

Georgian-Russian Conflict and Its Influence on the Energy and Security Situation in the Black Sea – Caspian Region.

Hanna Shelest

National Institute for Strategic Studies

In this article author analyzes the influence of the Russian-Georgian crisis of August 2008 on the security and energy situation in the Black Sea region. The main threats and risks due to the Russian-Georgian crisis 2008 in the Black Sea region may be considered as activation of the situation in the separatist regions of Moldova and Azerbaijan, security of the transport routes, pipelines, energy resources supply from the Caspian basin. For Ukraine – complication of the relations with Russian Federation, aggravation of the Black Sea Fleet status problem, possibility to use South Ossetia Scenario in the Crimea, difficulties for the realization of the “White Stream” Project. Author also considers positions of the third parties in particularly the EU, Turkey, Armenia, Belarus and other CIS states and how the conflict touches their interests and relations with parties to conflict. Events of August 2008 demonstrated which mechanisms the Russian Federation is ready to use to prevent post-soviet states from the Euroatlantic integration. And the same time the conflict has demonstrated how six days crisis in such interconnected and important region as the Wider Black Sea can influence and impact not only on the regional players and neighbors but on the common European security and stability.

რუსეთ-საქართველოს კონფლიქტი და მისი გავლენა ენერგო უსაფრთხოებაზე

ჰანა შელესტი

სტრატეგიული სწავლების ეროვნული ცენტრი

ნაშრომში ავტორი აანალიზებს რუსეთ-საქართველოს 2008 წლის აგვისტოს კრიზისს, შავი ზღვის რეგიონის ენერგო მდგომარეობის და უსაფრთხოების მიმართულებით. შავი ზღვის რეგიონში, რუსეთ-საქართველოს 2008 წლის კრიზისის შედეგად, მთავარ საფრთხეებად შეიძლება ჩაითვალოს მოლდავეთისა და აზერბაიჯანის სეპარატისტული რეგიონების გააქტიურების, სატრანსპორტო გზებისა და მილ-

სადენების უსაფრთხოების, კასპიის აუზის ენერგო უზრუნველყოფის საკითხები. უკრაინისათვის რუსეთის ფედერაციასთან გართულებული ურთიერთობა ვლინდება შავი ზღვის ფლოტის სტატუსის საკითხის გამძაფრებაში, ჩრდილოეთ ოსეთის სცენარის გამეორების ალბათობაში, პროექტ “თეთრი ნაკადის” განხორციელების შეფერხებაში. ავტორი ყურადღებას ამახვილებს, ასევე ვერო კავშირის, თურქეთის, სომხეთის, ბელორუსიის და სხვა დსთ-ს ქვეყნების პოზიციებზე, მათ ინტერესებზე კონფლიქტის გაგენასთან დაკავშირებით. 2008 წლის აგვისტოს მოვლენებმა მოახდინა დემონსტრირება, თუ რა შექანიზმების გამყენება შეუძლია რუსეთის ფედერაციას ყოფილი საბჭოთა კავშირის ქვეყნების ვეროპასთან ინტეგრაციის საქმეში ხელის შესაშლელად. ამასთანავე კონფლიქტმა თვალნათლივ გვაჩვენა, რა შედეგები შეიძლება მოჰყვეს 6 დღიან კრიზისის ისეთ რეგიონში, როგორცაა შავი ზღვის რეგიონი. გაუგენა გაგრცელდა არამართო მეზობელ ქვეყნებზე, არამედ კონფლიქტმა ზოგადად ვეროპის უსაფრთხოებასა და სტაბილურობაზე იმოქმედა.

Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008 should be considered in the context of the general geopolitical and geoenergetic situation in the Black Sea – Caspian region. Roots and consequences of this conflict touch interests of many actors of the international relations, have deep connection with other events in the world, including Kosovo independence proclamation in February 2008.

The goal of this article is to analyze consequences of the Russian – Georgian conflict of August 2008 for the energy and security situation in the Black Sea – Caspian region and to elaborate recommendations how to minimize its negative influence. The main tasks are analysis of the roots, which led to the crisis, study of the main risks and challenges due to the Russian-Georgian conflict. In addition, separate positions of the third parties concerning the August crisis will be examined and forecasts of the possible problem solutions made.

The relevance of the topic is in the direct influence of this conflict to the national security of other states of the Black Sea region, its consequences for the energy cooperation in the region and development of the relations with the European Union.

Russian – Georgian crisis of August 2008 intensified academic discussion on “frozen” conflicts in the Black Sea region both among academic of the post-Soviet space, Europe and the USA. Some authors concentrated on the roots and consequences of the conflicts, others – on the role of the third parties in

the region, a number of authors analyze particular aspects of the conflicts (ethnic questions, history of development, military and political issues, etc.). Among the main works on this topic it worth to mention those of H. Perepeyltsya (2003), Z. Suslu (2006), H. Karasar (2008), Y. Yakis (2008), etc. In addition, it is necessary to mention ad-hoc analytical researching of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (2008), International Crisis Group, South Caucasian Center of Regional Security, etc. Special attention deserve authors who started to work out on the interconnection of the energy security in the region with the solution of the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, such as C. Svante (2009), N. Kassenova (2009) and T. Marketos (2009).

Many experts assume that Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 and latest gas crisis in the Ukrainian-Russian relations of the beginning of 2009 are interconnected events – parts of the general concept to destabilize situation in the region, not-allowing Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO, to spoil their image on the world arena and promotion of own alternative projects of the energy resources transportation by-passing two states' territories.

Problem of the influence of the Russian-Georgian confrontation to the energy security in the Black Sea region is necessary to consider in two dimensions: direct impact on the realization of the projects of the energy supply from the Caspian region via territory of Georgia (Odessa-Brody, Baku-Supsa, Baku-Ceyhan, White stream, etc.) and indirect influence on the realization of the Russian projects of the gas pipeline "North Stream" and oil pipeline Burgas – Alexandropolis. De-facto Russian Federation conducts planned disinformation on Nabucco project in favor of "South Stream", in particularly in November 2008 Russian Ambassador to the EU V. Chizhov said that in distinction of the "South Stream" there are no sources for filling Nabucco (Посол России..., 2008).

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union some former republics (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) appeared with huge energy resources without real possibility to export them to the world markets due to the lack of infrastructure and because they were landlocked. The only way they had was transit via territory of Russia. Economic and infrastructural components of the problems were resolved by foreign investments. From a political perspective it was understandable that the development of these resources and their export to world markets was a huge factor in the overall development of the successor states, and that the export route choices for these energy reserves would go a long way in determining where these states would manage – in spite of being small states surrounded by great powers – to become fully sovereign and independent actors on the world scene (Svante, 2009). American

government has actively supported projects of the alternative gas and oil pipelines from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. Construction of the oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and gas pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum was one of the most successful projects, which stimulated active cooperation between three states in many other infrastructural projects, and gave an impetus for the economic development of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Moreover, it has created an alternative variant for Central Asian energy resources transportation to Europe and gave impulse for Nabucco project.

Functioning of the oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and signature of the Nabucco gas pipeline construction agreement for the transportation of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan gas via territory of Georgia and Turkey to Europe in 2006 has changed monopoly status of the Russian Federation as a main supplier of energy resources to Europe. Some experts stress that construction of the pipeline via Georgian territory bypassing Russia was a challenge to the geopolitical ambitions of the Russian Federation (Svante, 2009). De-facto Central Asian and Caspian states have only two variants for energy resources transportation – either via Russia or via Georgia.

In January-February 2009 many experts (Газовый конфликт, 2009) ran a parallel between events of August 2008 in Georgia and gas disputes of Ukraine and Russia, emphasizing that they constitute links in one and the same chain, aiming to keep Ukraine and Georgia from the further European and Euroatlantic integration, and it was demonstration to the European Union whose influence in the Black Sea region was stronger.

Some Russian experts also adhere to the same idea about interconnection of the Russian-Georgian crisis 2008 and Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict 2009, for example expert of the analytical center “Caucasus” V. Yakubyan (США начали, 2009), but they consider this issue from another side, stressing that these two events were provoked by the USA intending to prevent strengthening of the EU and Russian roles in the region.

Concerning security sphere, so the main problems are “melting” of the conflicts on the post-Soviet space, activization of the separatist sentiments, new configuration of the spheres of influence in the region, possibility to use territories of the third states for conducting military operation (The Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet problem).

History of the Problem. Reasons for Escalation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Beginning of the Russian-Georgian confrontation is possible to date from the mid of the 1990-s, when one can witness the constant exacerbation of relations, particularly because of:

Lack of neutrality and support of the separatists by the CIS peacekeeping

forces, which are composed only from the Russian military.

Long-term refusal to withdraw Russian military bases of the Soviet times from the territory of Georgia

Ongoing clashes on the borders between Georgia and separatist regions

Issuing of the Russian passports to the population of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

Illegal construction of the railway from the Russian Federation to Abkhazia

Introduction of the visa regime between Georgia and Russia

Several spy scandals

Rose Revolution in Georgia and support of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine

Euroatlantic aspirations of Georgia

Appointment of the Russian citizens – employees of the security agencies on the policy-making posts in the separatists regions

Economic sanctions and embargo on export to the Russian Federation of Georgian agricultural products and wines, as well as stop of the transport and post connection between two states in 2006

Construction of the alternative pipelines (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa, White Stream, Nabucco)

It is possible to give prominence to four factors, which influenced the Russian attitude towards the post-Soviet space (After August 2008, 2008): NATO enlargement to the East, development of the alternative routes of the energy transportation, “color” revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine; Kosovo independence proclamation.

As for NATO enlargement, so on the eve of the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 Russian leadership on various occasions stated that if Ukraine and Georgia would join North Atlantic Alliance it would be considered as a direct threat to the national security of the Russian Federation, and any actions to prevent such enlargement would be taken (Россия, 2008). This thesis was also included into the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation in July 2008 (Концепция, 2008).

Proclamation of the Kosovo independence in February 2008 provoked active movements for independence of the Georgian and Moldova regions, in particularly idea of the Kosovo precedent was actively used for the settlement of the “frozen” conflicts in the Black Sea region. Official Moscow stated against the recognition of the Kosovo independence, that is why it looked so irrational her decision to recognize independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in September 2008. One of the main problems was the fact that mentioning uniqueness of the Kosovo case, Western states could not give an explanation what

was this uniqueness about. As a result, Black Sea separatist regions insisted on the similarity of cases.

Russian-Georgian crisis took place amid to the following events that could minimize the international attention and be favorable for the Russian Federation. First, it is rise of the world oil and gas prices, and as a result quick filling of the Russian stabilization fund, as well as big dependence of the European Union states from the Russian energy resources together with active support by Germany of the “Northern Stream” project. Next factor that should be mentioned is difficult negotiations on Iran nuclear programme with participation of France, the UK, the EU, the USA and Russia, and from time to time disagreements between the Western partners and the Russian Federation about leverages and level of cooperation with Iran. Therefore, interest, first of all from the USA side, in the no-crisis relations with the Russian Federation. No small part had the actual rejection to present MAP for Ukraine and Georgia at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, not least because of the Russian diplomatic efforts. Political instability in Georgia and Ukraine, peak of the presidential campaign in the USA and opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing just added accents.

All these factors in August 2008 ran the West into difficulties concerning impossibility to adopt quick and mandatory decisions for defining adequacy of the Russian army’s and Georgian government actions. As far back as on March 6, 2008 the Russian Federation withdrew from the CIS decision on economic sanctions against Abkhazia and South Ossetia and set a course for deepening cooperation with them. Moreover, starting from May 2008, the Russian Federation has been conducting military exercises on the Northern Caucasus in close vicinity to the Georgian border (Caucasus – 2008) and naval exercises in the Black Sea.

South Ossetia was chosen not by accident. Before 2008, the situation had been more strain in Abkhazia. However, in 2007 the decision to organize Winter Olympic Games 2014 in Sochi (Russia), which is just 100 km from Sukhumi (Abkhazia), has been adopted. Deterioration of the situation in this conflict region could lead to a withdrawal to hold Olympic Games in Sochi due to the impossibility to guarantee a necessary level of security. Apart from image, Russian Federation could lose big investments, which were directed to the infrastructure development, as well as opportunity to use resources of Abkhazia, including infrastructure, human resources and construction materials. Yet one reason for South Ossetia to be chosen was reliance on the support from the North Ossetia, which is a part of the Russian Federation.

In March 2008, President Saakashvili proposed the peace plan in conflict resolution in Abkhazia, which stipulated grant of wide autonomy and creation

of the Free Economic Zone, as well as veto power for vital decisions and constitutional changes, and a post of the vice-president. Nevertheless, this plan was rejected by Sukhumi. In July 2008, the government of South Ossetia also rejected to accept proposition of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Mr. F. Steinmeier to widen the international presence in negotiation process. As a matter of fact all this was a slowdown of the negotiation process and resolution of the conflicts in Georgia.

In July 2008 the Russian Federation started the full-scale military exercises „Caucasus 2008“, which should be ended by the August 2, 2008, however troops were not returned to their home stations but stayed in North Ossetia. Beginning of the August 2008 characterized by the shootings on the border between Georgia and South Ossetia, origin of which hasn't been discovered, and as a result of which President of Georgia M. Saakashvili made a decision to bring troops to South Ossetia.

On August 8, 2008 Russia availed herself of the motive – security of the Russian citizens – brought troops to the territory of South Ossetia. However, by some evidence Russia brought her troops there yet on August 7, 2008 (Латынина, 2008), that afford ground for dispute who had been the first one to start military actions – Russia or Georgia. In several days Russian troops entered territory of Abkhazia.

The week of the military actions and mediation of the European Union headed by the President of France N. Sarkozy led to the signing of the Agreement of Six points, violated for several times, which led to the cease-fire and deployment of the European observers on the territory of Georgia and Russian military bases on the territory of two separatist regions, proclamation of their independence and recognition of these independences by the Russian Federation on August 26, 2008.

From the very beginning of the conflict, the Russian Federation accused Ukraine in the military support of Georgia, in particular in “illegal transfer of arms”, not providing any official evidences. This thesis was a provocation and an attempt to spoil the image of Ukraine at the international arms market, because Georgia has not been under any sanctions prohibited arms trade, and cooperation with Ukraine took place in the framework of the earlier signed contracts.

In fact, there are *three main versions of the conflict's reasons*:

Desire of the Russian Federation to prevent NATO enlargement to the East and to retain influence over the post-soviet space.

Attempt to spoil image of Georgia as a transit state for oil and gas supply from the Caspian region, and to undermine attempts of the alternative energy routes to Europe (oil pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan, Baku – Tbilisi – Supsa

and gas pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Erzurum and “White Stream” project). In this case, Russia de facto would be the only one to have control over the energy supply to Europe.

Desire of Georgia to attract attention of the international community, first of all of the NATO and the EU, to the problem of unresolved conflicts at its territory and inadequate actions of Russia, aiming quick NATO joining.

Analysis of the main threats and risks resulted from the Russian-Georgian crisis of 2008.

Today we can define threats and risks both for the whole Black Sea region and for separate states, especially for Ukraine. For the Black Sea region, it is stepping up of the situation in the separatist regions of Moldova and Azerbaijan, threat to the security of the transport routes, pipelines and temporary stop of energy supply from the Caspian basin. For Ukraine, this list is added by aggravation in the relation with the Russian Federation, exacerbation of the Russian Black Sea Fleet status problem, possibility to use South Ossetian scenario in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, etc.

The Russian – Georgian conflict clearly demonstrated level of the decision-making in Russia, namely the leading role of the Prime Minister V. Putin, and level of his personal position influence on the internal and external policy-making. De-facto during the whole military campaign the statements were made against the President of Georgia Mr. Saakashvili personally, whom Russian leadership negatively perceived after the Rose Revolution of 2003, but not against the Georgian state or its people. So in the beginning of September 2008 Mr. Medvedev states in the interview to the Italian TV channel RAI that for Russia “the current regime is bankrupt. President Mikhail Saakashvili no longer exists for us. He is a ‘political corpse’” (as cited in Barry, 2008).

The Russian-Georgian conflict has the following consequences for the energy security in the Black Sea region. Russian army operations, in particularly bombing of the oil terminal in Poti and Azerbaijan oil cisterns on the railway line Baku –Tbilisi – Kars, as well as bombing around the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline demonstrated vulnerability of the infrastructure and transportation routes. Moreover, the conflict had a psychological effect, when some investors rejected to participate in the projects for alternative energy resources transportation from the Caspian region, including slowdown of the Nabucco project realization. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the long-term perspective can redirect their export from Europe to China, and dependence of the European states from the Russian energy resources will increase.

It is necessary to mention that the United States and Georgia are going to advance security of the energy transit via territory of Georgia to the European markets about which is said in the Charter on strategic partnership USA – Georgia signed on January 9, 2009.

Position of the third parties.

Important factor is that members of the CIS and Shanghai group have not supported the Russian military actions against Georgia and have not recognized independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In the Final Declaration of the Moscow Meeting of the CSTO member-states on September 5, 2008, participants supported Russian military actions without enthusiasm, and rejected to recognize the former Georgian regions' independence. It was of special importance the reject of Belarus, as the main ally and satellite of Russia at the post-soviet space, to recognize independence of the Georgian regions. Furthermore, right from this moment we can witness open rapprochement of Minsk with Brussels.

Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis because of the overprice for gas in 2009 started not least because Russian Federation to guarantee support of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had signed with them in August-September 2008 agreements on supply of energy resources at the European prices, not taking into account their possible decrease in the end of the year (Russia and Uzbekistan..., 2008). One of the reasons for such an agreement was wish to prevent transportation of the Central Asian gas via the territory of Georgia and desire to minimize support of the Caucasian states from the side of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

It is necessary to mention that despite the official denunciation of the Russian actions from Ukraine and expressed support of Georgia, high percentage of the Ukrainian population, especially on the East and South of the country, positively reflected the Russian actions. First of all, it took place because of the high level of confidence to the news programmes of the Russian TV channels unlike Ukrainian ones. Additionally, internal political confrontation in Ukraine and activation of the pro-Russian parties contributed to this.

Ukraine, not taking direct part in the conflict and in its settlement, nevertheless faced serious threats and consequences of the Russian-Georgian conflict, and de-facto lost information war when Russia accused it, in particular concerning the "illegal" arms trade and existence of the "Ukrainian military mercenaries" in Georgia. August crisis demonstrated a big role of the information war and information filling as an instrument of the foreign policy. Unfortunately, today Ukraine loses in such "disputes". That is why it is necessary to view all sides of the informational substance of the foreign policy of Ukraine and reaction, especially in crises and disputes with other states. It is also necessary to elaborate mechanisms of the adequate and rapid informational reaction and foreign media presence for objective highlights, receiving of the information from the "first hands" by the citizens and political elites of the foreign states.

After the Russian-Georgian conflict, there were fears that the Russian Federation could repeat that scenario in Moldova. Though such an idea has a right for existence, it is impractical because on the Caucasus, the South Ossetian region has an immediate border with Russia, and this fact makes possible a military intervention on the side of the separatist region. Transnistria has borders only with Moldova and Ukraine. As Ukraine supports the territorial integrity of Moldova, it makes impossible passage of the Russian troops through its territory. However, there is still a possibility of the political influence on Moldova, threatening by the South Caucasian scenario. Thus, Moscow can bolster influence on Chisinau insisting on Kozak Plan or any other peace plan acceptance, which will allow Russian military contingent presence on the territory of Transnistria during the next 20 years. Nevertheless, this possibility is reduced after the Communist party lost Parliamentary elections 2009.

Turkey appeared in August 2008 in a difficult situation. On one hand, it is connected with Georgia by oil and gas pipelines projects, and is one of the main investors in the infrastructural projects and economy of Georgia. On the other hand, Turkey actively cooperates with the Russian Federation both in energy sphere (Blue Stream Project) and in naval sphere (anticipation of the NATO operation "Active Endeavors" expanding to the Black Sea region). Moreover, Russia promised to prohibit Russian tourists to visit Turkey in case of the strong support of Georgia, and this could significantly influence the state budget filling.

When in August 2008 Russian bombers attacked oil pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan, usually safe in the relation with Russia, Turkey reacted very drastic. Being a NATO member, Turkey allowed several naval ships of NATO states (in particularly Germany, Spain, the USA and Poland) to enter the Black Sea via Bosphorus and Dardanelles aiming humanitarian aid to the population of Georgia. In addition, Turkey helped Georgia with firefighting, which was caused by the Russian bombing of the Borjomi-Kharagauli Forest Reserve. In the mid of August, just after the events in South Ossetia, Prime Minister of Turkey Mr. Erdogan tried to be a mediator in the conflict and met with Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Putin. At the same time, Mr. Erdogan met President of Georgia Mr. Saakashvili, according to whom "fraternal Turkey" granted the biggest humanitarian aid to Georgia and promised to reconstruct Gori city (Туреччина, 2008).

Armenia, which is the main partner of the Russian Federation on Caucasus, appeared in the most difficult situation. De-facto its territory is isolated because of the problematic relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Georgia is the only link that connects Armenian territory with other states. That is why

when Russian troops destroyed railway-bridge in Georgia, Armenia sent its materials and engineers to restore it, and in autumn 2008 rejected to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia so not to spoil relations with Georgia (Avoyan, 2008).

De-facto spoiled its image as a mediator after the events in Georgia; Russia boosted its “peaceful” initiatives towards other “frozen” conflicts in the Black Sea region. On November 2, 2008, the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moscow was organized in Moscow, at which Declaration on peace ways of settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was signed. On March 18, 2009, the meeting of the President of Moldova and the Head of the Transnistria was also organized in Moscow. Any compromises were not reached at this meeting but was decided to revive negotiation in “5+2” format. These two meeting demonstrated that the Russian Federation is not going to decrease its role in the settlement of the conflicts at the territory of the former USSR states, and relies on unilateral leadership in this process, not inviting to negotiations other participants, including the OSCE Minsk Group, Ukraine, etc. At the same time, it is necessary to underline the “show”-nature of these meetings, as in reality any concrete results were reached. Even the Moscow Declaration on Nagorno-Karabakh just confirmed those principles, which were on repeated occasions pointed at different negotiations on this conflict. However, these two meetings were accompanied by a serious media campaign where the leading role of Russia, its success as a mediator and peacekeeper were stressed, having the goal – to polish image at the international arena.

It is noteworthy position of the European Union. Actually, it was a first time when Brussels step as a mediator and openly intervene in the process of the conflict settlement in the Black Sea region. Only in 2007, the EU paid attention to the region adopting the Black Sea Synergy, a document, which paid a little attention to the “frozen conflicts” considering confidence building measures enough to enhance cooperation in the region. However, events of August 2008 demonstrated that “melting” conflicts pose a threat not only to the security of Georgia and other Black Sea states but also a threat to the European security and stability. Active mediation efforts of the French President Mr. Sarkozy, presiding in the EU, demonstrated two important facts. For the first time, the EU stood together in expressing the position on a foreign policy issue towards the Black Sea region. And at the same time big concessions to Russia, inability to impose sanctions and de-facto disregard of provisions of the peace agreement from the Russian side proved dependence and caution of the EU in relationship with Moscow due to the fear that she will use energy factor as a lever of influence.

Forecasts on further situation development.

As for today, there are two possible variants of the event trends for South Ossetia:

South Ossetia will merge into the Russian Federation by uniting with North Ossetia;

Start of the situation destabilization in North Ossetia aiming to separate from Russia, to unite with South Ossetia and found a new independent state. This variant is less probable in the short-term perspective because of the strong power concentration in the Russian Federation, low level of the socio-economic development of the region and therefore inability to finance the development of the Ossetian state by itself.

The most realistic is a variant for the conflict settlement in Georgia when South Ossetia will join Russia uniting with North Ossetia, and Abkhazia will return to Georgia with great autonomy rights. This variant has a chance for success because:

South Ossetia ethnically is different from Georgia but identical to North Ossetia.

South Ossetian elite is totally under control of Moscow, and Russian Federation finance the "state" budget

South Ossetia always proclaimed its desire to join with Russia.

South Ossetia does not have developed infrastructure, own resources and economic perspectives for independent existence.

Abkhazia does not express its wish to join with Russia.

Because of close location of Abkhazia to Sochi, Russia will avoid destabilization in the region.

Previous years of negotiations showed that Abkhazian leadership leaned towards the idea of broad autonomy until Russia involved.

At the territory of Abkhazia ethnic Abkhaz are not the ethnic majority, and in case refugees return to Gali region, Georgian population will prevail.

Further recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by other states is an important question. As for today, only the Russian Federation, Venezuela and Nicaragua (partly) have recognized these two republics. Moreover, after the CSTO meeting in Moscow in September 2008, one cannot witness any work of Russia for promoting idea of recognition of these newly created states. It is an opinion that Russia does not insist on their recognition by the international community because in case this will happen, Russia can lose its levers of influence and monopolistic position and special relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Николай Злобин, 2008).

Conclusions

Russian-Georgian conflict set the real parties to conflict, switched over negotiations from Georgia-South Ossetia and Georgia – Abkhazia to Georgia – Russia format. As a confirmation to this is a fact that the EU conducted all negotiations with Moscow, but not with governments of the unrecognized republics. In addition, deployment of the regular army of the Russian Federation, which did not have resolution of any international organization and was not as a peacekeeper, made Russia a direct part to the conflict, yet one time, confirmed its impossibility to be a mediator. Event of August 2008 demonstrated which mechanisms the Russian Federation is ready to use to prevent post-soviet states from the Euroatlantic integration. If in March-April 2008 Moscow confined to strong statements, so events of August 2008 dramatically demonstrated these “any means” by which it is ready to confront this process.

Events of August 2008 and their consequence should push Ukrainian government towards prevention of the “Georgian scenario” reoccurrence on its territory; first of all, it is necessary to activate check process of double citizenship among the Crimean population, especially among the former Russian military men, and to enhance Ukrainian legislation on termination of citizenship. Moreover, it is necessary to elaborate clear mechanism of control over the Russian Black Sea Fleet activities in the Crimea to prevent its reuse in military acts against third states. Yet one consequence for Ukraine was an attempt to spoil its image of the arms trader at the world market. That is why it is necessary to inform about Ukrainian-Georgian military-technical cooperation, arms trade, and fact-finding on illegal trade in Georgia before and during the Russian-Georgian crisis.

The European Union in its turn tries to play a more active role in the Black Sea region, including being a mediator; however, internal collisions and unwillingness to confront with the Russian Federation limit its activity. Not at least it was demonstrated by very quick return to negotiations on a new agreement between the EU and Russia, which had been suspended in August 2008 and inability to gain point on deployment of the EU observers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and strict respect of the “Six points” Agreement.

In addition, it is necessary to mention that August events demonstrated that struggle for routes of energy supply to Europe from Central Asia and Caspian region can be not only in economic sphere, but also in political and military one, what should be taken into account while planning alternative energy routes.

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