
Is the Caucasus becoming more Balkanized than the Balkans?

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Both Russia and Georgia claim the current conflict started after the other side violated a ceasefire in South Ossetia.

But whoever is responsible for the clashes, it is never acceptable to kill innocent civilians. Moreover, the fighting could even lead to a wider war between Russia and Georgia.

What is the sin of civilians that they should fall victim to the ambitions of Ossetian separatists or Georgian or Russian leaders? Should civilian neighborhoods become battlegrounds in the conflict between Georgia, which enjoys Western support, and Russia, which is angry over NATO's encroachment into its sphere of influence?

The escalation of the situation in Ossetia comes as a shock in a volatile region where there is already a rivalry between Ukraine and Russia, enmity between Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic over Nagorno Karabakh, and a seemingly interminable war in Chechnya.

With so many ethnic groups in the region, serious efforts must be made to ensure that the Caucasus does not become more Balkanized than the Balkan region itself.

The news of civilian deaths at the hands of governments is a disgrace for the two countries. When legitimate governments kill civilians, how can they condemn terrorists for indiscriminately massacring of civilians?

Unfortunately, the UN Security Council failed on Friday evening to agree on the wording of a statement calling for a ceasefire.

The UK, the U.S., and France are pinpointing what they say is Russia's aggression as the key factor in the slide toward war, while Moscow insists Georgia is to blame.

When major powers that regard themselves as the guardians of international peace quibble over the wording of a call for a ceasefire while civilians are dying, it makes us wonder if we have really entered a more civilized era
