

---

# **Abkhazian-Ossetian-Nagorno Karabakh problem : the US' political fiasco.**

Igor Muradyan - expert of Caucasus analytical center.  
Regnum, Russia      July 3 2006

---

Three subjects of the ethnic politics, three unrecognized South Caucasian states, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, are different in many parameters. Each of them has its own peculiar problems, its own unique fate, but also some things in common; and now we are witnessing one more quite special common factor looming large for all: the reality of war - not just minor demonstrative clashes on border but real war.

The South Caucasus is facing a new Abkhaz-Ossetian-Nagorno Karabakh problem - a problem of war that can lead to total fiasco of the policy of the Western community and, first of all, of the US.

Obviously, in Georgia the wars will not last for long: from several weeks to several months, with several time-outs. Georgia may well manage to gain control over some new positions in South Ossetia and low-lands in Eastern Abkhazia, but it may also be crushed, with all the three sides sustaining large-scale losses. This may lead to disastrous human casualties in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who will, therefore, get more yielding in political issues. Depending on the scale and scenario of the war, Georgia may either win - or lose so much that further war will have no sense. Most probably, Georgia's enemies will manage to retain control over bigger part of their territories. Given more political will, the Georgian army could successfully start war even today. The only factor that might keep the Georgian authorities back is human casualties. However, if Georgia continues building up its army as actively as it is doing now it will shortly have no other decent way as to start new war. The availability of strong forces and growing internal political and social problems will be decisive in the matter.

Azerbaijan is also eager to fight. Azeri generals keep calling for war, thereby, encouraging arms race and military spendings. Now its arms supplier is not only traditional Ukraine but also CSTO member Belarus. The general staffs of two western powers say that in case of active military actions in Karabakh, the Azerbaijani army may well lose their offensive capacity in just three weeks. They say that position war is very inconvenient for Armenia and, therefore, that country will try to knock out Azerbaijan with just one-two heavy blows. Azerbaijan will try to strike the nuclear power plant in Metsamor and some other vital centers in Armenia, in response, Armenia will destroy sea and other oil and gas facilities and oil and gas pipelines in Azerbaijan. In a couple of hours the West will lose \$14bln-\$16bln and any hope for Caspian oil import in the following 5-7 years. The Caspian Sea will face an ecological disaster. There will be no need for the Armenians to get very close to oil pipelines, they have enough people knowing how to carry out such operations.

Unless supported by Turkey, Azerbaijan may either lose its statehood at all or be given new borders and name - something the Iranians will be really happy to see. With military experts giving advantage to the side who will start the war the first, Armenia has no reason to wait for Azerbaijan's "victorious march" but will have to start the war itself - at least, three days before the enemy's planned attack. It

is better to have advantage at the front than in the findings of international experts as a victim to aggression. Azerbaijan will lose 25,000-35,000 soldiers and up to 100,000 civilians, Armenia will lose 10-12 times less.

After some delay, the international community will try to stop the war - of course, only when it sees that Azerbaijan is on the verge of a military and national disaster. If the Armenians try to destroy the west-sponsored oil-gas complex, the US and NATO will, most probably, decide to strike a counter-blow on the Armenian positions. This will not lead to Russia's interference. Russia will interfere only if the Armenian territory is attacked, while the US will interfere if Turkey meddles in or if Armenia gets into an extremely hard situation. In this case, the US will put an end to the war irrespective of its results. Will it be able to? Can the war be avoided at all? - idle question and vain supposition.

All the three problems could never and can never be solved in the format the western community suggests. "Territorial integrity" can be restored only by war. The very thesis and principle of territorial integrity means a war that goes beyond the conventional idea of war and implies genocide and mass deportation as obligatory addendum to military actions. The US has never planned to solve these problems in this way, i.e. to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia and Azerbaijan at any price. The US has already got all it wanted in the South Caucasus, namely, it has already ensured successful oil transportation from the region. The last trifling thing the US had to do was just to gain control - together with the UK - over the "Caucasian Panama Canal." For this purpose, it carried out a consistent policy from Ayrtau to Batumi. All the other tasks were either subservient or - if going beyond those tasks - were either ruled out or stifled by feigned political games and endless negotiations. What kind of policy is this? Anti-Georgian, anti-Armenian, anti-Azeri, anti-Russian or anti-Iranian? This policy is purely American. The US is absolutely unwilling to see war in the region. War means the failure of its tremendous efforts to ensure the safe operation of the Caucasian-Caspian, or, more correctly, American-British energy complex in the region. The Americans may want some political tension in some parts of the region but only provided they have full control over them.

Can we assert or deny that by expanding into the South Caucasus the US has been and is partly or fully preventing military actions in the local conflict zones? In the last 15 years the US has failed its policy in a number of regions. Even disorganized, bankrupt and capitulated Iraqi society has proved to be a hard nut to crack for the US. With all its might and power, the US has no sufficient military force for active suppression in even one - not very big - country, and has, in fact, failed to guarantee peace and security in any single country or region it held a military campaign in. Let's not dwell on the ideological and stylistic differences between the relevant policies of the Republicans and the Democrats.

War is at the door. Despite their strategic interests, the Americans has been led by their partner-opponent Europeans into absolutizing the principle of territorial integrity - something they regard quite cynically. By their political-propaganda games, they have convinced the "victims" that they have the right to use military force to restore sovereignty over their lost territories. The US has come up with dubious initiatives to encourage arms race for ensuring the safety of energy communications - initiatives that have resulted in extreme militarization in the region. We can't deny the influence of both complex and individual factors on the military-political situation in the region. The positions and interests of the western and eastern

great powers are certainly complex factors. However, the region's countries are becoming a looming large source of concern for the US in terms of their plans to resolve their conflicts by war.

It couldn't be otherwise.

By implementing its policy, the US has contributed to the collapse of the CAFE Treaty and, together with its Western and Eastern European allies, has launched an arms race in the South Caucasus. The only question is what they are training national armed units for. The US has "guaranteed" that they will not be used in ethnic conflicts. At the same time, the US and NATO are actively stimulating the militarization of the region. No doubt, this is part of the US' policy to ensure the safety of its oil complex. However, all these efforts are not augmenting the US' sway or diminishing Russia's presence in the region, but are, on the contrary, undermining the US' policy and ruining the oil complex together with the whole "Eurasian corridor" ("corridor" is always something vulnerable, something that leads to war).

This spring the author questioned 88 British and US experts as to security problems in the South Caucasus and the possibility of new wars in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. None of them has denied that the US cannot guarantee non-resumption of war. At the same time, they clearly differentiated two questions: are there enough factors proving that new war is possible and is the US able to prevent this possibility. This refers to all the three conflicts.

Pacifist Europe will react to war stoically. Their conservative media will call for interference and protection of oil facilities and pipelines, but no single European soldier will set foot in the region or will come here just to keep peace when the fight is already over.

It will be for the US and Russia to react, of course, if Turkey is kept away and Iran is not very active.

---