
Georgia : the First Step Towards Chaos Control (II)

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Part I

CIS: Russia is the key power in the post-Soviet geopolitical space. It is actively reasserting itself, and the process will compel other post-Soviet countries to decide which side to take. As a result the currently amorphous club known as the CIS will split into real military, political, and economic alliances.

The core of the new alliance in the post-Soviet space led by Russia will be formed in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the geopolitical, military, and strategic partner. The new alliance will not be joined by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. A question mark hangs over the future partnership with Belarus.

Nevertheless, considering that all of the above countries except for Azerbaijan are not self-sufficient in terms of energy resources and are too weak economically to survive the transition to market-based fuel prices, they will have to look for a justification of their siding with the US and the EU in the situation of domestic economic crises.

The initial polarization in the post-Soviet space will be a prologue to a serious geopolitical conflict between the two groups of countries. At times we will see the confrontation evolve into armed hostilities. There are two long-term scenarios of the evolution of the situation .

According to the first scenario, the occasionally hot conflict between the two new blocs in the post-Soviet space will be sufficiently protracted to make the existence of the Russian geopolitical space in the de facto imperial form impossible. The second scenario is that Russia and its allies will make serious efforts to gain control over the territories of the above countries. In our view, the latter option is the only one acceptable to Russia since it simply cannot afford a protracted conflict.

The CIS split and the permanent instability in its space will have an extremely negative impact on the European energy security.

Europe Currently Europe is divided over the strategy and tactic in dealing with the unfolding conflict between Russia and the US. On the one hand, the old Europe is tired of being an inferior partner of the US and no longer regards Russia as an ideological opponent (it is widely believed that there can be no wars between democratic countries with market economies). On the other hand, the East European novices will be trying to profit from the discord between Russia and the US as their economies have no potential to survive the fuel price war the West is dragging Russia into.

It should be expected that Europe will fail to formulate a common approach to Russia. However, the US is notorious for its ability to stage provocations.

Therefore, it appears likely that in the nearest =0 D future the US will organize another massive provocation (similar to the events of September 11) or a series of provocations of smaller proportions in order to break the resistance of a part of the European elite and to entirely subdue the EU.

In case the US succeeds in doing so, its conflict with Russia will turn into a cold war in which Europe will "contrary to its continental interests - traditionally play the role of a satellite of the "global island".

Asia China and Iran will be important actors in the coming transition. It is clear that if Iran is admitted to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization before it comes under attack from the US and Israel, and China supports Russia in its bid to restore order in the disintegrating Russian (imperial) geopolitical space, Russia will avoid fighting a cold war alone. However, it is too early to say what stance Tehran and Beijing are going to adopt.

Geo-Economics The threat of a series of local conflicts or of one global military conflict is bound to affect the overall condition of the world economy. Access to natural resources will be of fundamental importance to the stability of national economies. Since Russia is the world's top resource-rich country and it has successfully reformed its traditionally most problem-ridden sector "the manufacturing of consumer products" the Russian economy should be able to endure high food and technology prices.

The economy of the majority of Western countries will move from stagnation to long-term recession. The position of the US will be the best among the Western countries since it has large oil reserves and has raised the domestic natural gas production by 50% over the recent years. Therefore, in case Europe once again allows the US strategists to get it involved in a cold war with Russia, its own economy will be particularly vulnerable.

Conclusions 1. The conflict in the Caucasus has shown that Russia should as actively as possible move on to implementing its own strategic political projects in the post-Soviet space.

The politics of limiting interactions with post-Soviet countries to interacting with their leaders proved inefficient, as we have seen in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine. Russia should address broader audiences including various political elites and the general public in the respective countries. Moscow's policy should not be exclusively oriented towards any particular authority groups in post-Soviet countries.

The approach would be equally warranted from the economic standpoint. It will require substantial financial infusions, but it is cheaper than a war. Russia spent \$100m a day on the war with Georgia and a serious armed conflict is bound to be even costlier. The budget of a program of cultivating friendly political forces in any of the CIS countries is likely to stay within the \$1bn limit. Unless such efforts are made, the economic expansion alone will not ensure Russia's influence over its neighbors.

2. In all likelihood, preparations for the second phase of the US operation aimed at destabilizing the post-Soviet space are underway. Its start is tentatively scheduled for September-October, 2008 and will probably be marked by a new Georgian invasion of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this time with the direct US support by means of space reconnaissance and radio-frequency jamming.

Quite possibly, the US Special Forces in the Georgian army uniforms will be involved in combat.

At the same time, a provocation such as a murder of Russian sailors or a blow-up of a Russian warship will be organized in Sevastopol, the result being a civil war in Ukraine and a direct military conflict between the country and Russia.

Obviously, the US intends to use Georgia as a foothold in a campaign aimed at dragging Russia into a low-intensity conflict as it has been done in Vietnam.

The response of the Ukrainian leadership has shown that it is ready to join Georgia in a military confrontation with Russia in case Washington asks it to.

3. Parallely, the US will be bracing for an attack on Iran. The result will be McCain's victory in the coming presidential race. The American society has given him carte blanche to take drastic measures to deal with the countries which do not side with the US.

Nevertheless, the war with Iran will stretch thin the US armed forces simultaneously engaged in several conflicts. Though Iran's infrastructure will be largely destroyed during the first days of the US attack and, quite possibly, the US and Israel will subject it to nuclear strikes, its strategy will be to block the Strait of Hormuz and to switch the conflict to a permanent mode.

4. The fact that the US elite aims at instigating a series of regional conflicts shows that the US is no longer able to carry the burden of the global leadership, and the coming war is the last resort to retain it. However, the conflict will not last forever and sooner or later the US will have to downscale its military and political presence worldwide. The reliance on war demonstrates that the US elite's intellectual potential needed to maintain the status of the US as the only superpower is exhausted.

5. Under the circumstances Russia's main task is to psychologically survive the first propaganda strike and some 3-6 months of the information war waged by Western media. Subsequently the US will have to withdraw under various pretexts from the conflicts it unleashed unless its victory will be complete and obvious.

6. The result will be a fundamental transformation of the global geo-economic picture and pattern of trade and financial flows, plus a reform of the UN. A new global monetary system will be established based on the economies of Russia, China, Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil.

7. The US dollar will lose its current status of the global currency. The US will no longer be a country with attractive living conditions, and a migration of quality workforce from the country will commence. The US will be plagued by crime and will face the problem of preserving its territorial integrity. The international community will have to dispatch a peacekeeping force to the US territory to maintain order in the country and to prevent international terrorists from making inroads into its nuclear arsenals.

8. The EU in its current form will stop to exist. A new system of the European collective security will be based on the alliance of Russia, Germany, and France and on a partition of Europe into their respective spheres of influence.

Great Britain will be distanced from the continent again and lose its competitive advantages. London will stop serving as the world's financial center.

9. Facing serious time constraints, Moscow should clarify its relations with Belarus, and its Collective Security Treaty Organization and Shanghai Cooperation Organization partners maximally by the moment the above scenario starts to materialize.

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