

The Russian-Georgian War: Political and Military Implications for U.S. Policy

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Introduction¹

The purpose of this Policy Paper is to examine some of the strategic implications resulting from the war between Russia and Georgia from a military and security perspective and in so doing provide some policy recommendations as one looks beyond the crisis and its immediate aftermath.

Since there has been and will be written much on operational-tactical details of the conflict, this Policy Paper rather lays out some of the key aspects that the U.S. and NATO face with regard to Georgia, the South Caucasus, and the Euro-Atlantic security community. This is done from a defense policy and military strategy perspective with focus on Eurasian political military affairs.

To this end, after a brief description of the geo-strategic context for the U.S. and NATO in the Caucasus and beyond, some analytical thoughts on the conflict itself are outlined. This is followed by implications and corresponding policy actions for Georgia, the South Caucasus and for the Euro-Atlantic community.

The Geo-Strategic Context

The recent war in Georgia is the latest manifestation of Russia's attempt to change the European security architecture established over the past 18 years. President Medvedev last year laid out the underlying foreign policy principles of this restructuring attempt, which is not only directed at the Eurasian states but at the members of the EU and NATO as well. The aim is to drive wedges in the NATO Alliance in order to attenuate its collective security strength. Coupled with its development of an enemy image over the past couple of years, this war exemplifies the Kremlin's desire to strengthen order and control in Russia.

The United States and NATO allies are therefore required to reassess their

¹ This Policy Paper is based on a presentation by Colonel Jon E. Chicky at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute on September 17, 2008, and has been slightly updated to reflect subsequent events. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the U. S. Government.

relations with Russia as well as their national and Alliance defense policies. There is no desire for a new Cold War or an adversarial relationship with Moscow. However, if Moscow's actions are in fact adversarial to the U.S. and NATO states' interests, friends, and partners, these challenges need to be addressed.

The implications of Russia's military action reach far beyond Georgia and its immediate neighborhood. Turkey, Iran, Syria, Ukraine, the Central Asian States, Central and Eastern Europe, Venezuela, China and Taiwan are but some of the states directly or indirectly affected by Russia's action in Georgia. As Georgia had been the "poster child" for the Bush administration's Freedom Agenda, Russia's actions affected the prestige of the United States as well. The U.S. also played a major role in assisting Georgia in training and equipping much of its tactical military capability. Moreover, the U.S. supported Georgia's cause in receiving a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP).

In this light, the Russian military action cannot be regarded as a simple punishment of Georgia aimed at rendering the country militarily impotent. It is rather to be seen as a message to the U.S. that Russia can act at will against Georgia or any other U.S.-interests in Eurasia with some confidence that there would be little action in return.

Given this strategic context, the U.S. must show resolve in the face of this new Russian assertiveness. This is even more important as the U.S. is the "shining city on a hill" for aspiring democracies throughout the world and to those who desire democracy and freedom but live in un-free countries. Continuous support for Georgia's democratic aspirations and its national desire to join Euro-Atlantic political, economic, and security organizations is therefore essential. The U.S. has legitimate interests throughout Eurasia and its regional policies are not based upon zero-sum thinking. However, even if the U.S. has the desire to find ways to work with Russia, it should not shirk from achieving its interests despite their possible unpopularity in Moscow.

Analysis of the Conflict

This section provides for some general analytical thoughts on the war to preface the outline of strategic implications and derivative policy recommendations.

In his seminal book *On War* the foremost western military theorist of 19th century Prussia, Carl von Clausewitz, famously wrote, “War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.” Additionally, when discussing the relationship between war and politics, he said, “The political object is the goal, war is the means [of] reaching it, and [the] means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”² In other words, war is not separate from politics and military objectives are tied to political aims. That being said, the role that passion, prestige, pride, revenge, etc., play in the decision-making to go to war cannot be ruled out. Moreover, it should not be ignored how chance and probability also affect the decision-making and subsequent conduct of war.

An important point is that the use of force by both sides, but in particular Russia’s military operations, demonstrates that the military actions of last August were neither random nor independent acts that incidentally happened, but rather extensions of the political interplay that preceded this war. This perspective was borne out by Russian preparations taken prior to August 7, such as the Kavkaz-08 exercise. Furthermore, military means were used by Russia as part of its political interaction with Georgia going back at least as far as 2007.

Regarding Georgia’s decision to go to war, it is unclear where the primacy of politics is measured on the decision-making scale relative to the other factors of pride, prestige, and passion. Initially, Georgia’s political aims were declared as limited – to protect Georgian citizens in South Ossetia. The military contingent initially deployed into Tskhinvali was also limited. However, as much as the limited military size had to do with the short-notice of the decision to utilize military force and the limited availability of military units due to the Iraq deployment and the disposition of forces for Abkhazia contingencies, it was also linked to finding the right balance between political ends and military means. Hence, the Georgian decision on August 7 to utilize military force was both complicated and complex from a military strategy perspective (this view was later borne out in the Georgian parliamentary inquiry into the conflict).

² Howard, M. and Paret, P. (eds. and trans.), Carl von Clausewitz, ‘On War’, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 86ff.

Concerning Russia, the picture is much clearer. Though pride, prestige, and passion had roles to play in Moscow's decision-making to go to war, Russia's actions were more along the lines of Clausewitz's famous dictum regarding politics and war. It is obvious that Moscow's military objective was not to restore the status quo ante bellum in South Ossetia, but rather more expansive or "high-ended" in that the military objective was "to render [the enemy] politically helpless [or] militarily impotent."³ Moscow's political aim was most likely the removal of Mikheil Saakashvili as Georgia's president, to drive a stake in the heart of the Rose Revolution as an example to the other countries of the former Soviet space, and to send a clear message to the United States and NATO that Georgia is in a zone of Russia's "privileged interests". This implied that Russia will use military force in this zone to further its political aims and that the U.S. and NATO will not be able to stop it. The fact that tanks did not roll into Tbilisi and eject the Saakashvili government at bayonet point does not necessarily mean that Russia was unable or unwilling to achieve its political objectives. Given the size of its military, Russia used a relatively small proportion of its armed forces to attack Georgia, but sufficient force to eject the Georgians from both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to destroy much of Georgia's military capacity, and to occupy key lines of communication and economic nodes. Russia's use of military force has set the conditions for using other elements of power – political, diplomatic, informational, economic, financial, legal, and intelligence – in order to achieve the ultimate objective: to bring about regime change and eliminating Georgia as an alternative model for political and economic development in the former Soviet space that stands in contrast to the autocratic, "vertical of power" model of power of today's Russia.

As a result of Russia's military actions, Georgia, and specifically the Saakashvili government, is in a very vulnerable position. This is primarily for the following reasons:

- The Russian occupation and subsequent recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the establishment of permanent Russian military garrisons in these regions make the

³ Carl von Clausewitz, Beatrice Heuser (Ed.), Michael Howard (trans.), Peter Paret (trans.). 'On War', Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.7.

overarching political objective of the Saakashvili administration – Georgia restoring sovereignty over these regions – a remote prospect.

- Additionally, to the already large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the conflicts in the 1990s are now added approximately 50,000 IDPs (at the end of the conflict) from both separatist regions.
- Transport and commerce have been disrupted and the attraction of Georgia as a place to invest has been damaged.
- Due to Russian attempts to disrupt the oil and gas pipelines, the viability of transiting energy through Georgian territory was questioned.
- Losses inflicted on the security forces have left the country tactically and strategically exposed. Tbilisi’s ability to protect its citizens, the single most important task of a sovereign state, was significantly degraded exposing defenseless civilians to the whims of marauders of various backgrounds.

Cumulatively, the damage inflicted by the Russian military upon Georgia has created tremendous psychological (as well as security and economic) pressure on the Georgian nation, beyond the costs in human lives and material damage. Moscow can be expected to leverage this psychological pressure, created by military action, by using the other, non-military instruments of national power. Russian troops will be present to ensure that this pressure on Georgia remains palpable, allowing Russia to use “an indirect approach” in achieving its political aims. By using this approach and with time on its side, Russia can keep both its profile and the risks in terms of costs relatively low. These points illustrate major portions of the strategic context that the U.S. and European security and defense policymakers will face during the coming months regarding the situation in Georgia and beyond, and entail several implications that are outlined in the next section.

Key Implications and Next Steps

Georgia

The key strategic implication of this conflict is that Georgia now finds itself, yet again, in a “no war, no peace” situation with regard to Russia. However, this time the situation is no longer about “creeping annexation” in Abkhazia or South Ossetia, but rather about the survival of Georgia as a sovereign and democratic state as well as a positive example of political and economic development for other Eurasian countries. From a military perspective, the reconstitution of the Georgian armed forces’ operational and tactical capabilities is the first priority in preserving Georgia’s sovereignty and its democratic, Euro-Atlantic orientation. In doing this, Georgia will need outside assistance.

For the United States and Europe, rebuilding the Georgian military is thus an essential element in supporting Georgia’s independence and sovereignty. Strategically, U.S. and NATO involvement in this endeavor will be crucial for demonstrating resolve that Russia’s way to pursue its political aims in Georgia will not be without consequences. The primary question that Georgian, U.S., and NATO officials have to answer regarding military reconstitution is what missions the military will be expected to fulfill and how the military will be configured to meet these missions. Additionally, the rebuilt armed forces have to be financially sustainable.

Past U.S. military assistance to Georgia, mostly in the form of the train and equip programs, focused essentially on counter insurgency and stability operations at the tactical levels because of the missions Georgia agreed to undertake in support of the War on Terror. Given this war, the U.S. and NATO must now seriously consider providing assistance that focuses on territorial defense rather than expeditionary missions beyond its borders, as for instance in Iraq. This assistance does not necessarily have to replace tank for tank or artillery piece for artillery piece, but instead could include providing sophisticated air defense, anti-armor and counter-artillery capabilities along with associated command, control, communications, computer and intelligence systems. The purpose of providing these systems and associated training is to redirect the focus of the armed forces on territorial defense in order to give Georgia the ability to respond adequately

in terms of troops and treasure if Russia were to attack again.

Despite Russia's military success in this conflict, it was not cost-free. More focused development of territorial defense capabilities (including training senior officers in the tenets of operational art rather than expeditionary stability or counter-insurgency (COIN) operations) could raise the physical and material costs to future Russian aggression exponentially. Concurrent to rebuilding the operational and tactical levels of the Georgian armed forces, the progress made to date in transforming the defense establishment at the ministerial level should not be allowed to deteriorate.

Defense reforms and building defense institutions that would make the Georgian Defense Ministry more interoperable with NATO and prepared to undertake the reforms and measures necessary to implement a future NATO Membership Action Plan must continue. Although the NATO Foreign Ministerial did not offer Georgia a MAP at the December meeting, this goal should not be abandoned. The December 3, 2008 Chairman's Statement of the Meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers and the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership are constructive documents, though they do not have the strategic significance of MAP. Needless to say, it is important for both NATO and the United States that real effort is made to "operationalize" the words of these two documents with the ultimate aim, as stated in the Bucharest 2008 NATO Summit Declaration, to invite Georgia into the North Atlantic alliance. Finally, for Georgia, it too must live up to the letter and intent of these documents and work hard in continuing its defense transformation towards an NATO interoperable and integrated defense establishment.

In any case, very wary Europeans seeking a "gotcha" moment to prove that Georgia is an unstable, unreliable, and undependable candidate for full NATO membership will scrutinize future security activities. Speaking of standards, some such as Ron Asmus have posited that NATO should relook its MAP and membership criteria after Russia's military action. The intense focus on building democratic institutions before receiving NATO security guarantees through membership may have been the right course of action prior to August 2008, but now is perhaps the time to reexamine the criteria and processes necessary for countries to receive NATO membership.

As evidenced in Iraq and Afghanistan, political reform and economic development are difficult to accomplish if there is a lack of security. In the case of Georgia (and perhaps soon in Ukraine as well), the security issue is not one of domestic threats, but rather one of existential threats from Russia. Assistance in this endeavor at the bilateral level and from NATO must continue with renewed commitment from Georgia to undertake the hard work necessary to succeed in building and transforming its defense institutions. Furthermore, NATO's new NATO-Georgia Commission must have the organizational "passion" to assist Georgia in improving its defense institutions towards further Euro-Atlantic integration.

All of this work is both time- and money-intensive. The reconstitution of the armed forces will necessarily require the process to be done in a phased approach, providing the country with basic defensive capacities that are growing in size and capability as both internal and external resources are increased over time. This phased approach, dependent as it is on resources and the current state of readiness of the existing Georgian military units, leaves Georgia exposed both physically and psychologically. This is where U.S., NATO, and EU political support will be necessary to counter future aggressive Russian actions.

Finally, the U.S. and Europe must be clear-minded in knowing that any assistance given to Georgia will come under the withering fire of Russian rhetoric. This is due to the fact that support to Georgia's defense establishment would reverse Russia's military gains, mitigate the psychological pressure mentioned above, and therefore constitute a significant obstacle to Russia in achieving its political aims.

The South Caucasus

There were certainly political, security, economic, and psychological implications of the Russian-Georgian war for the entire South Caucasus region. Trade and transport disruptions to both Azerbaijan and Armenia have already been documented in many analyses of this conflict. However, beyond the attendant regional economic effects of this conflict one of the implications in the region was the negative impact on U.S. prestige. The seemingly slow response to Russian aggression in Georgia gave the impression of significant physical limitations of U.S. power as well as the

willingness to exercise this power.

From a political-military point of view, some may conclude that military force is the only way to resolve the region's separatist conflicts if success is to be likely. This is a dangerous perspective, since war, once started, is unpredictable due to matters of chance and probability. This situation, therefore, makes finding a political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict more urgent. The U.S., along with other interested parties such as the EU and Turkey, should redouble efforts for finding a diplomatic solution.

In this context, the Minsk Group may no longer be considered a viable process after the events of August. Russia may, at some point, decide it no longer desires to work within the OSCE on the NK issue and that its perceived stronger strategic posture in the region allows it to be the peace-broker. It seems that Russia is already busy in working with Baku and Yerevan in this regard.

Therefore, the U.S. should reassure Baku and Yerevan of its engagement in the region in order to remain connected and influential in its work to resolve the NK situation. The now former U.S. Vice President Cheney's recent visit to Baku was a good step in this direction. From a practical standpoint, if this conflict can be resolved and Azerbaijani-Armenian and Armenian-Turkish relations can be normalized, this will go a long way in reducing Russia's negative influence in the region and allow Armenia in particular to have other political and security options than those Yerevan is currently facing.

Another aspect for the South Caucasus is that the discussion of whether the region's energy infrastructure will become targets in a military conflict has moved from the hypothetical to the practical. As the fighting in Georgia demonstrated, regional energy infrastructure will become targeted during conflicts.

This is due to several reasons such as spite or jealousy or in order to raise the economic costs of war for Baku and Tbilisi. Additionally, it would be a means to put political and psychological pressure on outside stakeholders to cease their support for Azerbaijan or Georgia, and/or to force them to pressure Baku or Tbilisi (and their external supporters) to cease military operations in order to save their investments from military destruction. Given this analysis, it may be prudent for Baku and Tbilisi to consider how

to protect regional critical energy infrastructure from both conventional and unconventional attacks. In the work undertaken concerning critical energy infrastructure protection, conventional military threats now need to be considered in addition to terrorist or criminal threats.

This aspect has even larger implications for Azerbaijan, as the energy sector is its economic center of gravity as well as the basis for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and independence that provides Baku with political influence beyond its borders. Considering the fact that it is impossible to defend every kilometer of pipeline from attack, there are critical nodes such as the Sangachal terminal that are vital to regional energy infrastructure and the improved protection of these has to be closely examined. Baku and Tbilisi will need assistance from Ankara, Brussels, and Washington in analyzing and then implementing the most practical and affordable ways of protecting key energy nodes. This is one area where NATO and perhaps the EU could be more involved in security aspects of the Caucasus, as the region's energy is important to European energy security.

Further, an important implication for the South Caucasus as well as for the entire Europe-Eurasia region is the fate of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe or CFE. Russia suspended its compliance of the treaty in December 2007 in an attempt to force NATO members to put aside their refusal to ratify the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty until Russia fulfills the commitments agreed upon when it signed the Adapted CFE Treaty in Istanbul. The remaining unfulfilled so-called "Istanbul commitments" pertain to Russian troops and facilities in Moldova and the Russian military base and troops in Gudauta, Abkhazia. One of Russia's key arguments regarding the Adapted CFE Treaty has been to remove Russia from the so-called flank regime, which exists in the northern and southern flanks of the CFE Treaty's area of application. The southern flank region includes Russia's North Caucasus region as well as the states of the South Caucasus and Aegean and Black Sea regions. Russia sees additional equipment limitations on its own territory as a vestige of a "colonial" treaty. After the war in Georgia, it seems that it will be very difficult for many NATO members, with some possible exceptions, to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty with Russian troops remaining on Georgian territory. Furthermore, none of the South Caucasus states and few NATO countries will sign any revised

conventional forces arms control treaty that eliminates the flank region limitations for Russia alone. However, Russia is adamant that the flank restrictions must be removed if the CFE regime is to survive.

Finally, one has to question the treaty's viability, already in jeopardy after Russia's suspension, following the Russian-Georgian war. If the treaty regime does collapse, the legally binding limitations for Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan as well as the rest of the CFE states-parties will disappear. In theory, this would open the way for a possible regional arms build-up and Russia's recent "might makes right" behavior would provide the rationale for regional states to increase the size of their conventional forces. It would be in the U.S. and NATO's best interest to stand firm regarding future CFE talks particularly on the Istanbul Commitments (which are based upon the principle of host nation consent) and let Moscow be the one withdrawing formally from the treaty. Nevertheless, Russia, in the final analysis, may lose from a collapse of the CFE Treaty regime. Combined Russian aggressive behavior and bellicose rhetoric may influence Central and Eastern European NATO members as well as the South Caucasus states to reorient their defense priorities to territorial defense and acquire more conventional military equipment. This scenario becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of hostile neighboring countries reorienting their militaries toward Russia and creating a strategically more destabilizing environment for Russia.

Turning back toward the South Caucasus, it is important after the conflict that the U.S. and NATO continue to seek ways to increase their regional security and military engagement. Some ways to accomplish this have already been alluded to, such as assisting in rebuilding of the Georgian military, continuous support to Georgian defense reforms and offering a MAP to Georgia, as well as determining how to best secure and defend critical energy infrastructure in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Additional areas would include the continuation and, if possible, increase in U.S. bilateral and NATO military regional exercises to include the Black Sea, the pursuit of bilateral U.S. security cooperation with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, the elimination of the Section 907 restrictions for Azerbaijan, an increase of NATO outreach to both Baku and Yerevan, having the EU hold a security dialogue with regional states as it does with Central Asia and, finally, enhancing the U.S.-EU-NATO effort to work with Azerbaijan and Armenia

for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The U.S. and perhaps other interested European countries should additionally seek ways to invigorate a dialogue with Turkey on the South Caucasus, including both Turkish political and military interlocutors. This will not necessarily be an easy enterprise due to Ankara's economic relations with Moscow, its well-known history with Armenia, as well as baggage in the U.S.-Turkish relationship. Nevertheless, any successful U.S. or NATO security strategy to bolster Euro-Atlantic ties to the region requires Turkish involvement.

Finally, the South Caucasus remains important to the U.S. military's sustainment of combat operations in Afghanistan, since the airspace over the region links U.S. military logistics nodes in Europe with Afghanistan. It is essential that this airspace remains accessible to sustain what now appears to be growing U.S. military presence in the country. The only other way for U.S. military aircraft to reach Afghanistan is through Pakistani airspace from U.S. facilities in the Middle East.

Beyond the South Caucasus

The United States and NATO face a new set of challenges resulting from this conflict and Russia's assertive and aggressive security and foreign policy. Before the August conflict, NATO's agenda was already full, with items such as the question of Afghanistan, missile defense, NATO expansion, Kosovo, CFE, and, at times, Georgia.

The MAP issue for Georgia requires resolution, especially as some observers believe the Bucharest summit decision not to offer MAP to Georgia but instead declare that Georgia will become a NATO member encouraged Russia to take military action against Georgia. Moreover, this brings us to the question of what Article V really means for the expanded Alliance.

NATO has been struggling to find ways of dealing with a resurgent Russia. Prior to August, Brussels' issues with Russia were largely rhetorical. The only states that regularly expressed concerns about Russian intentions and actions were the U.S., the Baltic States, Poland, and Romania. However, other NATO members, highlighting the differing perspectives between the newer and older members of the Alliance, considered these concerns as

unnecessarily alarmist. Post-August 2008, NATO and its individual alliance members must now re-evaluate their views with regard to Russia. Moreover, the Baltic States and the other newer members must be reassured that Article V is indeed viable in the event these countries are threatened. Russian actions in Georgia may put a monkey wrench in NATO's continuing efforts to build capacities for expeditionary operations, such as in Afghanistan. It may be time or even overdue for the Alliance to examine defense planning for operationalizing an Article V situation for the Baltic States and perhaps for Poland. As already described, if the Russians withdraw from the CFE Treaty regime and the Treaty regime collapses, there will be even more reason for the newer NATO members to push for defense contingency planning and new emphasis on building territorial defense capabilities.

A review of NATO missions could prove problematic for Brussels and Washington. Some NATO members already experiencing constant U.S. pressure to do more in Afghanistan and create more expeditionary capabilities may be superficially pleased to shift focus on territorial defense to lighten the pressure. Yet, many of these same NATO members are not in close proximity to Russia and will be unable to contribute a lot to building territorial defense capabilities for the Alliance.

This does not mean, however, that NATO should abandon its efforts to do more in Afghanistan, nor does it reduce pressure on individual members to possess more agile and deployable forces with COIN capabilities. Nevertheless, Russia's behavior necessitates internal NATO reorientation on how to balance expeditionary COIN capabilities with the ability to conduct a wide spectrum of military operations in defending a member nation under Article V.

As a final aspect of the Article V issue, NATO may want to re-examine the NATO-Russia Founding Act in which it states that NATO would not permanently base substantial combat forces on the territory of new NATO members. This review is contingent upon Russian behavior, particularly with regard to the Baltic States as well as Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Beyond the internal Alliance debates of the current 26 members, soon to be 28, NATO needs to seriously examine its relations with Ukraine and the South Caucasus, in particular with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Traditional

NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) relationships, though useful, are insufficient in this post-August 2008 environment where Russia used military force to demonstrate its “privileged position” in the former Soviet space. With Georgia battered, Moscow’s eyes have turned to Ukraine (and Azerbaijan). The Alliance will need a unified position on how to bolster Ukraine from Russian mischief making, which will require U.S. leadership. Increased NATO attention to Azerbaijan is also necessary to protect its vital energy infrastructure.

As NATO reassesses its strategic posture vis-à-vis Russia, it may now be prudent for Sweden and Finland to consider seriously joining NATO.

Conclusion

The intent of this paper is not to encourage NATO or the U.S. to return to a Cold War-like relationship with Russia. Quite the contrary, despite it being a challenge, there should be continuous efforts to find ways to work with Russia. However, at the same time, there needs to be awareness about the nature of Moscow’s policies. The re-assertion of the U.S. in the region and the new beginning of a slow process of rebuilding U.S. prestige in Eurasia will be the challenge ahead for the new U.S. administration.

Author's Bio:

Colonel Jon E. Chicky, Jr. is a member of the military faculty at the National War College's Department of Strategy and Policy. Prior to his assignment to the War College he served as the Director for Eurasian and Black Sea Policy in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2005-2008. During his tenure as Director, he was responsible for the development and implementation of policy guidance, strategic direction, and security cooperation programming for Russia, Ukraine, the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea basin and for alternating periods, Central Asia and the Black Sea states of Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey plus Cyprus. Additionally, he participated in interagency negotiating teams concerning the U.S. use of Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, and talks on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the U.S. missile defense program with senior representatives of the Russian government. Colonel Chicky's experience in the political-military aspects of the Caucasus and Central Asia includes service in the Abkhazia region of Georgia as the Senior U.S. Military Observer (1995-1996) as part of the UN Military Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). He later served as the U.S. representative in an OSCE military fact finding mission that observed Russian troops in Chechnya and Dagestan during the Second Chechen War (June 2000). Later in 2000, he led subsequent NATO teams monitoring the removal of Russian equipment from Vaziani, Georgia under the terms of the so-called 1999 Istanbul Commitments. Colonel Chicky served in U.S. Central Command J5 from 2001-2003 as a Central Asia political-military and security assistance staff officer where he was responsible for CENTCOM's efforts in establishing and sustaining the U.S. presence at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan to support U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. From 2004 to 2005, he served as the OSD-Policy Country Director for Georgia where he led strategic planning efforts for the Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP), which trained and equipped a Georgian infantry brigade for subsequent battalion-sized deployments to Iraq.