polish security forces say it was staged by Tbilisi. Russia strongly denied the allegations, saying Tbilisi was behind it. President Kaczynski confirmed that shooting had taken place but stopped short of blaming anyone. Russia’s position has now been supported by Poland’s ABW, who said “the shots fired near the cars of Georgian and Polish president were a Georgian provocation”. The Polish document points out that Saakashvili kept on smiling after the first shots and his bodyguards didn’t react. The report also highlights another suspicious fact, namely, that the bus carrying journalists was instructed to travel in front of the motorcade, while the car with Kaczynski’s own bodyguards was pushed back by Georgian soldiers. The result was that they were not in a position to witness the alleged shooting.

All in all it might be that Saakashvili’s tenure as President faces major internal challenges for his bent to undertake such reckless stunts. The Obama White House will inherit a plate full of geopolitical problems in Europe next January 21.

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