CHAPTER TWENTY

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Introduction

Since the North Caucasian Republics form part of the Russian Federation, conflict resolution efforts in the North Caucasus by third parties require action and approval by the central authorities in Moscow. The Russian Federation regards conflicts in the North Caucasus as an internal affair.

The problem with international intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations is that they are only as effective as they are allowed to be active in a territory. If grass roots organizations set up projects to reconcile groups and promote cooperation, the outbreak of hostilities can nullify all efforts. Therefore, the activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are rather a tool to assist the government in its policy, and a warning signal of the issues that still need attention.

For a government to benefit from the activities of such organizations, it is important that they are not regarded as counterproductive by the government. In the case of the North Caucasus we see that organizations do their work in some Republics under difficult circumstances, and are successful on the micro level. The problems the North Caucasus faces are however so immense, that we have to realize that both intergovernmental, non-governmental and governmental organizations have a long way to go to realize peace, prosperity and justice in the Republics. The plans for a redistribution of territory in the Russian Federation made by Putin and Kozak may not be helpful in this respect.

The Role of the UN in the North Caucasus

The Russian Federation has a prominent position in the UN. It has veto power in the Security Council, and can thus influence UN decision-making in the sphere of conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. However, several UN organs are active in the Russian Federation, and
in the North Caucasus. One of the prominent organs is the UNHCR that works for refugees and IDPs. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has visited the region in 2006.\(^1\) The World Food Program delivered food to Chechnya; UNICEF is active in the region, just like the World Health Organization and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.\(^2\)

\textit{The Role of the Council of Europe in the North Caucasus}

The aim of the Council of Europe is to assist its member states in strengthening respect for the rule of law and observance of human rights. However, this can also pave the way for reconciliation processes and a solution of territorial or ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus. The visits of special monitors appointed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), their talks with groups in society and the politicians of central Russia as well as of the North Caucasus support the stabilization process in the North Caucasus. In addition, the judgments of the European Court on Human Rights provide an additional tool to monitor respect for human rights and the rule of law. In the case of Chechnya, they make visible flaws in the legal system in Russia, which needs to be repaired in order to continue an effective transition process.

\textit{The Role of the OSCE in the North Caucasus (Prigorodny Rayon)}

The main activities of the OSCE in the North Caucasus are to support the resolution of the conflict between North Ossetia and Ingushetia over Prigorodny Rayon. This territory, which was inhabited by Ingush, moved from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR to the North Ossetian ASSR following the deportation of the Ingush in 1943. Many Ingush still claim lands and properties that have not been returned. At the beginning of the 1990s fighting started between Ingush and Ossetians. Although there is a cease fire, the conflict has not yet been solved. Alexei Zverev states in \textit{Contested Borders in the Caucasus} that following the deportation of the Ingush people to Central Asia and their

\(^1\) http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1065972.html, accessed 15-10-08.
\(^2\) http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/dc09d1f2f88d4a2bc1256bd400453182, accessed 15-10-08.