CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

CRISIS IN THE CAUCASUS:
A CONVERSATION WITH
NINO BURJANAVZE

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THOMAS CAROTHERS: Good afternoon. My apologies for the delay, but we’re going to get underway now. I’m Thomas Carothers, vice-president for studies here at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It’s my pleasure to be your moderator at today’s session. The outbreak of armed open conflict between Georgia and Russia just under a month ago was a cold and unpleasant shower of reality for a world that was just turning to the Olympic Games in Beijing. The reverberations of the conflict are multiple in Georgia, in Russia, in the immediate neighborhood, with respect to European-Russian relations, and, of course, with respect to U.S.-Russian relations as well.

As the conflict unfolded, people on different sides, including here in Washington, rushed to make up their minds and reach definitive judgments, both about what happened and what is likely to happen in the coming months and years. Yet although some things are clear about what has happened and what may happen, many are not and there remains much to understand and to analyze about the recent events.

Two areas that certainly need better understanding here in Washington are first the internal political situation in Georgia. What are the current lines of thought within the Georgian polity? What is likely to happen with the overall direction of Georgian politics? And how will Georgian domestic politics affect the possible diplomatic resolution of this conflict? And second, also important, are what are Georgian perspectives on what the United States should do now to try to be a productive and effective player and helping reach a resolution of this conflict?

We are very fortunate today to have Nino Burjanadze here with us to speak on these issues. As I think everyone here knows, she is one of Georgia’s most prominent politicians of recent years, having been at the center of almost every major political development in Georgia over the last 10 years, including, of course, the Rose Revolution. She served for most of this decade as speaker of the Georgian Parliament and she twice was acting president of the country, once in late 2003, when Eduard Shevardnadze resigned, and once briefly last year when the current president also temporarily stepped down. She’s also been very active in the Parliament in other capacities, as head of some important committees and also in Georgian-European relations over the years as well.

Although she recently stepped down as parliamentary speaker, she’s made clear her intention to continue to play an active role in Georgian political life and she recently announced the formation of a new think tank under her direction, the Foundation for Democracy and Development. It’s my pleasure to welcome her here to the Carnegie Endowment. She will make her remarks and then we’ll have time for your questions and her answers. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

NINO BURJANADZE: Thank you very much. It’s my real pleasure and honor to be here. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention. And I would like to say that, first of all, of course, I want to welcome you all and extend my sincere gratitude to all our hosts for providing me with this special opportunity to address this distinguished gathering. I would like to highlight that due to the possibilities kindly offered by Carnegie, it’s not my first address in this well-known organization. As a speaker of Georgian Parliament, I visited many times this place. But today, it’s my real pleasure to address this eminent gathering in different capacity, in the capacity of the president of the Foundation for Democracy and Development.
Allow me to briefly introduce some of my personal views regarding the latest developments in my country. I'm convinced you already know the chain events that were on the front pages of all the newspapers and extensively covered by many international media sources, also regrettably this has been about the tremendously sad events of the last several weeks. Georgia has been dragged into a conflict with the de facto leadership of South Ossetia, followed by the open aggression of the Russian Federation, which resulted in the bombing of cities which were quite far from conflict zones, seaports, economic and military points of strategic importance, and the complete annexation of two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Hundreds were killed and thousands were forced to flee their homes.

A question arises: what is Russia doing on Georgia soil? What is the ultimate goal of Russia? Is this a nostalgia for Cold War order or it is a self-isolation targeting at emerging Russia as a contender to the rest of the civilized world? Or is it a new attempt to restore the dividing wall of Berlin, this time along the posts of its republics?

The declarations which Russia made that Russia wanted to stop fire in South Ossetia and Russia was trying to force to peace has nothing to do with realities. And all these actions which I mentioned right now, bombing of cities and villages which are very far, quite far in Georgian reality from the conflict zone, shows that this had nothing to do with truth.

At this stage, we all face a new grave reality. Today we all observe Russia’s attempts to change the political map of the Caucasus. As many of you might be aware, the Russian Federation has already recognized the independence of Abkhazia into another region, which is also known as South Ossetia.

I hope you all agree that these facts fall beyond the scope of the worsening of bilateral relations between two neighboring countries. This is not about Georgia. This is not about Abkhazia. And this is not about South Ossetia. The development in my country proves that in the 21st century, Russia is clearly trying to create a precedent of open violation of state sovereignty, open violation of all norms and principles of international law. This is an open challenge to the contemporary international order and it has a great and far-reaching effect, far beyond a simple punishment of Georgia for its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

This is an attempt at establishing a new world order, an attempt at establishing the rule of power and not the rule of law. If Russia succeeds, it will create a new precedent in international relations and send a clear message to the world that military aggression is a tolerable means for reaching certain political objectives. Regrettably, Georgia has suffered much from Russia’s need to demonstrate over and over again to the entire world that they are the only masters of the region and the southern Caucasus is its area of influence and political dominance. The formula of contradicting everything and everyone, particularly as concerns Western interests still remains as a basic guideline of Russian foreign policy and – (inaudible) – there is no longer – there is no light in the dark. Considering NATO as enemy number one and as a hostile military anti-Russian alliance and a new enlargement of this organization remain to be the most irritating occurrence as any new agreement of the allies is deemed to be a deception of plot against Russia.

During the last 15 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia is trying to identify its place and draw in the new world order. At this stage, Russia is trying to rehabilitate its imperial soul, as well as exerting its influence on the post-Soviet space, Europe and even far beyond its
boundaries. If today the international community will remain silent, it will inevitably result in the establishing of a totalitarian regime in Europe in the 21st century that will try only to further boost its influence in the region as well as globally.

Unfortunately, it’s quite clear that Russia is trying to keep influence, but it’s Russia trying to keep influence using all negative steps and negative efforts. I was trying many times to explain to our Russian colleagues that influence the country might have in nearest borders, but this influence should be only positive, strengthening democracy in the country and outside of the country, helping find solution for the conflict, really respecting interests of neighbor countries and having in mind that you should respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries who are around you.

In this sense, you can have some kind of positive influence which is normal in international relations and international policy. But negative influence, trying to keep countries under your influence, trying to force countries to do what you want to do, this is absolutely, absolutely unaccepted in this new world in 21st century.

There is no doubt that the open application of the independence of Kosovo is an international precedent by the Russian leadership is a very dangerous political technique, first of all, for Russia itself. The latest development in Ingushetia, one of the republics of northern Caucasus of the Russian Federation are an indication to that. As you may know, the local opposition accusing the authorities of murdering a well-known journalist has started calling its move for independence from Russia. Perhaps every such claim will entail a very serious response from Moscow, but this is a process that will be very hard to seize in the future.

And I would like to mention again and again mentioning Kosovo, comparing it with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is absolutely unacceptable because Kosovo is a different case. This is a unique case and has nothing to do with Abkhazian case because there was an ethnic cleansing in Kosovo against Kosovars and it was ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia, but against Georgians and it was proved in many international documents – by the way, Russia is a part of this documents – among them extremely highest level documents of OSCE, which was adopted in Lisbon, in Bucharest, and Istanbul during OSCE summits and Russia was signed these documents that times.

Despite the fact that ceasefire agreement has been reached and signed by Georgia and Russia, so-called Sarkozy Agreement, the tough diplomatic efforts of the international community, despite the fact that European Union, the United Nations, the United States, OSCE, the Russian pledges remain on paper only and yet Russian military personnel continue to block one of the principal economic routes of Georgia, the port of Poti, the military base in Senaki, and other locations.

Undoubtedly, there are always two sides of the coin and today each side to the conflict has its own truth in – in – (inaudible) – of course. The famous Russian argument is that it’s protecting the rights of its citizens living in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia. It is not a secret for anyone that granting Russian passports and citizenship to the population living in the conflict zones is a favorable method for Russian politicians and this is the main argument for the validation of their destructive policy. The passportization process has started years ago and today we are bearing the fruits of such illegitimate methods.
In addition, the Russian authority started an investigation on the ground of ethnic cleansing. Let me remind you that there were about 100,000 Ossetians in Georgia with more than 70 percent of them living outside of South Ossetia. Ossetia, for years, it is more than evidence that no one would exhibit an international hostility toward the population of the Tskhinvali region alone. All those Ossetians who are living outside of this region never had problems with Georgians before and I can promise you that they will never have problems in the future.

For centuries, Georgian people have never been enemies of Abkhazians and Ossetians, or any other nationalities living in Georgia within the more than 3,000 years of its statehood. What is more, the villages located next to the dispute region controlled by Georgian side before the August 7th, were deliberately burned and this population was forced to flee. As a proof of this, we can refer to the Human Rights Watch report, this is what can be considered to be an ethnic cleansing. It will sound ironic, but considering the strong statement of the Russian leaders – (inaudible) – full readiness to protect the right of Russian citizens in every single spot worldwide, it’s make us think of the fact that even a small concentration of Russian citizens may be considered as a potential threat to their host countries. I hope Russia’s leadership and Russians themselves understand it quite well.

To be more serious, if we look carefully at the authentic grounds of both of these conflicts, which were created artificially in the early ’90s, it’s easy to reveal that South Ossetia as well as Abkhazia were two so-called slow motion bombs, potential levers of influence that could be used when necessary.

On behalf of the Georgian people, let me express my sincere gratitude to all our friends all over the world, here in the United States, in Europe, our partners for the expressed concern over the aggressive policy against Georgia and for their readiness to assist my country and my people. The results of the special meeting of the European Union leaders in Brussels on September 1st reaffirm the support of the whole Europe for Georgia and its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Statements which United States made many times concerning territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia means really a lot for Georgia and for Georgian people. We are extremely grateful for the all support which we received from international community and this proves once again that all people all around the world understand quite well that if we will not respond adequately right now, tomorrow it will be – it might be quite late.

Undoubtedly, it’s very important right now to have even more tangible consequences of the support which we need in nearest future, too, but we understand that Europe and United States, they are trying to find solution from this very difficult situation. And we understand quite well that isolating process of Russia could allow its leadership to ignore the contemporary international relations values contributing to further complications. In this regard, the entire international community should activate all existing levers and international mechanisms to force Russia to act in accordance with the principles of international law. We never call international community to isolate totally Russia. We never call international community to build new iron curtain because this is not bringing results.

But we need to react adequately and we need to force Russia to respect international agreements, to respect international law and at least to respect their agreement which was signed by Russia’s president, President Medvedev. With the recognition of the breakaway regions of Georgia, Russia has identified very serious political messages and this is not serious and not dangerous as I already said, only for Georgia. Ignoring the six-point agreement which was prepared by U.S.
presidency and recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we are really in front of the very serious difficulties.

But I hope that after the visit of President Sarkozy in Moscow, it will be possible to bring Russia back to this document and it will be possible to implement these documents concerning pullout of Russian military forces from Georgia, concerning finding of international mechanism for conflict solutions and many others which we have in this agreement.

And it's absolutely unacceptable to speak about some kind of buffer zones in the territory of sovereign country. It's absolutely unacceptable to speak about recognition of de facto regimes. And it's absolutely unacceptable to speak about internal situations of Georgia, about regime change and so on. It's absolutely unacceptable in 21st century to dictate to the people who should speak on behalf of these people. It's up to every sovereign nation to decide and not up to neighbors to decide.

Quite simply, a modern Russia does not show even the smallest intention of sharing the values upon which contemporary civilized relations are based. I hope the international community will do everything possible, as I said, to force Russia to respect international values and international norms and principles.

What future does Georgian-Russian relations have? Is it a protracted hostility or is there promise for dialogue? At the present situation when there is a fact of open aggression, we see ourselves as a part of wider European and international security system and consider our relations with the Russian Federation as a compositive part of the multilateral international dialogue. We are ready to negotiate together with international community to achieve results, which means to protect sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and to protect international law.

Without further delay, a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflicts in Georgia must be found. A solution that will be based upon the full respect for the principles of Georgia’s independence, sovereignty and its territorial integrity that is recognized internationally. There is a need for the urgent internationalization of the peacekeeping format as never before. We all saw that forces which are in South Ossetia and Abkhazia so-called peacekeepers, they are not real peacekeepers. They are not neutral and they are part of the conflict. We said it many times before, but right now it’s absolutely obvious for the whole international community that if we need peace and stability in the region, if we need peace and stability in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, we need international mechanism. We have to de-monopolize Russian presence in these regions. We have to bring really international and objective forces in these conflict zones.

I believe all our friends, as well as the entire democratic community, realizes that there should be mechanisms that protect small countries like Georgia and this is very important for democratic community. Only with the joint efforts of the international democratic community will it be possible to defend the values which form the basis for contemporary international relations and the principles of the peaceful coexistence of sovereign states.

I would like to highlight that right now Russia’s clearly stated intention to change the present government of Georgia is doomed to fail as not a single Georgian or political force will support the demand of the aggression. Mentioning the president of Georgia as a political corpse by the side of President Medvedev in any interview is another clear confirmation of this. Nevertheless, the crisis
clearly illustrated the Georgian society as well as the entire political spectrum is united in protecting Georgia’s statehood and its territorial integrity. It was also clear that the democratic values and the Euro-Atlantic aspiration of the Georgian people remained firm and irreversible in spite of Russia’s severe punishment.

However, we, the Georgian people, do not consider the government as victims only and, of course, when Russia pulls out, we assure and we hope that all internal political situations in Georgia will go in democratic direction and will be according to democratic principles and according to democratic frames. With your support, dear friends, with the encouragement of the international democratic community, Georgia should continue pursuing its weight over the Euro-Atlantic space. It should build a state up on the basis of genuine democracy and it should become a deserved member of the international family of democratic nations. I am more than sure that the only way for Georgia to keep Georgian sovereignty, territorial integrity, to strengthen Georgia’s democratic values, to strengthen democracy in this country, and to build real democratic, a strong democratic state, to create irreversible democratic processes in the country, this is only possible way out from this very critical and dramatic situation.

Today the Georgian people need support and we count on your support and your understanding and I would like to ask you please consider this urgent appeal. We need your support and we count on you very much. Thank you very much for your attention and I’m ready for your – any questions from your side.

(Appause.)

MR. CAROTHERS: I will call on people from here and then direct your questions to our speaker and she’ll stay standing for the benefit of our television cameras, if you don’t mind. Thanks very much. So if I could have your hands and then proceed. I’d like you to ask yourself to identify yourself clearly and to wait to speak until you have the microphone, which will come to you – (inaudible).

Q: Bill Courtney, former U.S. Ambassador to Georgia. Throughout a period of U.S. relations with Georgia, the strongest element of U.S. policy has been that Georgia is most likely to gain back Abkhazia and South Ossetia if Georgia reforms politically and economically. And indeed Georgia has done a lot in that respect. Looking forward, though, to what extent do you think that’s still the right policy? Or do you think there should be a different policy from the U.S. and the West?

MS. BURJANADZE: Yes, you’re right. During many years, United States and many countries trying to help Georgia to find solution for these two conflict regions because everybody understood quite well that without solutions of the conflicts in this country it’s not possible to have real peace and stability in the country and it’s not possible to have real peace and stability in the region and it’s not possible to have sustainable development or to continue sustainable development for the country.

Unfortunately, we all were not very successful in this conflict solution process and these conflicts were frozen for a long period of time and Russia was a part who was playing very serious role in this situation. We were always saying that Russia is interesting at least to keep these conflicts frozen because Russia was against of Georgian aspiration to be a member of NATO and of course it was easier to keep influencing Georgia having these two breakaway regions under Russia’s control.
And everybody knows quite well that this territories’ regimes had very close and direct contact with
Moscow.

We have to change the policy or not? I think yes. Right now especially we have to change
the policy concerning these two breakaway regions of Georgia and we should focus our attention
more seriously on this and unfortunately these dramatic events somehow helped in this direction,
helped in breaks, of course and what we really need, we need to bring as many international
mechanisms in these conflicts as possible.

What was the main problem during these years and why the problems and conflicts were not
solved? Because conflict zones were monopolized by Russian forces and Russian political elite or
some Russian special services. We need to bring real international mechanisms in these conflict
zones.

First of all, we need international peacekeeping forces who will not protect only their own
citizens, but who will protect everybody who lives in this territory, and international peacekeeping
forces which will do everything possible to help people who were kicked down from these regions
and this is from Abkhazia, more than 300,000 Georgians and other ethnic groups and more than
55,000 and 70,000 and right now even more from South Ossetia. This is very important, to create
international mechanisms which will give a possibility to give – to ensure for these people that they
will come back to their homes and they will join the same rights as any other normal nations have in
every territory which belongs to international community and civilized world.

This is the most important solution and right now first of all we should try to implement this
Article 5. We should stop to speak about buffer zones. We should stop to speak about Georgia
proper. We should speak about Georgian territorial integrity and when we are speaking about
Georgia, we all should mention that we are speaking about Georgia including Abkhazia and South
Ossetia.

MR. CAROTHERS: Here.

Q: Hi. Kevin Jones, Georgetown University. You talked specifically about the reception of
Russian aggression and you talked specifically about the relationship with the international
community. But I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about specifically the decisions that
were made by the Georgian government. If we go back a few, three months or four months before
the crisis, what changes do you think or different actions of the Georgian government could have
taken or perhaps should have taken?

MS. BURJANADZE: Coming back to three, four months period before, if you remember
quite well – if you remember and I remember it quite well, three or four months ago, it was April
and it was 16th of April, President Putin – at that time, President Putin – few weeks before his –
before new elections, presidential elections, Russia signed a document concerning special relations
of Russian Federation and Russian Federation structures with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of
course, it was absolutely illegal document because Abkhazia and South Ossetia were part and are
part of Georgia and Russia had no right to establish direct contacts with Abkhazia and South
Ossetia without permission from Georgian side.
And this is not something which only Georgia wants, but this was something which was an obligation of Russia, not only under United Nations charter or not only after the OSC, not only according to OSC documents, but according to documents which Russia signed under CIC, which is one of the main organizations where Russia is dominated.

So this was the beginning of the crisis, this is for sure. Of course internal situation and political life in Georgia will continue, as in every normal and democratic countries, questions concerning results, questions concerning where we are, questions concerning why we are where we are, but it’s not time right now, a right time for this, until Russian tanks are on Georgian territory, until Russia is trying to change borders of a sovereign nation. I think we should pay more serious attention how to deal with this problem. Time for analysis will come and I promise you that as in every normal nation, Georgian people will ask these questions and will ask in democratic way, will ask according to democratic processes in the framework of the constitution. And I want to have right answers from the side of the government, of course. And we will make an analysis, because even if you are winners in every situation, you need to make good analysis to do the same or to improve or not to do what you did. So analysis will be done, but not now. I think that answers about these decisions we can give only after serious analysis. Not emotionally, not without enough information, but based on serious analysis, which I’m sure that will be done in Georgia and outside of Georgia too.

Q: Richard Weitz, Hudson Institute. As you know, right now media attention in the United States is dominated by the Republican and Democratic conventions, and I understand a bunch of Georgian representatives were there, and there were a bunch of panels on U.S. foreign policy, as well as private discussions. Has there been any feedback in the sense of what the next administration – policies the next administration might pursue toward Georgia out of those general impressions you’ve been receiving?

MS. BURJANADZE: Thank you. I was really honored to attend both congressional meetings, in Denver meeting of Democrats, and in Minneapolis meeting of Republicans, and I think that the case that Georgian delegation governmental representatives, representatives of opposition and civil society were attended both, gives partly the answer on this question. But I can tell you that we had a lot of meetings with different representatives, high-level politicians among Democrats and Republicans. I am more than pleased to say that Georgia is really bipartisan issue in this country, and this is very correct.

I am sure that despite of the decision of American people whom they will elect, Democrats or Republicans, Georgia will have support from this country because this is not about relations of Georgia’s government with the government of United States. This is not about relations between Democrats or Republicans. This is about common values which we share, and this is about these principles which we believe. So that is why I think that Georgia will continue to receive support from this country and from the rest of international community. Not from Nicaragua, of course, but from civilized world, yes.

Q: Eric Rudenshiold, US Agency for International Development. I appreciate very much your comments on the internal situation, and to follow up on that a little bit. All too often, unfortunately, you don’t get to pick the time when the population at large raises the question about how effective a government’s actions have been. As we saw during the last presidential elections and events prior to that, people took to the streets, there was frustration that bubbled up. Do you
believe that there is a prospect for this happening now? And if so, how can the government respond?

MS. BURJANADZE: I hope that there will be no any more rallies in this country because country is really tired from so many problems, so many rallies, so many revolutions. Even if it’s Rose revolution, which was fortunately without violence and which was really democratic revolution. I am sure that Georgian society will find right way to solve this very deep crisis in the country. That is not easy, but I am sure that this is quite possible, and I hope that this unity, which Georgian political forces and civil society shows say a lot. I am sure that government will act adequately, and all this process, process of questions and answers and discussions will go in democratic way.

MR. CAROTHERS: Yes?

Q: Wendy Silverman from the Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. You’ve said in your presentation that you hope that Georgia will strengthen its democratic processes and values. I wonder if you could share with us what you consider to be the priorities in that area.

MS. BURJANADZE: Thank you. It’s quite easy for me to answer this question. It’s about my new job. It’s about my Foundation for Democratic Development. By the way, I’m quite proud that even being the speaker of the parliament and being in the government I was speaking about the same priorities. But of course Georgia is country in transition and we need to strengthen democracy, without any doubt. And we have more room for strengthening democracy.

Priorities are, and I will be more than happy to giver the brochure about my foundation, where all these priorities are mentioned quite clearly. Priorities are rule of law, which is very important. Priority is to strengthen state institutions, to make country less dependent from leadership and more dependent from institutions. Priority is strengthening free media and press and media. Independence of judiciary, which is very important, and basically includes human rights and many, many other issues. Strengthening the self-governance. I think these are the main priorities. I can give you some others in detail, but the main priorities, of course are these — rule of law, independence of judiciary, strengthening state institutions, self-governance, freedom of press and media.

MR. CAROTHERS: Yes.

Q: Anders Åslund, Peterson Institute. I wonder if you could enlighten us upon the major factual disputes in this case. When the Georgian troops and the Russian troops respectively stopped moving on the 7th, 8th of August. Thank you.

MS. BURJANADZE: I can’t speak about the details of military operation. I was not there. I was not in the government, so I have not enough information about this. I know what you know, the same. I know that from the 1st of 2nd of August, Kokoity began to bombing Georgian villages. I know that on the question of our government, while Kokoity is doing this, Russia’s official answer was that we are asking – and by the way, it was just even in Russian TV and Georgian TV, when we received official answer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia that we are asking Kokoity to
stop but he is not stopping, which is – I don’t believe in this. I think you too because Kokoity was too much dependent from Russia, and if Russia said, you should stop, it was enough.

So this is what I know for sure, that Georgian villages were bombing by Kokoity, and it was clear provocation, very clear provocation. And it was not first time when the de facto regimes and Russia wanted to provoke Georgia to do something or to react. This was many, many times even before.

MR. CAROTHERS: Yes?

Q: Zeyno Baron from Hudson Institution. About MAP in December, how likely do you think it is for Georgia to expect MAP, and what would happen if Georgia received it and didn’t? Because as you know, among some European countries there is concern in going one way or another. If you can tell us the two potential ways forward.

MS. BURJANADZE: Thank you. First of all, I want to mention once again that unity of United States and Europe is very important. In many, many different cases but in particular this case. It’s very important to keep unity of Europe. Traditionally Baltic countries and Eastern European countries are more – I don’t want to say more supportive, but they understand Georgian issue and Georgian realities and Russian realities much better sometimes than Western European countries because they have different relations.

I remember when President Putin was elected his first term. You remember that we all had expectations that Russia would become more democratic and Russia will change the policy. But we saw in Georgia that nothing changed. And quite often I said to my European colleagues, I was saying to my European colleagues, please take into account how Russia is picking with Georgia and with the immediate neighborhood. It’s different how Russia is picking with United States, with Great Britain, with Germany, with Italy. But it’s different how they are picking with, and they were, and right now it’s more clear how they’re picking with countries like Georgia. So it shows a lot.

So that is why sometimes it was easier to receive understanding from the side of former Soviet camp countries than from old Europe, who had different relations with Russia. But right now I think that they saw a lot and we’ll really have strong support from the whole European community, which is very important. And for us support of France and Great Britain, Germany, and other countries are very important. I’m sure that we all will be in one boat and this boat will go through this crisis safely, without more serious problems.

Concerning MAP, unfortunately – unfortunately arguments which Russia trying to use concerning Georgia, that Georgia has had two unsolved conflicts, these arguments were arguments for some European countries and we were saying that if conflicts will be obstacles on our way to NATO, it will give more motivation to Russia to keep these conflicts unsolved because the main goal of Russia not to give a possibility to Georgia to be a member of NATO. There will be no motivation for them to play positive and objective role in this conflict solution. Just opposite. They will keep this conflict going in Georgia as long as possible.

I understand that it’s not easy question right now. Even before conflict it was not quite clear what will be decision of NATO concerning Georgia, there will be MAP in December or not. I hope that there will be Member Action Plan in December but I understand that it’s not easy because
many countries have to speak in one voice. But despite of the fact MAP will be or not in December, I’m sure that whole Europe will continue to support Georgia sovereignty and territorial integrity. As it was said in Bucharest, one day Georgia will be a member of NATO. This is not true, that NATO is a threat for Russia or anybody who is not afraid democratic organization. For them NATO is not threat. And Baltic countries and other countries are quite good example of this. Okay, Baltics are members of NATO and what? Are they a threat for Russia? Of course not.

I hope that we will be members of NATO, and I’m sure that we should find solution for the Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And I am sure we will find this kind of solution, which will be really peaceful and which will be oriented to common coexistence of Georgians and Abkhazians and Ossetians. I know that we will find common language. It is not easy, especially after this tragedy, which renewed this pain and brought new pains between Ossetians and Georgians, but I am realistic but optimistic too.

MR. CAROTHERS: I wonder if I might take the prerogative of the chair to just ask one question. As you know, U.S. military assistance to Georgia is apparently being both proposed and debated here in Washington. Would you comment on what forms of U.S. military assistance you think are most urgent and necessary in Georgia? And are there other forms of military assistance that you would not give a priority to at this time?

MS. BURJANADZE: Yes, military assistance was very important for our country to build Georgian army, which did not exist. To build military infrastructure, and of course we need to rebuild what was ruined after the conflict. I already said this is not only military infrastructure. It’s civilian infrastructure too, and I want to thank United States government because of yesterday’s decision to send additional support and help to Georgia. About $1 billion help will go to Georgia right now to help Georgian people to recover from this tragic situation.

I think that we should continue to strengthen army to be according to NATO standards. Of course U.S. military assistance was not focused to build army which will fight against somebody, and it was quite clear during this recent development too. It was army which was to defend country, and country’s territorial integrity. There is a sentence, that if you don’t want war, you have to be prepared. If you want peace, you have to be prepared for war. This is what Georgian army was about.

From my point this is about what Georgian army should be because you can’t fight against – I hope we will never fight against our neighbors, but it’s not reasonable to fight, and especially when you have such big neighbors as we have. So I am sure that we should rebuild our army, but not for using force, or not to fight, but to have a feeling that we can be protected if aggression happens to us.

MR. CAROTHERS: If I might just ask one more question. With respect to the European decisions on Monday regarding its position vis-à-vis Russia, were you satisfied with the decision by the European Union on Monday, the European actors with respect to whether or not to impose sanctions on Russia, and whether or not to curtail other types of relations.

MS. BURJANADZE: First of all, most important was that Europe was united concerning sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. This is results, and without any questions Europe
was supportive to implement Sarkozy’s agreement. Europe was supportive to pull out Russian military presence from Georgia.

Of course the damage for Georgia is so big that we wanted just more or additional measures. But from another side, that already said, maybe is elation is not the best policy right now. Maybe there is still time for Russia to reverse, face absolutely illegal steps and illegal decisions which Russia made. I know that President Sarkozy is going to visit Russia, Moscow on Monday. I don’t want to predict something, I don’t want to just go ahead of this visit. I think that Europe was not – Europe tried to keep room for negotiation with Russia, and that was why they didn’t go more far than consenting economic sanctions and all this.

If these efforts will be successful, and if Russia will implement its obligations and will respect international community’s decision, it might be a beginning of some new development which will be more or less positive.

Q: Thank you. (Inaudible) – youth movement, from Armenia. Just a question about lost initiative from the Turkish president. Do you see any future from the announcement that he made about creating a Caucasus with a different integration idea? And how far do you think this idea can go?

MS. BURJANADZE: Thank you. First of all, as you are a representative of Armenia, I want to thank Armenian people who are living in Georgia for support which they show during these difficult days, as many other representatives and nationalities who are living fortunately in peace in Georgia showed during these days. I know lots of information about different regions of the country where different nationalities are living, and I know how supportive they were during these critical days for Georgian citizens and for all the country.

Concerning this initiative, I am not very familiar in detail, so I can’t say. But in any case, any initiatives should be really discussed and we should find if there are some new initiatives which might be useful for the regional security and cooperation. I can’t go in detail, I am sorry, because I really don’t know in detail about this initiative and I am not ready to answer this. But any initiatives which will be focused on which will help us, all of us, in the region to have stability, peace and cooperation, and democracy in the region, will be of course welcome by all sides.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thank you very much. I think we’re going to close here. I’m tempted – anybody who has sat through at least parts of the conventions, both in Denver and Minneapolis, probably has interesting insights about American democracy, but I’ll spare you that for now. But I think the large turnout here today is an indication of the tremendous level of concern here in Washington for the events that are affecting the country.

MS. BURJANADZE: I hope American democracy will pass this exam quite well.

MR. CAROTHERS: We’ll see. And also the high level of interest in European Union as well. So I want to thank you for coming today and sharing your thoughts, and thank all the rest of you, and we look forward to seeing you are Carnegie before long and wish you well on your return to Georgia.

MS. BURJANADZE: Thank you.
(Applause.)

(END)