

*Jasper von Altenbockum*

In order to state their solidarity with president Saakashvili, prominent politicians of Poland and Ukraine as well as the three Baltic states traveled to Tbilisi on Tuesday. In a statement President Toomas Hendrik Ilves together with its Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian colleagues wrote that Russia had exceeded the „red line “. In a discussion with FAZ the invasion of Russian troops to Georgia is designated as „illegal act of the aggression “.

**How should the European Union react upon Russia overstepping a red-line as you claim in your Joint Declaration? Is there still a strategic partnership?**

**President Toomas Hendrik Ilves:** It is difficult to conceive how to pursue a strategic partnership with a country that is bombing cities in neighboring countries (as is continuing right now in Georgia), violating international law or demands "regime change" of legitimate, democratically elected governments. As of this writing Russian forces have physically crossed into Georgian territory proper. In fact this is an illegal act of aggression that violates the U.N. Charter and fundamental principles of cooperation and security in Europe. A strategic partnership is possible with countries that share our values.

The EU needs to react very clearly and resolutely to this kind of Russian behaviour. First and foremost we need a ceasefire, guaranteed respect for the territorial integrity of Georgia and find a peaceful and lasting solution for the Abhasia and South Ossetia conflicts. The EU must, however, analyse the entire package of its relations with Russia. And also Europe to make an appraisal of what kind of neighbor we are dealing with. And what today, after the events last week, is our security situation.

## **Are the negotiations on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement obsolete?**

I believe they have been taken over by events. Russia in the 1990s had great potential to become a modern democracy that respects its neighbors. We know from our own sad history what appeasement and the toleration of aggression led to in Europe in the 1930s.

## **How should NATO react?**

It is essential that NATO will not be shocked and that we calmly but surely continue our co-operation with Ukraine and Georgia. These are democracies that should neither suffer nor be isolated because of their democratic choice or due to aggressive behaviour by its neighbor.

It is regrettable in the extreme that NATO could not reach an agreement on offering the membership action plan to these countries. Russia, as I feared already then, apparently interpreted this as leaving these countries in its "sphere of influence". Some statements from NATO members contributed to this misinterpretation and now the result of the decision can be realistically evaluated.

## **Why are statesment by the EU and even the US towards the war in Georgia so cautious?**

Statements by both the EU and the US have consistently stressed the fundamentals: the need to maintain the territorial integrity of Georgia and to cease military actions. But I agree that there are countries that understand only clear and frank language. Western caution and circumspection and politeness tend in some other cultures to be misinterpreted as weakness.

*Link to the original article in German on the homepage of [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung](#)*