
Ukraine, The Caucasus And Further On?

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It is becoming more evident that a gas war launched by Victor Yushchenko against Russia, Europe and also against the Ukrainian nation had been orchestrated from the overseas as part of a large-scale plan to undermine stability in the post-Soviet states. Ratification of the Strategic partnership charter between US and Ukraine and the beginning of the gas war cannot be viewed separately.

Since the end of the 8-day war in South Ossetia, its outcomes being quite unexpected for the protectors of the Georgian leadership, experts worldwide have been predicting a new U.S policy in Eurasia. Despite a change of scenery in the White House, this political course is being implemented already.

In view of this we may expect the U.S foreign policy to become even more aggressive, aimed to unfreeze old and stir up new conflicts everywhere along the Russian borders.

Ukraine is not the only example. Since US and Georgia have signed a strategic partnership charter, the military cooperation between Washington and Tbilisi will become more intensive with Georgian trying to take revenge for its failure in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Almost each day we receive alarming reports about Georgia speeding up the militarization of its army and occupying its old positions in Gori (eastern Georgia) and other places bordering South Ossetia. And the European observers pretend not to be aware of this. But South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not the only possible hot spots.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is very likely to be another U.S target. After the presidents of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia had signed a declaration on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Moscow on November, 2, 2008, there appeared a hope for a quickest solution to the issue. The sides agreed not to resort to methods of force while settling the conflict and provide guarantees of a political dialog. Through that declaration Russia demonstrated its growing influence in Transcaucasia, which provoked concerns among those being against it. They wanted the Nagorno Karabakh region back under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan because Russia (as any other large country having its interests in the Caucasus) could have renounced its claims for the territories which did not belong to it...

Soon these concerns gave way to poorly concealed irritation. Otherwise how could we explain all the events that happened after the sides had signed the declaration in Moscow? On the New Year's Eve the leaders of one of the opposing sides spoke in favor of force in settling the Karabakh issues and thus provoked a scandal in the Azeri media. In 2008 Moscow had allegedly sold to Yerevan arms and military equipment at \$800 million. The news agencies in Baku reported that the arms Armenia had received at the Russian base of Gyumri comprised diverse models of tanks, missiles, canons, grenade guns, mortar guns and small arms.

Acting spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry Colonel Alexander Drobyshevsky denied the information and said Russia had not delivered any weapons to Armenia. "This information is false. We are taking such reports as provocation", Mr. Drobyshevsky said. He also added that Colonel Alexander Petrunin, who had been cited by the ANS television channel in connection with the issue, was not authorized to give comment at all.

Colonel Seiran Shakhshuvaryan, press secretary of the Ministry of Defence of Armenia, also denied the information.

Soon after the failure of the disinformation campaign, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry expressed its dissatisfaction and named Russia responsible for the further development of the situation in Karabakh. Russia's Ambassador to Azerbaijan Vasily Istratov was summoned to give explanations, which however did not satisfy Azerbaijan. Actually, Baku aims to use the story with non-existing arms as a leverage in its political games (like Ukraine uses its status of a transit country)...

The disinformation was distributed further on through numerous partisan media in Russia and in the West. Political observers of the leading Azeri newspapers simultaneously accused Russia of violating the Moscow declarations and trying to undermine political stability not only in Ukraine and Georgia but in Azerbaijan as well.

In view of the threats coming from the "northern neighbor", Azerbaijan decided to speed up the work connected with the "Nabucco" pipe, a military deal with Turkey and deeper cooperation with NATO and U.S. According to a political expert Mr. Musabekov, "Azerbaijan used to be too careful with the Nabucco project and NATO but now it's time to act freely".

It appears that that scandal with the delivery of Russian arms to Armenia was initiated just in addition to the Ukrainian issue in order to speed up the accession to NATO of several former Soviet republics.

The Azeri officials unanimously characterized the "arms issue" as an international scandal and demanded that Russia was excluded from the OSCE Minsk group. Taking into consideration the national traits, it is difficult to imagine this huge propaganda campaign invented in Baku without the U.S.

Instructions...

Amid the attempts to widen partnership, NATO contingents in Azerbaijan, a country with tons of arms on its territory, are likely to be increased. In spring of 2006 the alliance deployed the so-called "interim forces" at the former Soviet bases of Kyurdamir, Nasosny and Gyulli. The number of troops there is reported from 750 to 1300 soldiers and officers and may be doubled. Among other aims, the contingent is due to carry out a strategic mission in Georgia and protect the Azeri-Georgian leg of the Baku-Tbilisi-Dzeikhan pipe line. =0 D If case of success, Ukraine could borrow the experience. The official Kiev believes Ukraine's gas transportation system to be "unique wealth of the continent", which requires U.S and NATO protection from "Russian imperialists".

Now they seem not to pay any attention to the fact that for many years Russia had turned a blind eye on Ukraine stealing the transit gas, announced its respect to Georgia's territorial integrity and helped Azerbaijan not to lose its face in 1994. In politics there is no place for gratitude. They will pay you nothing for your help. A new war in Karabakh will completely discredit Russia in South Caucasus.

Amid harsh anti-Russian rhetoric, Moscow can do nothing but establish a system of military-political balances and get ready to pay any price for being able to stand for its national interests.
