

2018/3/2: Fashioning intentions, interests and instrument of external actors in southern Caucasus (part1)

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With the collapse of the USSR, the East-West-Conflict ended at the same time. This, however, did not result in liberally and democratically composed market economy models of order as prognosticated by Francis Fukuyama in the new states except the Baltic States. On the contrary, the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the flaming up of a series of violent conflicts in and between the newly founded republics. In the 1990ies these ethnological conflicts and territorial disputes escalated in wars and displacements: Transnistria in Moldavia; Chechnya in Russia; Nagorno-Karabakh and Talysch-Mugan in Azerbaijan; Abkhazia and South-Ossetia in Georgia. The national and ethnic conflicts of the Caucasian peoples, which had been suppressed by the Soviet regime, experienced an unexampled renaissance, which triggered a regional knock on effect. In this context - apart from Abkhazia, South-Ossetia and Chechnya - the conflict about Nagorno-Karabakh between Karabakh-Armenians and Azerbaijan proves to be another South-Caucasian hotspot. This region may not have been altogether destabilised, but none of the confrontations could be resolved satisfyingly. This structural pattern is called „frozen conflicts“. Due to its geographical situation, its bridging position on the Eurasian continent, and its foottrace for the Caspian raw materials of energy, South Caucasus has got into a geopolitical and geo-economic fight of interests taking place between external actors in this region, and which is called the „New Great Game“ in literature. The collision of different political and economic interests has led to the genesis of strategic axes all over the Caucasus: the vertical axis goes from Russia across Armenia (Nagorno-Karabakh) to Iran, and the horizontal axis from Central Asia across Azerbaijan, Turkey and Ukraine to the west. The course of the axis is partly historically and partly pragmatically, but above all power-politically related.

In this essay the politics of Russia, Iran, Turkey, the USA and the EU as external actors in South Caucasus are investigated with three questions:

1. With which political means and instruments do they realise their interests, and with which obstructions are they confronted at the same time?
2. Which historiographical, ethnic-religious, economic political and power political ideological factors influence the formulation of their interests?
3. Which energy-political projects have been performed in this region and which plans are intended for the future?

The analysis is based upon epistemic approaches of geopolitics, geo-economy and Neo-Realism.