

INTERNATIONAL
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Georgia and NATO; Obama and race

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Georgia and NATO

Regarding the article "Bush to back Georgia at meeting of NATO" (March 20): Here we go again. President George W. Bush says, "I believe that NATO benefits with a Georgia membership." He then added: "I believe Georgia benefits from being a part of NATO."

While Bush may be infatuated with Georgia and its U.S.-educated president, the already fragile EU-Russian relationship would certainly not benefit.

Moscow has made that very clear, and the article says that some Western leaders also have their "misgivings" about such a membership.

Is there any limit to the European Union's tolerance of Washington's continued interference in the EU sphere of interest? This meddling does nothing to help Europe's security, nor to boost the aspirations of Georgia to join the European Union.

The most sensible approach for Europe would be to formulate a meaningful EU foreign policy, and to defer any consideration of an expanded NATO until the next U.S. president takes office in early 2009.

Jens A. Jorgensen, *Brussels*

Obama and race

Regarding the editorial "Obama's courageous speech on race and religion" (March 20): In the opinion of this African-American, Barack Obama reacted too late and too reserved in his criticism of his former pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright Jr. Obama missed the opportunity to distance himself in a firm and decisive manner from a man who has used the language of America's enemies when shouting from his pulpit: "God damn America."

What do U.S. veterans, the soldiers now fighting a war and those coming home wounded, and the families of those who have lost loved ones, feel after hearing these words from a pastor?

If Wright were to use language like that of the great African-American leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I'm certain black and white America would be more understanding of the point he was trying to make. King never damned his country. He loved America. That's why his criticisms of its racial sins were always dignified, eloquent, yet insistent and unflinching.

Wright's words remind me of another black leader, Malcolm X, who realized much too late that firebrand speeches on race, regardless how full of truth and good intent, can be divisive and in the end more destructive than constructive.

Every Sunday morning thousands of African-American pastors, in their many different denominations, preach the word of God without using speech that seeks to incite or divide their congregations.

Ron Williams, *Munich*

Notes: