

Brief: Redrawing Georgia

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Background: Russia needs the Caucasus to be stable and under its influence to serve as a buffer between it and powerful states like Iran and Turkey. It recently brokered peace and deployed peacekeepers between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but the status of two pro-Russian regions that broke away from Georgia in 2008 remains unsettled.

What Happened: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday **appointed a special representative** for the demarcation of Russia's borders with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Georgia and the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgian government shot back that it will not discuss borders with Moscow until Russia removes its troops from the breakaway republics. The deputy chairman of Georgia's parliament called the appointment of the special envoy an act of **aggression and a provocation** by Russia.

Bottom Line: Last year's six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan reestablished Russian influence in the Caucasus and highlighted the distractedness or diminished influence of the U.S. and Europe. This represents a possible opportunity for Russia. The Kremlin will slowly and cautiously test the waters with Tbilisi to find weak points and try to coax Georgia into discussing a border settlement.

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