Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Basic principles for an effective transformation of the peace process (‘7D’)

Alexander Russetski, Siegfried Woeber

Peace-building efforts in Abkahzia and South Ossetia are virtually paralysed. Both cases are serious and dangerous, yet so far, the OSCE — and the UN — have shown little effectiveness in moving negotiations forward. Nor have they substantially improved the human rights situation in the disputed territories; for example, a proposed human rights office in Gali (Abkhazia) has still to be set up. Yet we believe there are promising ways to respond. Local resources, especially civil society groups and independent experts, should be more closely involved in the mission’s work in order to attain the original mandates and therefore to come closer to a peaceful settlement of the conflicts. The peace-building process will become more effective once it starts to have an organised character, far from spontaneous single initiatives, and stands on a stronger moral basis. Some political scientists today refer to Realpolitik as the origin of certain approaches; we are rather often reminded of ‘social Darwinism’ in this respect.

The following recommendations, referred to as ‘Project 7D’, were prepared by the ‘South Caucasus Institute of Regional Security (SCIRS)’ as an annex to the ‘Concept for the regulation of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast’ in January 2005. The Seven D’s will be explained below:

1. Diagnostics,
2. De-escalation,
3. De-ethnisation,
4. Democratisation,
5. Deformalisation,
6. Decriminalisation
7. Demilitarisation.

1. Diagnostics
The creation of two appropriate international groups composed of experts and analysts can ensure an adequate evaluation of the given conflicts and the

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1 Alexander Russetski is the executive director of the regional think-tank ‘South Caucasus Institute of Regional Security (SCIRS)’ and the co-ordinator of the ‘Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly — Georgian National Committee (HCA-GNC)’. Siegfried Woeber has worked as an international advisor to the Caucasus on regional projects jointly with the 'Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly’ in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (with support from the Dutch organisations IKV and ICCO) since 2001. He is also a member of SCIRS.
identification of their diagnosis: components as well as the position and interests of conflicting sides. The group of analysts should include representatives from the pool of experts from each side, having a direct or indirect relation to the concrete conflict. At the same time, the number of participants in the working group should be reasonably limited. The group should be made up of independent, experienced facilitators from countries whose interests are minimal in the given conflicts. Based on the joint effort of the analysts, the newly elaborated concepts that outline the interests of conflicting (or independent) sides could lead to the creation of documents that have a greater practical application and form the basis of a real peace-making process.

2. **De-escalation**

For the de-escalation of the conflicts it is first of all necessary to meet the wishes of all sides through non-violent methods, with the objective being to achieve a stable, long-term co-operation between stakeholders, rather than aiming at the opponent’s complete defeat. Another condition for the de-escalation of the conflicts is their de-internationalisation and subsequent localisation. The protagonists on both sides have to direct their actions towards detecting common threats and establishing a strategic partnership. The process of internationalisation the conflicts themselves should be replaced by the process of internationalising the peacemaking resources, which is necessary for increasing the efficiency of the peace-making process as a whole. One of the principles of de-escalation should be to ‘dismantle’ the conflicts which assumes a partition of the conflicts into their basic components as well as the working on degeneration of each component.

3. **De-ethnicisation**

The participants in the given conflicts should admit that the ethnic component does not represent the only component in these conflicts and it is not the equivalent of the political component. They should furthermore reject the idea of constructing ethnocratic\(^2\) regimes in Abkhazia and on the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast. Representatives of all ethno-national groups or subgroups living in the territory of the disputed zones should take part in the management of the peacemaking process and the decision-making connected with the future of these former autonomies. Especially both sides in the conflict should understand the importance of the existence of mixed families, which are also found among the categories of victims of the conflict. Their use as a natural ‘living instrument’ during the regulation process should be taken more seriously and not be limited to some initiatives at the level of civil diplomacy. It is furthermore necessary to completely refrain from political speculation concerning data on the victims of violent confrontation. It is also important to collect information about the worst cases of human rights violations available on both sides of the conflict as well as to create a

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\(^2\) This term refers to a regime based on the dominance of an ethnic group, but not democratic principles. Further information on the above concept and other publications by the Institute can be obtained at www.scirs.org, or via scirs@caucasus.net.