

SMALL ANATOMY OF GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONFLICT

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Abstract: In the 90s of the past century the Soviet Union disappeared from the world map and several new sovereign countries were created. These countries, especially south Caucasus's 3 republics: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, started facing political, economical, ethnic and religious confrontations (e.g. Georgian conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia; Armenia-Azerbaijan armed confrontation for Karabagh).

The main aim of my speech is to portray from the main points of existing ethno-territorial political conflicts and 20 years anatomy of Georgian-Ossetian conflict which started in 1989 and mistakes which were made by the parties during the regulation, which resulted in war in August 2008, the smallest war of the 20th century: “The war over South Ossetia lasted only one week, but will have devastating consequences for civilians for generations to come.” said Rachel Denber, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch [1].

Keywords: ethno-territorial conflicts, political conflicts, Ossetians

I. THE MAIN POINTS OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

The ethno-territorial conflict has the unique ability to mobilize different segments of the society on a very high level, which is causing the extreme aggravation of the conflict. In these cases, ethno-territorial protection is coming to a first place, which is reducing the chances for compromises.

1. Every ethno-territorial conflict has a very complicated nature. As the main point is the aspiration of ethnos for creation of its own country, and here the conflict is gaining political status.

2. Ethno-territorial conflicts have high emotional aspect in them. Most of such conflicts have their historical roots. Conflicting parties are trying to use the history for their benefit, to justify their positions.

3. Ethno-territorial conflicts are characterized by extremely high mobilization of ethnic groups. Even those who were not paying too much attention to their ethnic origin and were neutral, after some period of time even these people started to give special importance to ethnic factors and started to contribute to “common business”.

4. Ethno-territorial political conflicts are chronic in nature. Their final resolution is practically impossible as the level of democracy and governance which is satisfying for the present generation of the ethnos, might be insufficient for the next generation. Hence there will always be the danger of conflict renewal. Relations between different ethnos are distinguished with their conflict nature and when political mistakes are adding to the general situation, resolution of the conflict is becoming practically impossible.

The actual way of regulating the conflict are the steps made by the confronting parties towards each other for achieving common agreement. In this case the most important are the steps made by the “strongest” party. But political will of conflict resolution is also very important, which is very hard to achieve.

In the field of ethno-territorial political conflicts there is one simple truth: Conflict prevention is easier than its resolution afterwards. Exactly this had to be foreseen in Georgia's and its neighbor countries' state politics, which would avoid armed confrontations in south Caucasus region.

II. PARTIES' RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONFLICT

Georgians and Ossetians have confronted on the basis of ethnic origin, which has caused the full ethno nature of the conflict. Georgian-Ossetian conflict is a totally ethno-territorial political conflict.

During the Soviet regime, before the conflict in 1989, the Ossetian population in South Ossetia (66%) was an integrated part of Georgia's social, economic, cultural and ethnic structure. Here I must mention that in 1989, according to the Georgian population

description, 165 thousand Ossetians were living in Georgia, from which 60 thousand were inhabiting South Ossetia's territory. The rest of the 105 thousand Ossetians inhabited different regions of Georgia. The most interesting part of this

Region	Year 1989	Year 2002	Year 2009
Georgia	165 000	38 000	Approx. 25 000
Tbilisi	34 000	Approx. 15 000	Approx. 12 000

statistic is that almost half of the Ossetians residing on South Ossetia's territory had mixed Georgian-Ossetian origin.

For comparison I can say that merely 40,000 Ossetians are left on South Ossetia's territory and Georgian populations are massively driven out from South Ossetia. Today in the rest of Georgia only 30,000 Ossetians are left and they are also emigrating.

Both confronting parties are considering South Ossetian territory as their own historic land and are trying to establish their governance. From this point of view Georgian-Ossetian conflict is the fight for the territories, but the Georgian side is not denying the right of Ossetians to live in the Inner Kartli region. Also, South Ossetia's de-facto government is admitting the legal right of Georgia to live on its territory; hence the main subject of the conflict is South Ossetia's political status.

After Georgia became a democratic country, none of Georgia's governments could carry out democratic values which are highly necessary for building a democratic country. Georgia's ethno territorial conflicts with Ossetia and Abkhazia were caused because of the tragic mistakes made by Georgia's presidents Z. Gamsakhurdia, E. Shevardnadze, M. Saakashvili, which have stopped the country's development and after the August war in 2008 the existence of Georgia as a state started to be under question.

Georgians and Ossetians have strong mental, relative and religious connections between each other, but still during past 20 years they started confronting each other, which thrice resulted with armed actions in 1989-92, 2004 and in 2008. During these years many people became victims of the war from both sides. Analyzing these events objectively it is clear that it is necessary to reappraise subjective and objective causes and political reality. The conflict will still leave the greatest negative mark in two nations' histories.

The dynamics of the Georgian-Ossetian confrontation in years 1989-2008 is the typical example of ethno-territorial political conflict. Apart from the parties' responsibilities the cause of it is destructive politics followed by Russia in the second half of the 80s of the 20th century and beginning of 90s. Situation escalation was greatly caused by national political leaders' public speeches and afterwards conflict between them. After the actual armed confrontation, the situation was extremely tense. South Ossetia's political conflict turned into "Georgian-Ossetian" conflict, which had an ethno-territorial national nature.

As mentioned above the provocation of the conflict was greatly caused due to Russia's imperial politics, and in the end Russia finally declared South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent countries in August 26, 2008.

Due to Georgian and Ossetian parties' weaknesses and lack of the will to solve the conflict from the year 1989 until August 2008 it was impossible to create the dynamics of conflict solution, which would actually help peaceful solution of the conflict.

For years there was contraband and criminal activity on South Ossetia's territory in which the Ossetian separatist government as well as local Georgian corrupt officials were involved.

After the "Revolution of Roses" in 2003, the new government starting making aggressively active steps to restore the Georgian jurisdiction on its territory. Government started to bring autonomic units forcefully under its jurisdiction which was successfully achieved in Adjara in May 2004, where most of the population is Georgian, unlike South Ossetia where most of the population is Ossetian. This scenario was predestined to be unsuccessful in South Ossetia.

After solving Adjara's problem, Georgian government was focused on South Ossetia. The Georgian president has announced a number of peaceful initiatives of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict solution, but the government was lacking the actual will and consecutive steps towards this aim. At the same time some of Georgian political leaders were publishing forceful rhetoric; it provoked the armed confrontation in year 2004 which has greatly separated the Georgian and Ossetian societies from each other. After Georgian government's successful Adjara's operation it took the same scenario and tried to bring in South Ossetia's case and started the so-called "Tskhinvali (capital city of South Ossetia) humanitarian attack". This was first serious mistake made by the Georgian "Rose Government" and the beginning of further mistakes; this was when South

Ossetia's population which after 13 years of frozen conflict was tensed with the feel of conflict escalation.

The extremely serious and tragic mistake was the beginning of armed actions in August 2004, though at that time Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili occupied Tskhinvali's strategically important surroundings, there was a chance of Kokoiti's government's defeat. This possibility was declared in my private talks with the Russian government's political authorities and comparison of August 2008.

In August 2004, unlike in the year 2008, there was no precedent of declaring Kosovo and Russia at that time was not ready to take the responsibility to be militarily involved in the conflict.

At that time the president M. Saakashvili had taken the decision to give up the occupied regions without any fight. After the above mentioned armed actions Russia has started serious financial and political support of South Ossetia's Kokoiti government and what is more important, Ossetian society started consolidation around its government against the enemy, Georgia. Hence the result of the military operation in 2004, which was strengthening Kokoiti's separate and criminal government and creation of its political image.

In November 2006 the Georgian side started the so-called "Sanakoev Project", the main aim of which was to try and strengthen relations with Ossetian people opposing the Ossetian separatist government. Also, the full infrastructure development on the territory controlled by Georgia, created better living for Georgian and Ossetian people, which would give the example of peaceful living, so that they could chose between war and peace.

The above mentioned project was very effective in the beginning but faced serious problems afterwards. The Georgian government fully stopped the dialog with the Ossetian government which affected the situation in the region. Aggressive rhetoric towards the Russian federation ended up with the August war in 2008 with fallen soldiers, a destroyed army, destroyed economics, and lost territories.

My essay was already written when the Tagliavini report was announced. Heidi Tagliavini was leading the EU investigation into the chain of events leading to the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia. The report concluded that Georgia started the war, but both sides bore responsibility for escalating the conflict. The commission could find no evidence to support the Georgian claim of a prior Russian invasion. In addition, it stated that there was conclusive evidence that the Georgian offensive was

not meant only as a defensive action. According to the commission's legal experts, the Georgian attack was in violation of international law. The initial Russian response was justified, according to the report, but its later stage was disproportionate and in violation of international law as was Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It also holds that the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in South Ossetia was committed by unorganized bands but not by Russian forces, and that it is unclear if Russia should be held responsible for the actions of the various Ossetian militia.

Afterwards, Euro parliament has taken the resolution text, which was same as Tagliavini's report. It was stated that Georgia started the 2008 war but Russia provoked it. It was also stated that the facts mentioned in Tagliavini's report could be used by private persons to start the case at Hague Court for violating the Human Rights European Convention.

The present regime of Saakashvili, which came into government with the "Revolution of Roses" in November 2003, was promising the peaceful resolution of ethno-conflicts and developing democratic values in the country. The President of Georgia could not keep the given promises. After coming into government he started the so called "Humanitarian Storm" of South Ossetia which resulted into military activities and victims from Georgian and Ossetian sides. In 2004 it was possible to stop the conflict with the help of the American Side but in 2008 Georgia started the attack for a second time. It resulted into cruel war which lasted 5 days and changed not only Georgia's state contents but has changed the whole international political map in the region and maybe in whole world.

I hope that The Hague International Court will investigate the case and will make the just decision and the guilty side will be punished. This is very important for starting the constructive dialogue and diplomatic relations between the conflicting sides without which the existing conflict cannot be solved

III. REFERENCES

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Note:

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