

The Problems of Georgia: South Ossetia and Abkhazia

Georgia gained its independence in 1991 with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, many separatist movements also emerged with this process in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the borders of Georgia. By the result of this, the Georgian army intervened in both regions. In 1994, cease-fire agreements between the parties were signed (by) with the call of Russia. While both South Ossetia and Abkhazia were granted a large autonomy, Russian soldiers were placed under the name of "peacekeepers" in both regions. Despite disagreements between the parties, until 2008, this was described as a "frozen problem".

After the 'Rose Revolution' which happened in 2003, Mikhail Saakashvili whom also supported by western countries, has come to the power. Saakashvili, who assessed the membership of the European Union and NATO as the main goals of Georgia, implied that he wanted to completely get away from Moscow with these policies in some sense. Russia, which indicating at every opportunity that this situation is unacceptable, has increased its support to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In 2006, a referendum for independence was held in South Ossetia and the authority of Tbilisi was ignored.

While these were being experienced in Caucasasia, Kosovo, asking for its independence from Serbia for a long time, declared its independence with the support of USA in February of 2008. Russia resented it. Furthermore, the issue of NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia was raised at the NATO Bucharest in April 2008 was regarded as a bigger problem for Russia.

On 8 August 2008, Georgian Army launched operations against South Ossetia which declared its independence, by violating the ceasefire agreement signed in 1994. Thus, Russia has had the opportunity which it was waiting for a long time. Russia broke into South Ossetia with a numerous army and clashes with Georgian army. Although Western Powers conveyed their support to Georgia before the war, they didn't provide actual support during the war. As a result of this, the ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia was signed after the eighth day of the war. On 26 August 2008, Russia was the first country to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia, with this move, retaliated for recognition of Kosovo in a sense and also prevented Georgia's membership to European Union and NATO indirectly.

Russia, not only prevented Georgia's membership to EU and NATO but also created two buffer zones in Caucasasia. Russian soldiers are still present on the borderline of both region. Russia tried to get the upper hand in the international area by enabling Venezuela, Nicaragua, Vanuatu, and Nauru to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Although the insistences coming from Russia, the countries close to Moscow like Belarus who didn't recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia has suffered sanctions by Russia.

Enjoying political, economic and military support by Russia for years, Esad regime also announced that it recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in May 2018 and diplomatic relations were built at the level of ambassadors. Turkey, USA, and the European Union denounced Syria because of recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia's unilateral independence. And also, these countries stated that Syria's decision was against international law and the territorial integrity of Georgia was violated. The Foreign Ministry of Georgia announced that it ceased its diplomatic relations with Syria as of 1 June 2018. Syria was one of the few countries that supported Russian intervention during the Georgia – Russia war in 2008.

Turkey stood up for the territorial integrity of Georgia from the very beginning and articulated its opposition to Russian intervention in this country at every occasion. When considered the disagreement between Armenia and Turkey, not only acting as a transit route between Turkey and Azerbaijan but also allowing the energy lines to pass through, Georgia stands on an important role for Ankara's Caucasasia policies. The fact that Turkey ranks first in Georgia's economy and tourism is important in terms of indicating where bilateral relations between two countries leveled up to.

Consequently, Russia seems to continue to introduce the "buffer zones" (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) as recognized countries to countries that it can convince. The uselessness of international law is not likely to bring the problem in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to a solution in foreseeable future.

