

NATO Membership Would Strain Georgian Ties With Russia, Medvedev Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 07, 2013

The  Moscow Times

NATO membership would not give Georgia any advantages for further development and would only strain relations with Russia, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said.

"This would give nothing to Georgia as a sovereign and dynamically developing state, but would create a long-term source of tensions between our countries," Medvedev said in an interview with Georgia's Rustavi-2 television channel on Tuesday.

Speaking in regard to the fifth anniversary of the brief war between Russia and Georgia over the breakaway Georgian republic of South Ossetia, Medvedev said it the military intervention was the right decision for him to make as president at that time in order to stabilize the region.

"I believe that everything that was undertaken by us, including by me as president, our Armed

Forces and finally at a diplomatic level, enabled the situation to allayed. They were not the easy decisions to make, but I believe everything was done right in that sense," he said.

The prime minister also expressed hope that Georgia would begin direct talks with South Ossetia on issues such as refugees and the non-use of military force.

Georgia lost control over one-fifth of its territory after South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another former republic within Georgia, broke away and were recognized by Moscow in the wake of a brief war with Russia that erupted on Aug. 8, 2008.

In the interview, Medvedev also reiterated that the presence of the Russian military forces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia complied with legal norms and could not be viewed as an occupation of Georgian territory.

Tbilisi passed the Law on Occupied Territories in October 2008, declaring the "Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia" and the "Tskhinvali Region," or South Ossetia, as "occupied territories." The law forbids entry into the regions from Russia and subjects violators to a fine or imprisonment.

Moscow provides the breakaway republics with economic and military support and has recognized their independence, along with a handful of other countries. Most countries do not recognize South Ossetia or Abkhazia as independent states, but view them as part of Georgia.

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