
Georgian Blitzkrieg fails. This can become a lesson to Azerbaijan as well

Hayots Ashkharh , Armenia - 9/8/2008

The Georgian army took control of two regions of South Ossetia and the capital Tskhinvali in just a few hours as a result of a large-scale attack initiated by Georgia on the night of 7-8 August.

The international community expressed an ambiguous approach to the large-scale attack initiated by Georgia. Only a few standard peace-loving statements were made. The debates at the UN General Council, initiated at Russia's demand, did not produce any results. The Georgian authorities first announced to the whole world that they were forced to take these actions - to put an end to provocations in the conflict region.

Some time later such statements were replaced by explanations about "restoring constitutional order" and "destroying the criminal administration in Tskhinvali". Even Tbilisi's intentions of providing large financial aid to the South Ossetian population were announced.

But only in the first hours, in the afternoon of 8 August at about 1500-1600 [local time], sources in South Ossetia and Russia started to report the retreat of the Georgian troops from the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. The Georgian news agencies have not denied these reports for the time being.

[Passage omitted: description of the Russian media behaviour while covering the events]

Such a course of events shows that the Georgian Blitzkrieg, which was initially quite successful, has already failed, and [Georgian President Mikheil] Saakashvili's administration is facing a difficult dilemma. Georgia can still slow down the course of the hostilities by announcing nationwide mobilization, but it is obvious that its military defeat is predetermined.

Moreover, it is cannot be ruled out that units of South Ossetia and the Russian volunteers who have joined them will occupy the Georgian villages that are not controlled by Tskhinvali and even enter Georgia's territory. Besides, Abkhazia's army has been mobilized and has come closer to the border with Georgia. Its clash with the Georgian troops is being prevented for the time by the peacekeepers stationed in the area of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Consequently, only international intervention, first of all by the USA and the EU, can get Georgia out of this situation with credit. However, to this end the Georgian side should first of all halt the attack, withdraw its detachments from South Ossetia, which is not the case for the time being.

The hostilities, which started in South Ossetia, are of interest to Armenia as this is the first serious attempt to settle a conflict in a military way in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan also already masters the political technologies and PR tools that were used in it.

The Azerbaijani government has repeatedly announced its intention to settle the Nagornyy Karabakh conflict in a military way. Now that Georgia initiated its first serious attempt to occupy South Ossetia on the example of Serbian Krajina, the further behaviour of our neighbour Azerbaijan will largely depend on its final results.

If South Ossetia, which is weaker than Nagornyy Karabakh, manages to withstand this ordeal, the first attempt to turn the South Caucasus into Balkans will fail, which cannot but serve as a lesson to Azerbaijan as well.

Although the Armenian government is prudently maintaining its neutrality in regard of the large-scale war started in South Ossetia, it is clear that the issue of its outcome is of great importance to Armenia. The military-political situation in the South Caucasus, unlike that in the Balkans, shows that an attempt to exact revenge on an opponent in a military way encounters counteraction from forces interested in the region.

The hostilities that have started in South Ossetia are becoming a peculiar "political text" in the issue of selecting peaceful or military ways of settling conflicts in the South Caucasus. We hope that the expected failure of Georgia's attempt to solve the conflict in a military way will become a lesson to Azerbaijan and will prevent senseless attempts to solve political issues in a military way.

[translated from Armenian]
