

# The New Pages in the History of Conflict Resolution



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## Five-Day Georgian Courses

The military clashes immediately following the social movements in the early 90s labeled either national liberation or separatist, in mid 90s transformed into a phase of negotiations, which certainly adopted a variety of formats, and it seemed that sooner or later these conflicts would be resolved in the result of these very negotiations. However, the natural course of the negotiations which lasted for over a decade was violated on August 8, 2008, the opening day of the Beijing Olympics, when the Georgian army attempted to force the annexation of South Ossetia. The Georgian-Ossetian-Russian war which lasted only for five days, still resulted in opening a new page in the modern history of conflict resolution in the South Caucasus, with the heading "Five-Day War".

The Five-Day War which is rated two on the 10-point scale still did prove that the oil pipelines are inviolable. During the large-scale military actions that lasted for five days the pipelines did not suffer any single damage. This war induced the modern world to reveal its unipolarity with all further implications.

The Five-Day War provided new opportunities and challenges first and foremost to the countries of the South Caucasus and their neighbors. Turkey, which has been undergoing significant internal and external transformations, aspires to taking a qualitatively new and serious role in the South Caucasus region. Turkey, which has adopted a difficult and controversial role in the war in Iraq and which actively pursues its interests in the Kurdish issue, has a number of disagreements with its western partners. What 'acute angles' can be anticipated in Turkey-NATO relations within the perspective of new ambitions the South Caucasian players are pursuing?

## Heavyweights in the region

The sweet fruits of the Five-Day War apparently fell to the lot of the fourth. The already growing influence of Turkey found a fertile soil for blossoming in Georgia, both economically and politically and even geopolitically. Moreover, exclusion of the prospects of military resolution of regional conflicts, in particular of the Nagorno Karabakh issue, increases the role of Turkey and other regional heavyweights. Additionally, the gradually growing influence of the West in the South Caucasus, and particularly in Georgia, resulted in establishing somewhat closer relations between Turkey and Russia. Turkey's proposal of creating a South Caucasus platform of stability and security clearly reflects these developments.

However, this latter Turkish initiative leaves out another regional heavyweight – Iran – which seems to have proved that without its involvement no sustainable solutions can be found on the Middle Eastern stage. Iran's role in the regulation of Nagorno Karabakh issue, very much like in the issue of security and stability of the South Caucasus, is indisputable as well. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Iran has been taking a more active role in the regional politics in response to Turkey's initiative. Moreover, the economic relations, the increasing tension

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around the Kurdish issue and the position of the Western countries in this regard to a certain extent bring Turkey and Iran closer in the region.

The world economic crisis and the new political development in the region imply new conditions. Are we ready to accept these new conditions, address the new challenges, identify the new prospects and make use of the new opportunities? Interestingly, even in case of regional interdependence politicians are ill-informed of the situation in neighboring countries and rarely pay mutual visits. Absence of direct flights from Tehran to Ankara speaks volumes about this. It seems that the lack of direct communication and limited information flow would have put a stronger emphasis on the voice of experts having the expertise on regional and global issues. However, the reality suggests the opposite: expert opinions are rarely taken into account in all the countries of the region. Armenia, for instance, does not lack the necessary expertise and the relevant action to take is straightforward: it is necessary to summarize scenarios of all possible developments in the regions and work out response strategies based on the interests of the country.

*The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion "New World Disorders: The Role of NATO and EU", which took place on September 24, 2008. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.*

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