

Iowa High School Model United Nations
Disarmament
Russian and Georgian Conflict
Author: Shaun Loneman (sloneman@uni.edu)

Background

Georgia has been a part of Roman, Persian, Arab, and Turkish influence throughout its history. It then became a part of the Russian Empire around 1801. Georgia gained independence from 1918-1921 after the Russian Revolution, however it was invaded by the Red Army and forced into the Soviet Union in 1921. In 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, Georgia declared their independence. In 2003, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze was forced to resign amid allegations of tampering with the elections. President Mikheil Saakashvili was elected in 2004 and has brought about economic and democratic reform (Georgia, 2008).

Georgia has had strained relationships with Russia and with territories within Georgia known as Abkhazia, Ajaria, and South Ossetia. These territories want independence and so far, Georgia has been reluctant to grant it. They have had skirmishes because Georgia doesn't want to allow a territory of theirs to break off and the territories feel Georgia is an occupying force (Georgia, 2008).

Russia and Georgia have had a poor relationship ever since Georgia gained its independence. A lot of the conflict stems from South Ossetia, where Georgia regards any Russian troops entering that region as an invasion and Russia believes they are sending peacekeeping troops to reduce the violence (Timeline, 2008).

The Russians began withdrawing troops from Soviet bases in the region in 2005. In 2006, Georgia began to require Russian peacekeeping troops to have visas, a move that greatly angered Russia. A couple months later, Georgia declared all Russian peacekeeping troops must be removed from South Ossetia and replaced by international forces. In 2006, South Ossetian citizens declared their independence from Georgia, although it has not been formally recognized. Then, in August of 2008, Georgia started to attack independent forces in South Ossetia. Russia said their citizens were being attacked and sent troops into the region. The conflict escalated as Russian forces moved further and further into Georgia. A ceasefire is agreed upon; however Georgia and the United States accuse Russia of violating it (Timeline, 2008).

Russia has recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent, drawing strong criticism from the United States, Georgia, and others. Georgia has been asking for membership into NATO for years and on September 4th, 2008, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney said the United States fully supports Georgian membership in NATO. The United States will also provide one billion dollars in aid for humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. Georgia has cut off all diplomatic ties with Russia, while Russia has accused the United States of promoting the conflict (Cheney, 2008).

What Has Been Done/Past U.N. Actions

The "UNOMIG [United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia] was established in August 1993 to verify compliance with the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities in Georgia (United Nations Observer,

2007).” This was established per Resolution 858 by the Security Council. U.N. military observers continued to patrol the area through the end of the decade. In 2001, the Secretary General said that both sides must put more effort into peace agreement discussions, particularly the Abkhaz side (United Nations Observer). The U.N. has continued to monitor the situation with military forces. Currently, the U.N., the European Union, and other organizations have formed a closed door meetings for the different actors involved. They also monitor the refugee situation, as more than 100,000 citizens were displaced (Nebehay, 2008.)

Possible Solutions

The committee should look at resolutions regarding whether or not to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent regions. A clear, unified response would allow all actors involved to know where they stand with the rest of the world and with the U.N. The committee should also discuss providing the pros and cons of humanitarian aid to the refugees who have been displaced in the conflict. A discussion of possible sanctions and/or military involvement would also be prudent, as well as a discussion of the continuation of the UNOMIG.

Questions to Consider

1. How should the refugee problem in South Ossetia be addressed?
2. Should there be a resolution recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia as sovereign territories or as regions of Georgia?
3. Should there be sanctions put on either Georgia or Russia for their military response to the conflict in August?
4. Should there be sanctions if a similar situation occurs in the future?
5. How does both countries’ behavior in previous instances affect the decisions made by the committee moving forward?

Consulted/Recommended Sources

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