
On Turkey's New Undertaking In South Caucasus

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The five day long war in August between Russia and Georgia have resulted important changes in South Caucasus. It is still early to speak about the final results; however, it is already known the main tendency - strengthening of Russia's geopolitical position in the region.

Displaying its political will and decisiveness and winning the war Russia has reestablished its role in South Caucasus as the main power center which it had lost at the end of the last century. It has not only succeeded in furthering the establishment of the two new states - South Ossetia and Abkhazia - in the region, but also in "legitimizing" deployment of its troops in their territories. Georgia, which in the period of M. Sahakashvili's presidency has become the main ally of the west, namely the US, not only suffered irreversible losses in the region, but also lost fighting capability of its armed forces and efficiency of the military infrastructures.

Among the closest neighbor states of South Caucasus Turkey was the first to respond to the geopolitical changes in the region. That response appeared in the form of establishing South Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (SCP). The author of the undertaking is Professor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's closest advisor, chief architect of the Justice and Development party's governing circle's foreign policy course who is also considered to be one of the leading geopoliticians and strategists of Turkey. In particular, he is the author of a distinctive geopolitical conception called "Turkey's strategic depth" which aims at theoretically grounding the necessity to develop geostrategy directed at creating spheres of influence around Turkey so reestablishing its privileges over its neighbors due to its favorable geography and magnificent imperial history.

In the beginning stage Turkey's suggestion was envisaging to include the US into the structure, besides the three South Caucasian countries, Turkey and Russia, however, later on, as a result of discussions among the leaders of Russia and Turkey in Moscow, was elected 3+2 format - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Russia and Turkey.

In this case the situation was quite different: Turkey was responded positively by all the possible participants of the Platform, besides Georgia. The latter one refused to take part in any undertaking together with Russia, as Russian troops were on its territory, which is politically quite perceptible. It is noteworthy that Azerbaijan has not officially appeared with any suchlike objections in connection with Armenia. It is clear that it is the result of Turkey's tough pressure.

However, from the geopolitical standpoint it is much more important that Turkey's undertaking is supported by Russia. As a matter of fact, this circumstance is conditioned by Turkey's readiness to exclude the US from the Platform participants. We think that Russia's positive approach to SCP is only of tactical character as it is difficult to imagine that country's geostrategic prospective involving another active player in South Caucasus beside itself. This circumstance makes a ground to characterize SCP's plan as hardly realizable.

We suppose that if Turkey and Russia being well aware of that circumstance, nevertheless actively further preliminary works of founding SCP, they have an objective to use that process in favor of their tactic interests. Turkey tries to assure its neighbors and the world that the foreign policy it carries out is based on active and multi-polar world order perceptions, just like it befits the successor state of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time SCP processes provide a chance for Turkey to have "privilege" in the centuries-old struggle with its regional and historical rival Iran - wakening its positions in Caucasus. Russia spares no efforts to hinder the US entrance into South Caucasus.

As for us, our involvement into SCP processes will raise Armenia's geopolitical "value" in the region. Accordingly, Turkey will get more interested in settling its relations with Armenia which will further mollifying "enforcement" policy implemented by Turkey. As it is known, the expression of that "enforcement" policy is the three preconditions put forward by Turkey and for it settlement of diplomatic relations and opening of borders are conditioned by realization of these preconditions. By the way, the visit of Turkey's president to Armenian provided a favorable chance to develop dialogues over normalizing the relations.
