



Talking Under Fire

The Negotiation of Ceasefires

Asst Prof. Anthony Wanis-St. John


American University

SIS Graduate Student Portal, August 2008



International Negotiations

- ✧ Undertaken by all kinds of 'actors'-states, int'l orgs, NGOs, eminent individuals and non-states (guerrilla groups, etc.)
- ✧ Purposes include normal diplomatic exchange, formal treaty-making, trade, the normal business of international affairs
- ✧ More interesting: negotiations to achieve ceasefires, resolve hostage and barrier incidents, conclude definitive peace accords, permit humanitarian access



Knowledge of international negotiations...

- ✧ Centuries of case studies, including ancient sources (i.e. Tel al-Amarna tablets, Thucydides)
- ✧ Insights from political scientists, classic political philosophers, social and cognitive psychologists, decision and game theorists,




Two main concerns in negotiation theory

- ✧ Descriptive: How *do* we negotiate?
 - ✧ Errors, biases, mistakes, miscalculations, positionality and threats...
- ✧ Prescriptive: How *should* we negotiate?
 - ✧ Strategies and tactical knowledge, collaborative, creative methods, cultural competence...



Ceasefires...some characteristics

- ✧ Special class of negotiations that deserve serious study on their own
- ✧ **Humanitarian imperative**; the urgent need to save lives when violent conflicts deliberately inflict civilian casualties
- ✧ Ferocity of **modern warfare** and weapons
- ✧ Existence of an **underlying conflict** that requires resolution, or which might become 'intractable'



Some characteristics of success and failure

Success

- ✧ Reduction in violence and civilian casualties
- ✧ Separation of forces, cantonment
- ✧ Rebuilding infrastructure
- ✧ Secure repatriation of displaced,
- ✧ Demining, UXOs,
- ✧ Monitoring (MOGs, PKOs)
- ✧ Enforcement
- ✧ Return to political negotiation process (resolve underlying conflict)
- ✧ Spillover effects; related regional conflicts also subside, internal violence diminishes

Failure

- ✧ Continued hostilities and casualties
- ✧ Splintering of armed groups
- ✧ Arming of new groups, irregulars
- ✧ Economic and social devastation
- ✧ Faulty, delayed or empty implementation
- ✧ Obstruction of monitoring, PK or enforcement
- ✧ Use of ceasefire time to prepare for renewed war
- ✧ Broader regional and global erosion of cooperation



Dilemmas

✧ Do efforts to attain an early ceasefire simply delay efforts to resolve the underlying conflict?

✧ Two sides of this question:

✧ Justice vs. Peace? BLN vs. FLN? (backward versus forward looking negotiations)

✧ Heal the past or change the future?

✧ Is this an acceptable dichotomy?



Organizing questions

- ✧ Can our national or international efforts to attain CF hurt peaceful conflict resolution in the long run?
- ✧ Are there ways to harmonize the two goals to minimize trade-offs?



Russia-Georgia conflict

- ✧ Not a simple bilateral conflict
- ✧ Involvement of local secessionist movements (Abkhaz, S. Ossetia) that no one except Russia recognizes
- ✧ Georgia's approach to the West (NATO) has enraged Russia, introduced a sense of threat
- ✧ Kosovo's declaration of independence and international recognition have some negative feedback here
- ✧ Energy politics introduce some leverage and Russia posturing
 - ✧ Russia's supply to EU
 - ✧ Non-Russia supply lines
- ✧ Georgia internal incursion August 7, maybe Russian provocations before that



What might you do?

- A. Call the UN?
- B. Get the major powers involved (France, US, UK, EU, OSCE)
- C. Make public statements calling for an end to the fighting
- D. Threaten to actually DO something if the parties don't stop?
- E. All of the above?
- F. Just A to C?



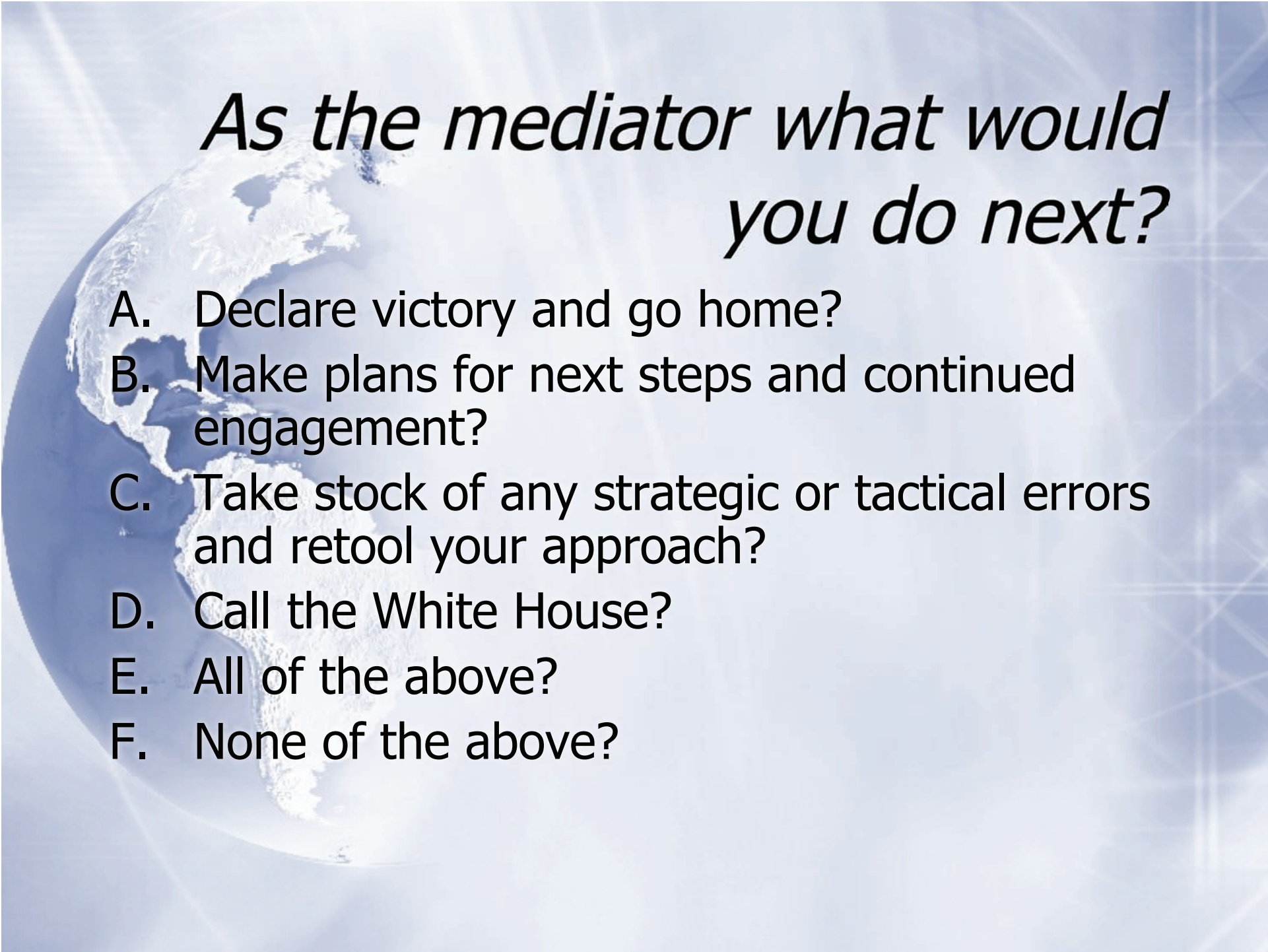
Immediate CF Efforts

- ✧ Mediation by France, holding EU Presidency and Finland, representing OSCE (had a monitoring role in prior Georgia ceasefires)
- ✧ FM Kouchner and FM Stubb arrive in Tbilisi 8/10, then go to Moscow with draft of ceasefire, containing Georgian offer 8/11
- ✧ French introduce a draft UN Security Resolution calling for the CF, which Russia threatens to veto



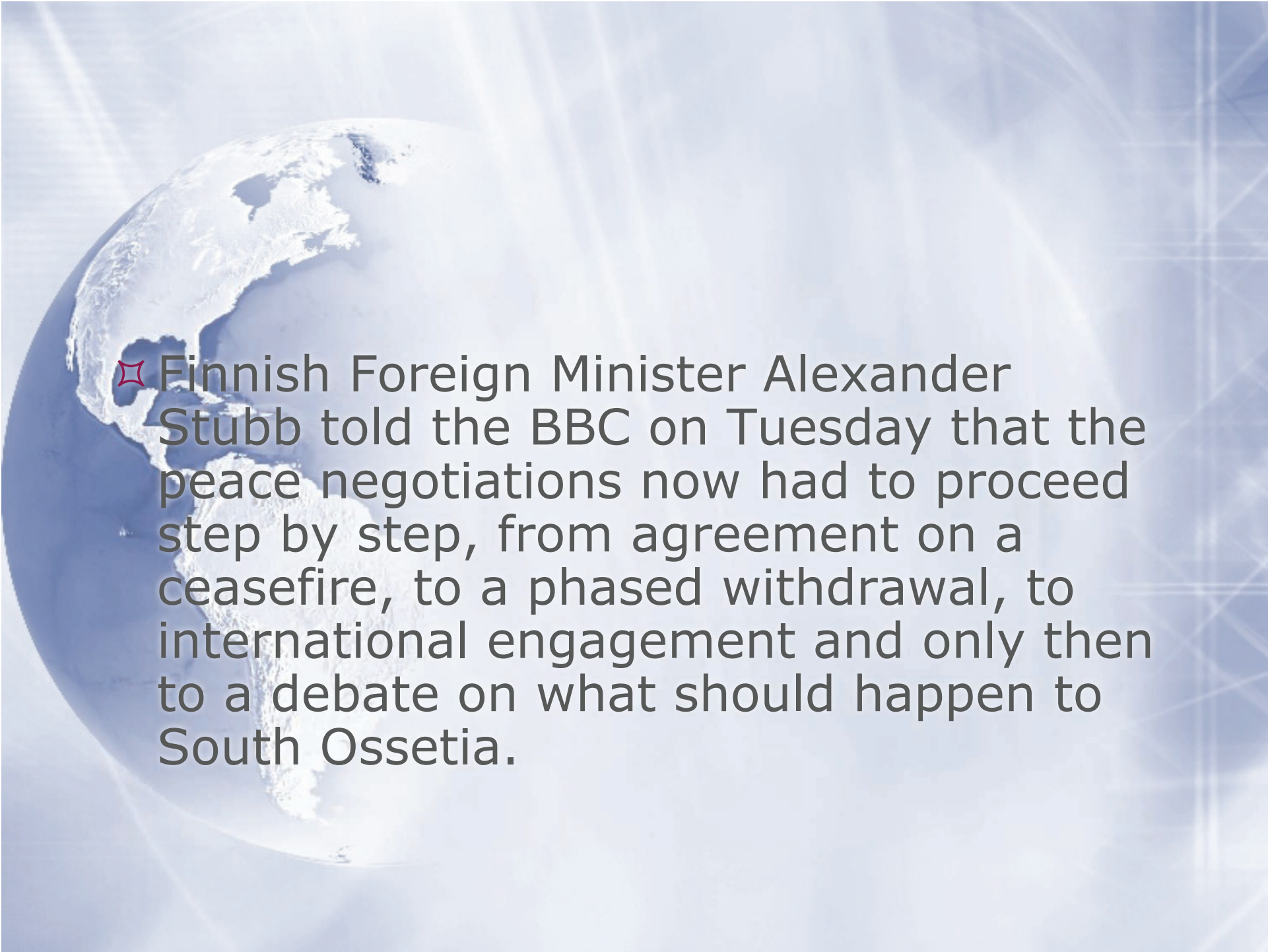
Then something interesting happens...

- ✧ 8/11 President Bush gives a warning to Russia
- ✧ 8/12 Pres. Sarkozy goes to the region
- ✧ Just before meeting with Sarkozy, President Medvedev states that Russia's military aims had been achieved
- ✧ Russians then agree to sign a ceasefire agreement that the Georgians had also agreed to sign




*As the mediator what would
you do next?*

- A. Declare victory and go home?
- B. Make plans for next steps and continued engagement?
- C. Take stock of any strategic or tactical errors and retool your approach?
- D. Call the White House?
- E. All of the above?
- F. None of the above?



✧ Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb told the BBC on Tuesday that the peace negotiations now had to proceed step by step, from agreement on a ceasefire, to a phased withdrawal, to international engagement and only then to a debate on what should happen to South Ossetia.



Russian military moves, after agreeing to the CF plan

- ✧ Expand outward from S. Ossetia
- ✧ Set up checkpoints on main E-W road dividing Georgia
- ✧ Loot arms depots, destroy military bases, deny humanitarian access to wounded people, attack hospitals
- ✧ Re-arm irregular forces in S. Ossetia, let them attack, burn Georgian villages and then claim to be restraining them
- ✧ Medvedev meets with leaders of Abkhazia and S. Ossetia, practically offers to annex them to Russia



International responses 8/13

- ✧ US transports Georgian troops from Iraq
- ✧ Declares a humanitarian mission will go to Georgia
- ✧ EU officials meet and discuss sending monitors



Negotiation obfuscation

- ✧ 8/14 US Humanitarian aid begins to arrive
- ✧ 8/14 Secretary Rice goes to France and then to Georgia
- ✧ 8/15 Saakashvili signs the agreement carried by Rice
- ✧ 8/16 Medvedev signs the agreement carried by Rice, but declares it will not withdraw until 8/18
- ✧ 8/20 France introduces new UNSC draft resolution, calling for Russia's immediate withdrawal, Russians don't want to pull out until 8/23
- ✧ 8/22 Russia introduces rival draft UNSC resolution, which the US threatens to veto

Russian soldiers take prisoners

Russian forces continue their occupation of Georgia and operate freely inside the country despite pledges to withdraw.

Poti

Russians seize at least 24 Georgian soldiers and four U.S. armored Humvees, block port

Senaki

Russians continue to occupy Georgian base, damage runway

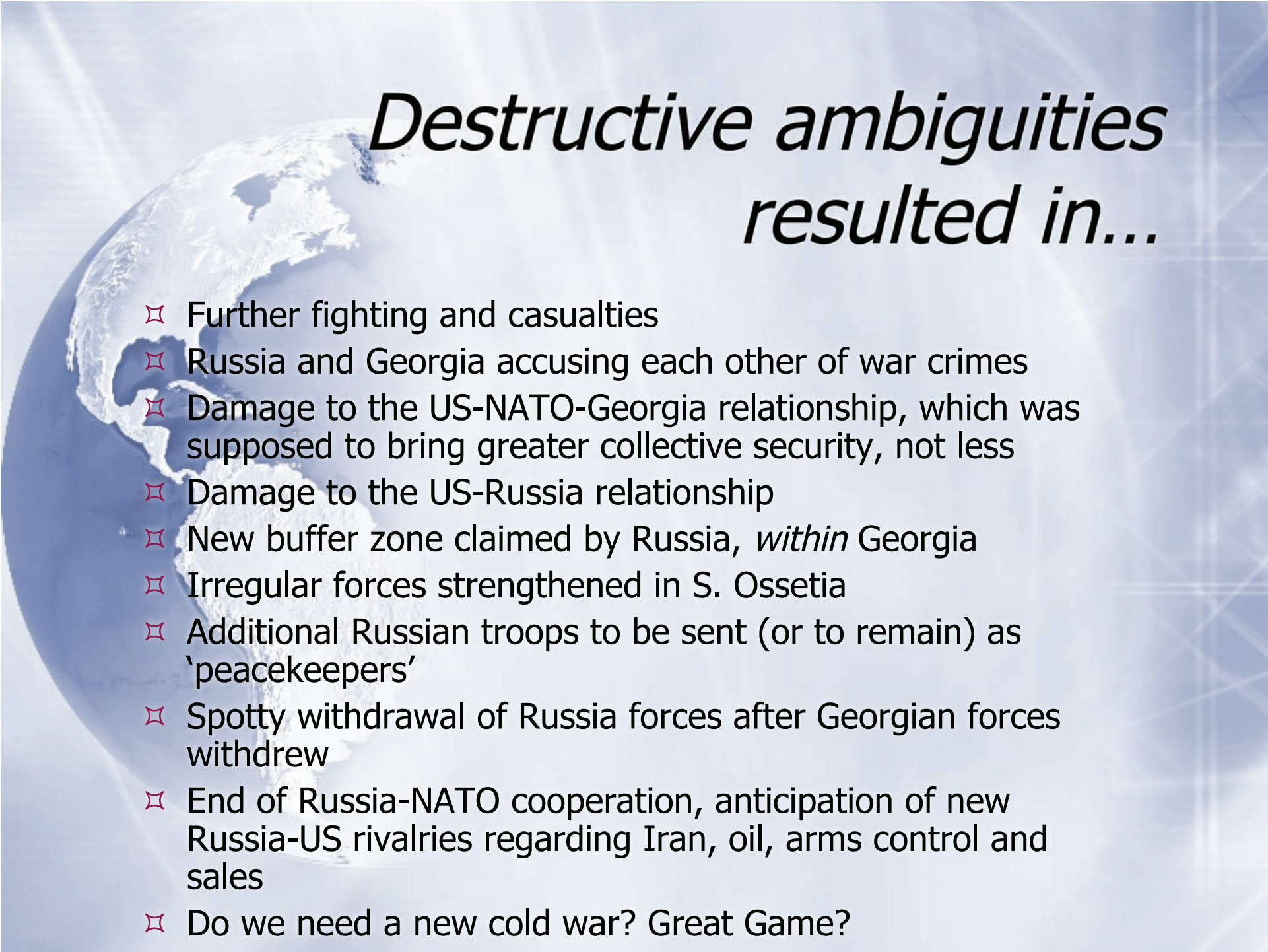
Gori

Russians build more checkpoints, block main road

Igoeti

Prisoners of war exchanged; 15 Georgians, five Russians





Destructive ambiguities resulted in...

- ✧ Further fighting and casualties
- ✧ Russia and Georgia accusing each other of war crimes
- ✧ Damage to the US-NATO-Georgia relationship, which was supposed to bring greater collective security, not less
- ✧ Damage to the US-Russia relationship
- ✧ New buffer zone claimed by Russia, *within* Georgia
- ✧ Irregular forces strengthened in S. Ossetia
- ✧ Additional Russian troops to be sent (or to remain) as 'peacekeepers'
- ✧ Spotty withdrawal of Russia forces after Georgian forces withdrew
- ✧ End of Russia-NATO cooperation, anticipation of new Russia-US rivalries regarding Iran, oil, arms control and sales
- ✧ Do we need a new cold war? Great Game?



What to do differently?

- ✧ Immediately build a strong global coalition in favor of CF, not a fragmented one
- ✧ Coordinate multiple international mediation and negotiation efforts
- ✧ Use credible threats, or none at all if you are going to ripen the moment
- ✧ Exercise leverage, or don't try to negotiate
 - ✧ Need for credible carrots, not just sticks to ENTICE parties toward legitimate aims
- ✧ Move toward specificity in commitments, going from principles to details.
 - ✧ Principles are important, but the 'devil is in the details'
- ✧ Anticipate implementation failures
- ✧ Consider preventive deployments of peacekeepers