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## 2008 WAR IN GEORGIA AND USA POSITION

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### ABSTRACT

This article traces the historical evolution of the diplomatic relations between the United States and Georgia, focusing on key events from the recognition of Georgia's independence in 1991 to the present day. The narrative explores the dynamics of the Russo-Georgian relationship and the pivotal role the United States played in supporting Georgia's democratic aspirations, particularly in its pursuit of NATO membership. The analysis delves into critical moments such as the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, shedding light on the U.S. stance and its impact on subsequent international developments, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

The article highlights the continuity of U.S. support for Georgia across various administrations, emphasizing the consistent theme of backing Georgia's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and democratic principles. Special attention is given to the strategic partnership between the two nations, as reflected in the 2009 Strategic Partnership Charter and subsequent reaffirmations. The study concludes by discussing the current geopolitical landscape, where President Joseph Biden's firm stance against Russian aggression aligns with historical U.S. commitments to Georgia. The article underscores the enduring significance of the U.S.-Georgia relationship and its broader implications for regional stability and democratic values.

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On May 7, 1920, the Democratic Republic of Georgia signed an agreement with Russia, according to which Russia recognized the independence of Georgia. This fact made it easier for Western countries to recognize the independence of Georgia. Unfortunately from major st, it was only The United States of America that didn't recognize the independence of Georgia. Washington returned to foreign policy isolation, its interests did not include strategic relations with Georgia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States had the best relations with Georgia from the former Soviet republics. The arrival of George W. Bush (junior) in 2005 was the first visit by a US president in the history of Georgia, which was followed by great emotion. Georgians well remember a president who danced to Georgian rhythms, calling Georgia a “Beacon of Democracy” and promising US support. Georgia was slowly becoming important also as a transit country for the US Air Force involved in the war in Afghanistan due to its geographical location.

In the spring of 2005, Putin uttered the famous phrase, “The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.” [1] page: 75. Russia could not tolerate this fact, it always tried to maintain its influence over the former Soviet republics, and Georgia had a special place in this situation due to its strategic.

Geopolitical location. Russia's violent policy towards Georgia was aimed at halting NATO enlargement to the CIS countries. Georgia was faced with a choice – it could abandon its pro-Western path and refuse NATO, or choose Russia.

Russia-Georgia relations have deteriorated since President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power after the Rose Revolution. In 2006, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Moscow. While talking to Putin about Georgia, Putin noted that if the Georgian leader ever dared to use force against Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moscow would not leave it unanswered, to which Rice called on all parties to be more reserved, reminding Putin that the United States recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity and opposes the use of force. “Moscow’s military intervention will have painful consequences in Russians relations,” Rice said. “Putin got up and left the room”. [2]

In 2008, Russian forces invaded Georgia. This was the first European war of the 21st century. The war finished in a few days. But the outcomes continue:

- Robbery and looting.
- Occupation of Georgian villages.
- IDPs are unable to return to their homes.
- Arbitrary demarcation of borders by Russia.
- Unjustified detention, abduction, and capture of civilians.

And most importantly a continuing creeping occupation that creates a new geopolitical environment. Unfortunately, the international response to the Russian military campaign in Georgia was silent and less troubling to Moscow. EU leaders only called for a ceasefire with Russia, and the United States, under the new Obama administration, demanded a resumption of Kremlin policies, but the resumption failed.

In 2008, the Atlantic Council called specialists to share their views about the results of conflict and its influence on international security. Here, John Herbst, director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, noted: “This is the first time since the defeat of Hitler that a large state has attacked a small country. Unfortunately, the Western reaction to this issue was slow and too weak – the same as in the case of Hitler.

It is true that French President Nicolas Sarkozy was a mediator between Russia and Georgia, through whose mediation Russia agreed to the terms of the ceasefire, but as usual, Moscow broke its promise and no one even asked him for a reply.

Thus, the promise of a ceasefire mediated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy was unilateral. In a subsequent five-day war report (incorrectly), the EU blamed Georgia for the first shot in Moscow's favor. Later, in 2008, Paris announced plans to sell Mistral-class helicopter carriers to Russia, prompting the Russian Deputy Chief of Staff to say how easy it would be to defeat Georgia if the ship was already in Russian service.

Georgia expected its partners - the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, regional and international organizations - to be more actively involved in resolving the conflict, but in vain. Here's paying the price for this silence and indifference today with the world invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Unfortunately, neither Washington nor NATO, has done much to stop Russian military aggression in the Black Sea region. The first was the fact that a few days after the ceasefire in Georgia, the Bush administration rejected Tbilisi's request to hand over anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, and as a result, the new Obama administration rewarded Moscow with a policy of “resetting Russia”. Matthew Bryza, a senior member of the Atlantic Council, was right when he said that the weak international response to Russia's invasion of Georgia gave the green light to Russia's subsequent military attack on Ukraine: “Many high-ranking transatlantic officials I worked with as mediators in Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia condemned the Russian invasion, but also accused then-Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili of provoking Vladimir Putin.” [3]

According to Alexander Vershbow, an honorary member of the Atlantic Council, Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia has pushed Western relations with Russia to the lowest level since the 1980s.

Honored Member of the Atlantic Council Daniel Fried reminds us that “Putin wanted a war”. In the Summer of 2008, he was continuously provoking the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, (against the will of the USA) until Saakashvili did order Georgian forces to repel the enemy who was bombing Georgian villages. The Russian army was also expecting this, it had already moved to Georgia with all its prepared forces. [4]

According to the New York Times, at a closed dinner, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned President Saakashvili not to get involved in a military conflict with Russia in which his country could not win. "I told Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili - personally - that the Russians would try to provoke him and that, given the circumstances on the ground, he could not hope for a NATO military response." [5]

"We will protect our interests, we will protect our friends", said Condoleezza Rice. [6] She writes, "I negotiated the final agreement that ended the war. We sat in Saakashvili's office - working on a French project - we made significant changes". Georgia was one of the few instances where the State Department and the Department of Defense consistently sent messages to prevent Saakashvili's hostilities. Saakashvili was told that if he started the war, the cavalry would not come.

Regarding the war, Condoleezza Rice said that Russia is undermining democracy in Georgia, using military force to destroy the country's infrastructure. He recalls, "I said: - Mr. President, do not allow the Russians to provoke you, Bush is telling you this, no one can help you and you will be defeated."

The United States has nothing to do with the war in the Caucasus, but The United States has been unjustifiably accused of inciting Georgia to go to war against Russia. The United States did not even get involved in the war to support a friendly country, they refused to sell the Stingers to the Georgian government because it had an agreement with Moscow to restrict trade in this weapon, but the Land Lease Act came into force during the Russia-Ukraine war. Unfortunately, this war was not properly appreciated by the world, which led to the appetite for Russia and launched a large-scale military operation in Ukraine, and despite world outrage, violations of international law, and the imposition of numerous sanctions, it is still impossible to stop Russia (May 2022).

Ron Asmus notes - Washington was furious because the Georgians started the action. "McCain, Saakashvili's personal friend, often called the Georgian president and heard the latest news from him ... In one of his speeches, he mentioned how Saakashvili was told, 'Today we are Georgians,' McCain accused The White House of being inactive'. [7]

Russia forced Georgian leader Mikheil Saakashvili to join the war in South Ossetia and then defeated the Georgian armed forces in a brief conflict. "The Russians set a trap and the impulsive Saakashvili fell into it," recalled Robert Gates, the then US Secretary of Defense. Brian Whitmore, Atlantic Council Senior Officer: Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, occupied 20 percent of its territory, and went unpunished. As a result, today we are all Georgians in the sense that we are all victims of Russian aggression from the brazen Kremlin. [8]

What was the choice for Georgia in 2008? Shouldn't it defend its population from Russia's aggression?! How should he find shelter from bombs? What alternative did the US offer when it called Georgia not to answer to Russian provocation? there are still many unanswered questions.

On July 21, 2008, Matthew Bryza said of the Joint Military Exercise: "I hope the exercise will enhance security throughout the region by enhancing the professionalism and cooperation of all these military forces; "Professionalism, of course, is key to military security." [9] Although security could not be maintained, war could not be avoided, in just two weeks Georgia was on fire.

### **NATO - Georgian relationship.**

Unification in the North Atlantic Alliance has become a national project in Georgia. Russia's aggressive policy towards Georgia initially aimed at halting NATO enlargement. NATO enlargement in the CIS countries has been irritating Russia for many years.

In 1995-2001, the United States became more interested in Georgia. At the NATO summit in Bucharest, it was announced that Georgia and Ukraine would one day become members of NATO, and against this background, Russia's invasion is a direct challenge for both countries. The main condition for adopting the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) was stability, not the start of hostilities (one more reason that Georgia didn't want to start the war).

Adherence to the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia was strongly supported not only by Washington but also by a group of new friends of Georgia. Washington has publicly confirmed that the United States has backed Georgia and warned President Saakashvili to refrain from military confrontation.

In April 2008, Putin was invited to attend a NATO summit in Bucharest, where he said he viewed the emergence of a "strong military bloc" along Russia's borders as a "direct threat" to its

security. Unfortunately, Georgia was not given the Accession Action Plan at the Bucharest meeting in April 2008.

In March 2002, the United States launched the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP), a military program designed to train Georgian troops. One of the goals of Georgia's participation in NATO was to reform its security. He has participated in several similar events and training as part of the Partnership for Peace program; Also in KFOR (Kosovo Forces) - the ongoing NATO-led Kosovo peacekeeping mission. [10] თუმცა, ნატო-სწავრთულობა However, NATO involvement in resolving Georgia's separatist issues was not envisaged in NATO or US policy. Eduard Shevardnadze has the support of the United States in achieving stabilization of the state as a result of ethnic and civil issues. [11]

US support for Georgia's statehood was mainly concentrated on:

**Military reforms.**

**Energy security policy (as a transit country for oil transport).**

**Peaceful resolution of internal conflicts.**

**Safety.**

**Democratization.**

**Economic recovery.**

**Principles of territorial integrity.**

During President Saakashvili's visit to the United States (July 5, 2006), US President George W. Bush stated that he believed that it would be beneficial for NATO if Georgia became a member of NATO. I think this will also be useful for Georgia. US funding for counterterrorism and stability operations has also increased since Saakashvili came to power.

Thus, the main reason for Russia's dissatisfaction with Georgia was the “Western course” of Georgia's foreign and security policy, and sympathy for the United States and NATO.

According to a 2007 public opinion poll, Georgians answered the question: “What do you expect from membership in the North Atlantic Alliance?”

- **Security guarantee - 57%.**
- **Restoration of territorial integrity - 42%.**
- **Social welfare - 22%.**
- **Strengthening Democracy - 16% [12].**

Approximately 80% of the public supported NATO membership, which was the largest number of votes among the applicant countries. Russia's coercive policy towards Georgia initially aimed at halting NATO enlargement to the CIS countries.

“In 2005, the United States launched the Sustainment and Stability Operation Program (SSOP), which followed the 2002 Georgia Training and Equipping Program (GTEP). This program prepared the Georgian military for operations in Iraq.“ [13]

In late 2004, Georgia signed the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, which enabled the Alliance to provide greater assistance in defense institutional and policy reforms.

On January 9, 2009, Georgia and the United States of America signed the Strategic Partnership Charter, which is a solid political basis for our cooperation. The purpose of this document is to deepen cooperation between the parties. It is based on the support of Georgia's sovereignty, independence, inviolability of territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, democracy, and stability. The charter focuses on strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, human rights, and promoting economic reforms and other freedoms. In a word, the Charter focuses on four key areas: defense, security, economics, trade and energy, strengthening democracy, and cultural programs. June 11, 2019, marked the 10th anniversary of the US - Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter, with the United States and Georgia reaffirming their commitment to the two countries Strategic Partnership and adopting the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Declaration.

#### **What's happening now.**

Joseph Biden knows Georgia well. He visited our country twice, in 2008 and 2009. During the 2008 war, in such a hard situation, Joe Biden visited Georgia for the first time. During that period he was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He arrived to deliver the humanitarian cargo, and after returning, in just a few days he was nominated by Obama as a Vice Presidential



candidate. Biden's key initiative for Georgia is that the United States is ready to provide \$ 1 billion to the country to help this "young democracy" compensate for the damage done by Russia.

President Barack Obama also supported Joseph Biden's initiative and said - we must help Georgia build what has been destroyed, so I am proud to join this fact. During the war in 2008, John Tefft was the US ambassador to Georgia, he recalls that Biden was the senator who came to Georgia in those difficult days and managed to organize a billion dollars.

In 2009, US Vice President Joe Biden again visited Georgia, the same time coinciding with Barack Obama's visit to Moscow. Biden noted that the United States fully supports Georgia and that his visit provides support to all who "hear and those who do not want to hear." Mr. Biden said the US-Georgia partnership was aimed at addressing security challenges, strengthening energy security, and supporting democracy. The US Vice President stated that he had arrived in Tbilisi "with a simple, direct message - we, the United States, stand by you on the path to a secure, free, democratic, and united Georgia." [14] He stressed the symbolism of the visit and noted that the resumption of US-Russian relations will not be at the expense of Georgia's interests.

Mr. Biden called on Russia to fulfill its commitments and de-occupy Georgian territories, as well as to expand the format of the International Monitoring Mission in Georgia, to aspire to the country's membership in NATO. Speaking about the prospects of strategic cooperation between the two countries, he underlined the cooperation envisaged by the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter.

The Vice President reaffirmed the United States' unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. "We will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and call on the world not to recognize them". Unfortunately [15] the reset failed, and Russia as usual broke its promise and invaded Ukraine.

This year (2022) marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Georgia. The United States was one of the first to recognize our independence on March 24, 1992. From that day on, the United States stood by us. Bilateral partnerships and cooperation in various fields are developing more and more. The United States is a country that stood by Georgia during the most difficult times, during the economic crisis and the war.

The foundations of Georgian-American relations were laid during the reign of Eduard Shevardnadze. American aid was first expressed by sending wheat - to which Shevi (Shevardnadze) later stated that - then America saved Georgia from the impending famine. Geopolitical interest in the South Caucasus and Georgia's involvement in energy projects has increased its geographical and strategic importance. In this regard, President Bill Clinton's position on the implementation of energy projects in the South Caucasus is noteworthy. Bill Clinton's merit can be considered in the launch of the Baku-Ceyhan-Tbilisi pipeline, which allowed the region to enter the international market ...

Georgian emigrants arrived in the United States in the 19th century. On December 1, 1931, the Georgian community was established in America. For example Georgian officer Eristavi, it turns out, fought in Lincoln's army. There was a big flow of Georgian emigrants to the USA after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Second World War. The modest contribution of Georgians to the life of the United States made by Georgian businessmen, scientists, and artists should also be mentioned here. We must single out John Malkhaz Shalikhvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Forces.

### **Conclusion.**

So the US presidents are leaving, but their attitude towards Georgia is not changing, e.g.

On December 25, 1991, the United States recognized Georgia's independence, and diplomatic relations were established on April 23, 1992, and on May 25, US Secretary of State James Baker visited Georgia as a signal of their keen interest in Georgia. Bush Sr. provided first aid to Georgia, sending wheat at a time when the country was embroiled in a war in Abkhazia and starving.

The commissioning of the Baku-Ceyhan-Tbilisi pipeline can also be considered a merit of Bill Clinton, because of the interest of the states in energy policy, Georgia has become in the interest of Washington.

During the administration of George W. Bush, Washington welcomed Georgia's desire to join the North Atlantic Alliance. He visited our country to get better acquainted with the "new democracy", thus expressing support for Georgia's aspirations in NATO and the European Union.

Nothing has changed during Barack Obama's presidency, contacts and meetings have deepened more and more. At the NATO summit in Warsaw, Obama said that the United States would help increase

Georgia's defense capabilities and that the United States supported its membership in NATO. The delivery of humanitarian aid also continued.

As for Trump, he said that “Georgia is not a member of NATO and Article 5 can not be enacted to help him. Still, Washington's policy of restraint is important for a small country like Georgia. '[16] The Trump cabinet expressed support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

As for Biden, Joseph Biden knows Georgia well. “He has visited our country twice, in 2008 and 2009.] He has a hard line on Russia and perceives it as an aggressor country “We do not consider South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states, we do not recognize them as independent states and we call on Russia to respect its international obligations“ [17] Biden said.

In total, the United States has provided \$ 4.5 billion in aid to the country since 1992. Many facts confirm the fact that the United States has recognized Georgia's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

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