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## Saakashvili Creates Yet More Scandal

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### Cyber Hooliganism- Does Georgian Law Protect Us?

"With a few strokes of the keyboard you can ruin someone's reputation, and sometimes their life. It sounds like an exaggeration, but it's a fact!" says A.M., one of the victims of cyber-bullying. It is naive to believe that only semi-literate people and teenagers can become the victims of cyber bullies, because we live in the age of information, which in the hands of the wicked can be a formidable weapon. One fine day anyone could find themselves among the victims of cyber criminals.

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# Saakashvili Creates Yet More Scandal

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

**On July 20<sup>th</sup> President Mikheil Saakashvili stated that US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had monitored the controversial forcible dispersal of the protest rally held on May 26, 2011. According to the President "each stage of the rally was observed by an FBI group based at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and this group delivered a report stating that the police measures did not exceed the limits of the law."**

This statement, implying that the USA approved of the actions taken at that event, has aroused criticism and concern in many quarters. The current U.S. Ambassador to Georgia, Richard Norland, responded by describing the events of that day as a "tragedy".

"Let me say first of all, of course I was not here on May 26, 2011, but I know that this was a terrible tragedy for Georgia. And at the time, if you look at the statements that we made, you'll see that we called for a thorough investigation of what happened to make sure that all responsible parties were brought to account," Norland commented. He refrained from making further comments as court case concerning the May 26<sup>th</sup> events is pending.

The Parliamentary majority called the President's statement "irresponsible" and insisted that both Saakashvili and former Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili "must be questioned concerning the May 26 events."

"This person is accustomed to spreading big lies, but what he has said about 26 May is scandalous. I don't want the country to have any problems with a strategic partner and a friend because of Mikheil Saakashvili's statements," Manana Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream MP and former Vice Speaker of Parliament, said. Addressing members of the President's United National Movement, she asked "Saakashvili invents many lies and obviously this is a lie too. But maybe you should demand answers from your President, and ask him why he makes such scandalous statements about the U.S.?"

Parliamentary minority member and possible UNM presidential candidate Davit Bakradze claims that the U.S. government did indeed monitor the May 26<sup>th</sup> events.

"The information I have received from Merabishvili and the U.S. government is that a certain group of American experts was in Georgia in May 2011 conducting riot control training for Georgian police officers. After the conclusion of the rally, this group made a



report," Bakradze said. "As far as I know the report justified the police actions in general, however, there were some cases in which the report referred to the misuse of force," he added.

Merabishvili's lawyer Giorgi Chiviashvili states that a report written by a major American research company into the events of May 26, 2011 "might play a crucial role in Merabishvili's case and demonstrate the innocence of the former Interior Minister." He explains that the U.S. State Department hired the Bensus Company to make a detailed report on the events of May 26, 2011.

"Their survey gives a detailed overview of all the events leading up to, and which were

part of, the rally on May 26, 2011. It is absolutely impartial, and stresses that there was no misuse of force by senior Georgian officials on May 26<sup>th</sup>," Chiviashvili said, adding that the U.S. Embassy delivered this report to the MIA. He commented that the U.S. government requested at the time that the report not be made public and that the recommendations within it should only be used to help Georgian government agencies in the future. The MIA has not yet made a statement concerning this report.

The People's Assembly was the first body to ask Ambassador Norland to make an assessment of the President's statement. Nino Burjanadze, leader of the Democratic Movement

– United Georgia and a member of the executive board of the Assembly, stated that the President was "fostering anti-American feelings among the populace."

"Saakashvili has been acting against the interests of our country for a long time. First he ruined Georgian-Russian relations, now he is putting in danger our relations with the USA," she said.

According to the President of the Experts Club, Soso Tsiskarishvili, Saakashvili is trying to arouse hatred for the U.S. in Georgia.

"Saakashvili thinks that Georgia's interest in pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration has declined. Therefore he acts as if the current Georgian govern-

ment is pro-Russian and he is the only leader who will take a pro-Western course." Tsiskarishvili commented, adding that Saakashvili's statements will only create more negative feelings towards him and his party.

Co-Chairman of the Centre for Strategic Research and ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Irakli Menagarishvili thinks that the U.S. Ambassador has now made a clear statement and answered all the questions which could be posed by various political groups.

"Since Richard Norland has commented it would be absurd to think that anybody ever supported the actions of the previous government during the May 26 events. It's apity that the Georgian President has aroused such a dispute with our strategic partner," Menagarishvili told The Georgian Times.

On May 26 2011 Georgian police violently dispersed an anti-government rally in Tbilisi, crushing protesters' attempts to prevent a military parade marking the country's 20 years of independence. One policeman and three protesters died, dozens were injured and many others were arrested in the centre of the capital as police broke up the rally, which also called for President Mikheil Saakashvili's resignation. Horrific images of the assault on the protesters were broadcast around the world.

## Georgian Products to Enter European Union Market

By LELA TSINTSADZE, GT

**The negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade (DCFTA) between Georgia and the European Union have been successfully concluded, and as a result Georgian products will enter European markets of 500 million. Access to the common European Union market is expected to enlarge the Georgian economy by 15% over the long term.**

Provided certain conditions are met, the DCFTA will give Georgian producers an opportunity to freely enter the world's largest single market, which includes 28 states and over 500 million consumers.

The tariff-free entry of goods and services to EU countries will increase Georgia's export potential.

Minister of Economics Giorgi Kvirikashvili stated that completion of the negotiations prior to the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, which will be held in November, is a significant step forward. Lawyers are now reviewing the exact text of the agreement, which will then be submitted to both parties for signature.

The Minister said that completing these negotiations swiftly but with optimum results had been one of the priorities of the new government. "This is one of the manifestations that Georgia has chosen the European path. After the agreement enters into force,

Georgia will undertake free trade in goods and services with the EU," he said.

EU has concluded preferential trading agreements, such as this one, with 45 countries. Similar negotiations are being held with Moldova and Armenia within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Ukraine has already signed a DCFTA.

Economic analysts have welcomed the signing of this significant agreement. Irakli Lekvinadze points out that not only will it give Georgian exporters access to a bigger market but it will increase the interest in Georgia amongst Asian and post-Soviet countries, who may now be tempted to invest in Georgia as they will be able to export the goods they produce here to European markets.

"I hope the negotiation processes with Europe and all other countries, including the US, will continue in this direction, as it will increase Georgia's global competitiveness. The EU currently accounts for 26-27% of Georgia's trade turnover. Enactment of the agreement will improve this percentage immediately, and the EU will account for an extra 10-15% of Georgia's trade after certain period," said Lekvinadze.

Fellow analyst Alexandre Tvalchrelidze also believes that the Georgia-EU agreement has political, political-economic and economic importance. However, Georgian products will now have to meet European standards, or they will not withstand the competition.

"Europe has acknowledged



that we are Europeans and are letting us join its family. When you join a family, you have to abide by its traditions and rules. The Russian embargo on Georgian wine was of crucial importance in this regard, as it forced an improvement of Georgian wine quality," he said.

At present the EU is Georgia's second largest trading partner, bilateral trade being worth on average 2.8 million USD per year. Exports to the EU are worth over 400 million

USD annually, representing 15-16% of Georgia's total exports. Annual imports from the EU are thus worth around 2.4 million USD. Georgia's main exports to the EU are agricultural products such as various types of nuts, wine, mineral water, alcoholic beverages, fruit and vegetable juice, leather and hides, etc. Industrial materials, such as mineral fertilisers, black metal, scrap metal, copper and copper residue and magnesium oxide, are also exported to the EU.

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# Kakha Gogolashvili: Dialogue with Russia Puts Us in a Trap

By EKA GAZDELIANI, GT

**The internal political situation in Georgia is becoming strained due to the upcoming Presidential Elections. The public is becoming polarised, and the leaders of the main opposition party have had eggs and stones thrown at them. In addition, despite the improving dialogue with Russia, the occupying troops are still installing barbed wire at the administrative border in the conflict regions. Kakha Gogolashvili, political scientist and head of the European Research Centre, here discusses these issues in an interview with The Georgian Times.**

**Does the current political situation suggest we will have impartial and fair elections in October?**

No. Several attacks on representatives of the opposition United National Movement have taken place and the government has not dealt with these effectively. The situation needs to be improved, and urgently, in order for us to say that there is a free election environment. If candidates live under threat of assault by angry mobs, regardless of the authorities' attempts to conduct transparent elections, improve the voter lists etc., the election environment cannot be considered free.

I would say however that the media are working well. Coverage is pluralistic, as all shades of opinion are being presented on both pro-government and opposition channels. I think there has been quite big progress in this respect.

**What should the government do to prevent attacks on opposition candidates?**

The police should prevent them and detain those who commit such hooliganism. Assaults on people hinder the election process and this makes them doubly criminal. Therefore serious sanctions should be imposed on those who commit them. A 100 GEL fine and the selective detainment of 2-3 people are not enough. Everyone who throws stones or raises their hand to any presidential candidate should be detained, and any harassment of people of an opposite opinion should be stopped. The government should show that it will not permit any type of intolerance. Public opinion should also be mobilised. Prevention of specific assaults is not enough; a serious campaign against electoral malpractice of all kinds is needed, as an election is not

only a collection of administrative acts and legislation. The government is responsible for informing the people, conducting relevant information and communication campaigns, introducing legislation about what rights people have and do not have.

People who are angry with the former government think that they are acting fairly by assaulting their candidates and have a legal right to do so. It should be explained to them that they are not behaving correctly. This is an obligation of government. It is an element of the civil education which should be undertaken by government. If they do not meet this obligation, we cannot consider that the government is attempting to conduct completely free and transparent elections.

**The government does state regularly that it opposes such violations. Is this not enough?**

No, because think that government representatives make such statements because the West and the international community tell them to, rather than because they actually mean what they are saying. TV and other debates are encouraging this belief. Many experts appear on these saying that it is nothing for people to throw eggs at the former ruling party's candidates because their government put them in prison. Such statements incite the public to misbehave and strengthen the feeling that they have the support of the government. This is not actually so, but statements alone are not enough. More persuasive action is required. It is recommended that they come out, speak and explain to people. Ultimately all responsibility rests with the government, so it is in their best interests to become more active in this regard.

**Who do you think is most likely to win the October 27 elections?**

We know that at this stage the Georgian Dream candidate is leading, but this is not due to his personal popularity. He is riding on Bidzina Ivanishvili's popularity. Therefore, his rating is not stable or convincing. It may fall if a more charismatic candidate emerges, with a more persuasive programme which is properly presented. The election is not a foregone conclusion, it is possible for other candidates to win.

**What do you think about the UNM candidate?**

It is possible for the UNM candidate to win. Apparently it will be Davit Bakradze, who is not associated with the crimes and mistakes of the UNM gov-



ernment. He has considerable political experience, is balanced and will be quite a strong competitor. If Bidzina Ivanishvili had nominated Bakradze he would be a certainly to win the election, and it is not possible to say this about Margvelashvili. He has less political experience and is less well known as a politician. He is better known as an analyst, public figure, manager, etc.

If there is a second round, if no achieves over half the vote of the first ballot, it is difficult to say which candidate would win. The ratings are changing; serious campaigning has not begun yet. The candidates have not presented their programmes, they have yet to hold meetings and demonstrate their strengths. Therefore, everything may change.

**Has the improved Georgia-Russia dialogue since the last election brought us any results?**

We have not yet achieved the results we want and need. The current approach is not focused on getting quick results. The main problem is that everything is still obscure. We have not been able to set a long-term policy towards Russia whose direction we know. The main differences between us are still there and there is no way to overcome them. We cannot be sure to what extent there is a real threat of a new war. There is clearly some threat, as Russia is trying to provoke us again by installing barbed wire and detaining people at the administrative border.

As for economic cooperation, there are questions about this as well. Sometimes, the Russian sanitarian says things that do not make our wine producers happy and do not encourage a feeling of sustainability. We can see that there has not been the great progress we

hoped for in getting Georgian wine back on the Russian market and reversing the embargo. But we cannot say that we should therefore abandon this strategy and return to the previous situation, when we had absolutely no dialogue with Russia. I think more public diplomacy is required here. Governmental attempts alone are not, and cannot be, enough as the two governments have quite different interests. Public diplomacy would focus on the transformation of those interests.

**Do you think that the installation of the barbed wire is a central directive or a local initiative?**

This is a centrally driven political move. Nobody can do such things without Russian central government authorisation. The decision has been made to fix the 'border' and it is therefore necessary to build a borderline infrastructure, which requires money and political will. This action carries certain foreign relations threats, as it may be criticised, therefore Russia is taking it gradually and cautiously. First one and later another section of Georgian territory will be violated, as complete implementation of the border creation programme will cause a great scandal in the West and provoke further international resolutions, which have not been made recently. This is why Georgia has begun a direct dialogue with Russia and is not pursuing the issue of the occupied territories strictly within international organisations. We are in a trap on the one hand we want a dialogue with Russia, but on other having this dialogue does not give us a moral right to demand that Russia by condemned by international organisations, and though the dialogue is achieving nothing. This is a dilemma,

and we have to find a golden mean.

**What has been achieved at the Geneva negotiations?**

The Geneva format is a channel through which all the parties to the conflicts in the occupied territories can meet each other. But it will not result in the resolution of the conflict. There is no such objective on the agenda of the Geneva format, it will not make any decision about South Ossetia and Abkhazia's status or restoring Georgia's territorial integrity. The people who attend these negotiations have no desire to include such issues on the agenda. We take part in order not to prevent any serious complications occurring and to maintain communication so that we can share our positions and prevent the complete mutual alienation of the conflict parties, which will be followed by their internal isolation. Finally, without the Geneva format we would not have a mechanism for finding out what the plans of the other parties are.

**What will the Vilnius Eastern Partnership summit bring Georgia?**

This is an EU summit. The Georgia-EU Association Agreement will be signed, which will include part of the DCFTA, and completion of the negotiations on this agreement will be registered. But the DCFTA will only be signed later, when it has been translated into all the EU's official languages of business after being elaborated in its final form and edited. The decisions made at the Vilnius Summit will be important for the future of Georgia, as they will affect how soon Georgia can come closer to, and eventually join, the EU. We will discover what the EU countries think Georgia needs to do to make further progress towards it.

**The opposition are always**

**saying that Georgia has turned away from the West and is being ruled by Pro-Russian forces. Do you see any sign of this?**

Of course Georgia has not changed its course, but before the new government came in it was not pursuing the Western course fully either. In order to pursue a pro-Western course you have to meet Western requirements. These were not fully reflected in our politics, although we were and will remain a pro-Western country because this is the requirement of our people. Of course the present government has made mistakes, and some steps it has taken leave room for doubt about how firmly and consistently we are following the set course. There is some reason for criticism, and there should be criticism, including some from the opposition, as this will help the current authorities develop their policy more clearly, but what we are hearing is a little bit exaggerated.

**Finally, do you think the cohabitation between political forces has been successful?**

If this cohabitation existed we would be quite a good society, and it would form quite a strong precondition for giving us a NATO Membership Action Plan. Unfortunately there is no cohabitation. There have been attempts to regulate the relationship and competition between the UNM and the new ruling party, but extreme positions have been taken on both sides.

However the attempts at cooperation on security and foreign policy issues are very welcome. The sooner we overcome our complex that one side must be completely right and the other must be criminal and bad the sooner we will get the benefit. We are not talking about political parties here – the whole of Georgian society must take this step, as GD supporters think that the UNM and all its supporters are criminals and should be in prison while UNM supporters think that the new government is pro-Russian and is leading the country towards Russia. This conflict goes to the levels of hysteria. It should be eliminated.

If we overcome this and become able to achieve compromises, respect each other's opinions and forgive and admit mistakes, then there is a serious chance of our political advancement. Civil organisations should encourage political parties and the public to move in this direction, not provoke endless confrontations and splits. This is crucial in making the political environment healthier and improving the political culture.



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# Giorgi Targamadze: “We think we have a good chance of winning”

By LIKA MOSHIAVILI, GT

**The Presidential Election campaign has officially begun in Georgia following the President's decree concerning the date. The election will be held on October 27, meaning that September 11th is the deadline for the nomination of candidates. All the supposed major contenders have in fact already stated whether they will take part.**

The Georgian Times has interviewed leader of the Christian-Democratic Movement Giorgi Targamadze, who according to the NDI opinion poll released earlier in this month is currently the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular of the declared presidential candidates.

**Why have you decided to participate in this election?**

For any political party in a democratic system it is important to come to power through elections. To participate in any kind of election is not only our right but an obligation. A political party which feels it has a responsibility towards the population, is confident in its strength, sure of its ideology etc. should give the voters the right to vote for its candidates in any election, from local government to presidential. Moreover, after this presidential election the new constitution will come into force, a European type one in which the president's powers are subordinated to those of parliament, and the Christian-Democratic Movement was one of the initiators of these changes. I think this presidential election will be very important in Georgia's recent history, and we will take part in any political activities. Most importantly, we feel we have support among the public.

**Your party has existed for 4 years. What have you achieved?**

We established the party when Georgia was in a very difficult situation. We enjoyed electoral success within a very short period of time. This shows that the Christian-Democratic Movement did not make any significant mistakes. We started with 8.6% of the vote but in 2010 we won more than 12% support nationally. This was great progress, and showed we were going in the right direction. Everything was going perfectly; we were preparing for the parliamentary elections of 2012, but none of us could have imagined that businessmen Bidzina Ivanishvili would decide to enter politics. Even now I do not know why he only decided to do so at that particular time.

Ivanishvili entered the politics when the opposition was very weak, when coalitions like the Eight and the Six had been formed and dissolved very quickly and the ratings of every political party, except the



Christian-Democratic Movement, were falling. We had all been doing our best to weaken Saakashvili's party as much as possible, but this was an impossible task, as we were fighting a strong authoritarian regime which controlled all the levers of power, including the media, business etc. The regime also had support from abroad. But despite all this we achieved a lot. By the time Ivanishvili came along the Georgian people did not trust Mikheil Saakashvili and his party any more. Of course it still took a lot of effort to defeat Saakashvili, but the basic job had already been done.

There is no person, and especially no political party, who does not make mistakes, but one thing is certain, the way we chose at that time – to change the President and government through ensuring that peaceful and democratic elections were held – was correct. We have always opposed street protests and confrontations. We fought the regime from within parliament, and I think that if the other opposition parties had done the same they would have been more effective.

**Why did your party lose ground in the 2012 parliamentary elections?**

2012 was a year of electoral revolution in Georgia. The people were in shock. A large proportion of voters only supported Bidzina Ivanishvili in order to end Saakashvili's rule. Ivanishvili was also the richest man in Georgia, with about 6 billion in capital, and therefore people had some social expectations of

him. Georgian citizens thought that Ivanishvili was the strongest candidate and had more chance to win the election than anybody else.

**Has your support increased since then? What have you done to improve your rating?**

We have not had to do much ourselves. After the parliamentary elections the situation calmed down and we regained the supporters who were in shock and had not known how to act in autumn 2012. The Georgian Dream and its leader Bidzina Ivanishvili are also gradually losing popularity. In October Saakashvili will step down and there will be nobody else they can blame for the ills of the country. To maintain its support the Georgian Dream will have to fulfill the promises it made during the election campaign. I am certain however that if it does not make systemic changes it will become like the United National Movement and try and remove all opposition both in parliament and the country. It's only a matter of time before this happens.

**What do you think about the election process so far? Do you have any complaints?**

We have had lots of complaints about the electoral atmosphere in the country over the years, as most people have. Now there is a problem with the electoral commission; only two political parties, the GD and UNM, are represented in it now, while there were seven at the previous election. It might seem strange, but the UNM actually has one more representative than the GD on

Everything I have told you shows that at the very least it's not getting better. One thing I hope will not happen anymore is people being beaten in the streets, but I think Bidzina Ivanishvili's dream of holding elections which will surprise us and the whole of Europe is just words; on the contrary, the wrong electoral system is in place, and it will guarantee that all the presidential candidates will not have equal condition in October's elections.

**As you said, during the last election different media monitoring projects were financed from abroad but this year not a single one is being conducted. Do you think there is less international interest in the presidential elections?**

The interest in the last parliamentary election was different, as it was obviously the first real opportunity Georgia had had to change its government in a peaceful way. I am sure everyone will observe these presidential elections with great interest too, as the progress towards democracy made in 2012 needs to be strengthened. The best way to do this would be to elect a president who is not a member of the GD, and certainly not the UNM, who will debate with and counter-balance the government and serve the Georgian people. We are holding negotiations with foreign organizations and hope to set up some proper media monitoring projects, at least in September.

**According to a recent NDI poll the GD's Giorgi Margvelashvili is the most popular presidential candidate at present, with 29% support. What can you say about him as a person and a politician?**

I do not know him as a politician at all. He has not been a member of any political party until now. It's not clear what ideology he has, if any. There are many questions about him as a person and a political figure. I think the only countries which are successful are those where politics is a profession and politicians become professionals after conducting political activities for some years. It would be strange for someone with no political experience, who has never participated in an election before, to become the president of a democratic republic.

I don't think he was a good Education Minister, as no significant changes were made in this area. Even those reforms which the Christian-Democratic Movement supported had lots of gaps in them. For instance, we do not understand his new initiative “freebooks for all schoolchildren”. We in the Christian-Democratic Movement did everything we could to ensure that children from socially vulnerable families received free school books, and for the last three years they have. We can't understand why

the children of rich people should get ‘free’ school books which are actually paid for out of the state budget, which is created by the taxes paid by ordinary and even poor people. I think this is very unfair. With this money the government could provide more help for socially vulnerable families. The rights of Georgian writers and publishers have also been violated by the Ministry of Education.

**Margvelashvili is also very bad team member. His public criticism of the new Labour Code was very embarrassing for his party and the parliamentary majority.**

I could continue talking about this, but I actually think it's better to concentrate the Georgian population's attention on the positive aspects of each presidential candidate.

**According to the same NDI poll the UNM candidate, whoever that may be, has around 10% support at present, Nino Burjanadze 5% and 4% of population plans to vote for you. Do you think you can beat these candidates?**

First of all, we should look not only at the figures but when the poll was conducted. We actually had the most positive ratings of any party in this poll. It said that only 4% of Georgian citizens would never support me, while this index is several times higher for every other candidate. That's why I'm saying that the actual campaign is very important, and we should do our best to ensure that these positive feelings towards us are reflected in the vote we receive. We think we have a good chance of winning and we will say our piece in this election.

**When will your campaign officially begin and why should people elect you?**

I am beginning my campaign on September 1<sup>st</sup>, but August will be a very busy month as we will be working with NGOs, international organisations, local institutions and of course the media as usual.

Under the new constitution the next President of Georgia will not have executive power but he will be the leader of the country, the top person, and will represent Georgia at the international level. Therefore our programme will focus on maintaining our Western orientation, defending our national values and improving relations with Russia but not at the expenses of our own interests or by making unacceptable concessions. We think it is very important to strengthen our defence and security systems, and of course the economy, so we can address the social problems, including health care and unemployment, which are the most painful issues for the Georgian population. We also aim to develop and strengthen the regions of Georgia.

# The Peoples of the Caucasus Have a Special Mission to the World

By VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

Here follows an interview with Bakur Kiguradze, President of Globalization International Research Institute, ex-political prisoner, co-author of the geopolitical conception "The Caucasus Geostrata - Caucasus geopolitics: global, regional and local development perspectives".

Can you tell us about the analytical institute you have

geopolitical conception "The Caucasus Geostrata" which has been published in the Georgian, Russian and English languages.

In the globalisation epoch humanity is being driven by a new wave of thought and practice labeled "liberty", and a new kind of person is being created with a new mentality. However, within the world's various regional geographical "cluster-zones", the Caucasus being an example of one of these, a genetic memory based on historical values preserves a certain

rivalries etc.) and global level (fierce competition between great powers seeking regional hegemony, the world economic recession, massive migration challenges, drug and arms smuggling, etc.) it can promote peace and stability in the region, which will in turn lead to the geopolitical integration of the regional actors.

**What is the relevance of this conception to recent geopolitical processes, such as the re-emergence of a Russia v. USA bipolar world order, the ad-**



created and the new conception it has elaborated, which is clearly one of the best conceptual documents to emerge from what might be called the Georgian Geopolitical School?

Firstly, thank you very much for your interest in the "The Caucasus Geostrata" and the activities of our institute, the Globalization International Research Institute or GIRI. GIRI was set up in 2002 in order to promote the national geopolitical consciousness and revive the Georgian geopolitical school traditions which go back to the twenties of the last century. The analytical nucleus of the institute is a team of the most competent and professional scientists and researchers who specialise in various different fields: archaeology, history, theology, ethnology, cultural studies, philosophy, political science and geography. The team members have conducted various interesting projects and programmes and multi-disciplinary research which has successfully produced this final 'product', the

ethnic code among the peoples settled in that region. The Georgian people have preserved their ability to demonstrate tolerance, hospitality and peaceful cohabitation. The Russian famous historian Lev Gumilev wrote about the "historic memory" of the Caucasus countries, and this unique phenomenon unites all those nations residing in both the South and North Caucasus. Its existence is explained by particular historic and contemporary political events which have occurred in the region and may also transcend the region in scope. This historic memory, the "Caucasus Geostrata", and the peculiarities it gives to the region's peoples give Georgians, and generally Caucasians, a special historic mission for the world. We should therefore be courageous, and proud of this peculiar mission of ours.

This conception does not relate merely to Georgia but the whole Caucasus, and despite the difficulties we face at the regional level (conflicts and the different spins put on them, geopolitical instability, ethnic

vance of Al-Qaida and its challenges to those of other religious confessions and the increased political, economic and social integration processes at transnational level which are associated with new types of asymmetric challenge, such as international terrorism, booming migration and religious nihilism?

Despite all internal and foreign political complexities, the regional integration pattern suggested by the "Caucasus Geostrata" conception remains valid. The geopolitical configurations which have emerged have made the South Caucasus crossroads a so-called "trimmer buffer" zone, and the space between the Black and Caspian Seas and the Caucasian and Trialeti mountain ranges has become a common geopolitical space in which Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are united in a common Caucasus civilization identity. Consequently, this implied regional union, imposed by how the other countries have configured themselves as well as 'historic memory', creates a basis on which the currently

frozen conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh can be settled constructively and cooperatively. Furthermore, as Europe has now emerged as a distinct geopolitical entity rather than a collection of individual countries sharing a common geographical designation, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia should seek integration with the "family" of European institutions (European Union, European Council, European Parliament, Schengen Zone, Euro-Atlantic Security Identity, etc.) together rather than separately, as a common geopolitical entity. This would ensure that they were not integrated into other less beneficial blocs (Azerbaijan with the Islamic world, Armenia with Euro-Asia, etc.).

This integration policy, which would widen rather than diminish the scope of regional identity, would make it possible for us to transcend conflict

and make our region a stable and peaceful space which would act as the fulcrum for the wider development of global political integration. The Caucasus has all the relevant criteria, from a cultural, ethnic and geographical identity perspective, to be the most acceptable site for the peaceful settlement of all political and military conflicts.

**Given the unsustainability of the current Georgian political system, and particularly so-called "cohabitation" policy which prevents the full implementation of foreign policy priorities, how can your conception help to fill the "conceptual gap" which has held the region's foreign affairs efforts back for so long?**

This is a very interesting question, and the uneasy political situation in the country does impact on how any conception can be implemented. Unfortunately none of the Georgian political actors, including those in

the ruling coalition as well as the opposition, are thinking about adopting a Caucasus National Strategic Plan in which national interests are identified within the framework of a broader regional policy. The Caucasus region as a whole is crucial in Georgian politics, and the failure to promote regional political unity has been the main obstacle to restoring territorial integrity. The Caucasus Geostrata is an 'antidote' to previous errors and will help the new democratic Georgian government properly assess the geopolitical processes in the region and create a "Peace Island" in the area, by using the concrete leverages and common regional principles outlined in the document.

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## NEWS

### UNM Loses Tbilisi City Council Chairmanship

Zaal Samadashvili, UNM member and chairman of the Tbilisi City Council (Sakrebulo), was voted out on July 26, less than a month after UNM lost majority in the capital city's Sakrebulo.

UNM councillors did not participate in the July 26 session of the Sakrebulo. Although UNM lost majority in Sakrebulo after 16 of its members quit the party since last year's parliamentary elections, no political group within Sakrebulo, neither those affiliated with the Georgian Dream, holds the majority in the city council right now.

Later on the same day when Samadashvili was voted out, a former UNM member, Irakli Shikhiashvili, was elected by most of the non-UNM members of Sakrebulo as a new chairman of the Tbilisi City Council.

One of the GD councillors Guliko Zumbadze, who is a member of the Republican Party, refused to support Shikhiashvili – position not shared by other 24 councillors, who now form the new majority in the Sakrebulo.

Also on July 26 new chairperson of Sakrebulo's 13 commissions were elected – posts previously held by UNM members, who were voted out on July 19.

### Economy Minister Named as Deputy PM

PM Ivanishvili named on July 26 Minister of Economic Development, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, as deputy prime minister.

The post was previously held by former Education Minister Giorgi Margvelashvili, who is GD's presidential candidate and who resigned from minister's post last week as he prepares for election campaign.

Before Margvelashvili, Defense Minister Irakli Alasania held the post of deputy PM till January, 2013.

Another Deputy PM in Ivanishvili's government is Kakha Kaladze, who holds energy minister's post.

# Russia's Expansion to the East: from a military to a geoeconomic perspective

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

**Russia's ongoing attempts to enlarge its influence involve not only military expansionism but geoeconomic expansionism, as it is implementing the "liberal imperialism" doctrine expounded in 2002 by Anatoly Chubais, the most liberal politician in Russia.**

Notably, on July 17, 2013 President Putin declared in Chita, whilst on a visit to the Far East region, that the "gasification" of the Far East region would be completed by 2015. This will not only improve domestic supplies but enable Russia to compete in a vast new energy market – the Asia-Pacific region – by exporting Russian gas to other customers in the area. The Kremlin's current geopolitical mission – to not only conquer the countries to

its West but also dominate the East – very precisely reflects its historical foreign policy ambitions, expressed even in its national heraldic symbol (the double headed eagle, looking both East and West).

The Russian government is unsatisfied with the European energy market, which declined in 2012 (gas consumption decreased by 1.5%). In the Asia-Pacific region gas consumption rose 5% last year. Russia's industrial gas reserves are now 32.9 trillion cubic metres and the Russian mega-corporation Gazprom can meet 62 billion cubic metres of Asia-Pacific demand at this stage. Certainly new market realization perspectives will improve the country's economic performance figures but as stated they also promote foreign policy goals as well as national economic interests.

Russia is pursuing several important goals at regional level, which include the following:

- Counterbalancing its so-called "European" foreign policy failures which are causing The Kremlin many political grievances. These include the failure to stop the promotion of the "anti-Russian" energy project NABUCCO, which will deliver gas from Azerbaijan's Shah-Deniz deposits to European markets without passing through Russia (31 billion cubic metres of gas will be transported through this 1300 km pipeline, which serves the national interests of countries such as Turkey, Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria) and the agreement, despite fierce Kremlin opposition, to decrease retail gas prices for European customers from \$500 to \$300 per 1,000 cubic metres. The emergence of a new market certainly reduces Russia's dependence



in Western "custody", as it sees it, despite its almost total monopolization of this market (Algerian gas accounts for only 10% of European gas deliveries and Norway about 5%). Even though Gazprom, through political leverage provided by the Russian government, has managed to torpedo the implementation of the NABUCCO project recently

and persuaded Austria and Bulgaria to abandon it, the geoeconomic rivalry between the Russia and EU remains strong, and unproductive from a Russian point of view;

- "Encompassing" Turkmenistan, with its gas extraction potential of 60 billion cubic metres per year, in order to monopolise gas supply in the Asia-Pacific region. This

would give The Kremlin effective monopolies in both the Oriental and European directions and decreasing the transit importance of the Caucasus and the Balkans. The same strategy will be extended to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, who are also thought to be important competitors whose success could work against Russia's geoeconomic interests;

- Reinforce its "muscles" in the East in order to counter the USA's ambiguous geopolitics in the Asia-Pacific region. This new confrontation of the centres of global power in a new market is very dangerous for the world.

As is traditional, what Russia is not achieving in the West it is seeking to achieve in the East. While Russia has traditionally regarded such expansion as self-protecting, this is not how it is seen in the countries directly affected.

## Is it the FBI's job to engage in international politics???

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

**The title of this article was suggested by a statement made by a mentally abnormal person about an event which took place in Georgia some time ago.**

On July 20 President Mikheil Saakashvili, who has already become a "lame duck" and whose comments at any kind of session, meeting or briefing cannot be taken seriously, held a meeting with what was described as a civic group (students, so-called "independent experts", etc.) of his fellow travellers at which he said that a "special FBI group" had monitored the bloody dispersal of the peaceful rally of May 26, 2011. He also claimed that this special group had asserted the operation positively. By doing so, he, the ruler of his country, stated that he had allowed another country to meddle in its internal affairs by sending its criminal investigation forces to monitor actions which were nothing to do with the country they came from or that agency's ostensible work – the sort of external interference the President of the country is constitutionally bound to prevent.

Suffice it to say that it is questionable whether the FBI, even in accordance with its own



federal laws, is authorized to deal with international politics and engage in international relations work. In the US, the authority to do this is vested in other government agencies like the CIA, DIA and Drug Enforcement Administration (although the latter, like the FBI, is part of the US Justice Department and tasked with combating drug smuggling and use within the United States). This gaffe, which like many previ-

ous ones brings us closer to truths he does not wish to admit, perfectly illustrates the personal agonies Saakashvili is currently undergoing whilst in the process of stepping down from his beloved high position. The falsehood of his comments has been revealed by one of his own political team, Shota Utiashvili, the former head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and right hand man of ex-Min-

ister Vano Merabishvili, who has confirmed that American private company The Densus Group, not the FBI, was visiting Tbilisi at the time and consulting with the MIA on particular issues. This seems a more reliable story, given the source and the fact that he is contradicting his own leader, however dubious Utiashvili's own record might be.

However the involvement of the Densus Group in Georgian

politics is also a matter of concern. The Densus Group is not a monitoring agency such as, for example, the EUMM, but a private military company. According to its mission statement, it is first and foremost a decision-support organization, a firm which equips its clients with the capability to succeed in addressing their most pressing concerns by understanding what is happening around them, anticipating events, instituting a robust decision making process and responding accordingly and effectively to developments.

It is interesting to note who the past and present governmental clients of the company are:

· The US Department of State – Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement

· The US Department of Justice – International Criminal Training and Assistance Program

· The US Marine Corps: - Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) - Marine Special Operations Command

· The Inter-service Nonlethal Individual Weapons Instructor Course

· The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

· The Pittsburgh Citizens' Police Review Board

· The Washington State Patrol

The involvement of this company, with this purpose and list of clients, in Georgia's affairs indicates what aspirations the ex-ruling party's leadership and their supporters amongst foreign political lob-

byists had in May 2011. If the Densus Group's involvement in those events is confirmed, it should be examined in the light of the Geneva Convention, particularly its clauses on mercenary activity. This is generally defined as the employment of extra national irregular forces to fight in international conflicts, but it is obvious that hired foreigners can and do participate in internal conflicts. In this context, the events of 26 May 2011 can be seen as para-military operation conducted by Special Forces, with the probable additional involvement of Armed Forces units, which had fatal consequences for people participating in a peaceful protest rally.

The alleged involvement of Densus Group representatives in monitoring the breakup of the demonstration, whether or not they directly participated in the action itself, is proscribed under the Geneva Convention as it is regarded as the involvement of hired foreign mercenaries in the internal political conflicts of another country, (in this case Georgia). Certainly, at the very least, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia should launch a preliminary inquiry into the President's statement that the FBI were involved, whether it is correct or not, and equally certainly the possible involvement of The Densus Group and the role it may have played are further grounds for a new investigation of the 26 May 2011 events.

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# Cyber Hooliganism-Does Georgian Law Protect Us?

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

**“With a few strokes of the keyboard you can ruin someone’s reputation, and sometimes their life. It sounds like an exaggeration, but it’s a fact!” says A.M., one of the victims of cyber-bullying. It is naive to believe that only semi-literate people and teenagers can become the victims of cyber bullies, because we live in the age of information, which in the hands of the wicked can be a formidable weapon. One fine day anyone could find themselves among the victims of cyber criminals.**

Everyone knows of the existence of professional hackers, who gain unauthorised entry to the computers of major infrastructure facilities, public organisations, banks and so on. But while the ‘work’ of hackers usually raises a smile in most people, we cannot say the same about the ‘smaller’ internet hooligans, who steal people’s personal data and use it to insult and abuse them.

According to a survey of two thousand people in the UK, one third of teens between the ages of 11 and 18 had been victims of cyber hooligans. According to another study, conducted by psychologists at the University of California at Los Angeles, three out of four teenagers had been subject to intimidation on the web during the last year but only one out of ten had told their parents or other adults about these online threats. 1,454 teenagers, aged from 12 to 17, participated in this anonymous online survey and 41% of these reported having received 1-3 internet threats per year, 13% 4-6 per year and 19% 7 or more. Most (51%) respondents had been threatened by their classmates, and 43% by online friends they had not met in real life.

Cyber bullying is not a trifle, nor is it confined to the young. Educated professionals are increasingly finding themselves victims of it. Almost every day new ways of inflicting harm on honest but careless citizens are invented.

**What is the difference between cyber bullying and traditional bullying and harassment?**

According to Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, authors of the book “Cyber bullying in the digital age” (2008), the phenomenon has some similarities with the traditional harassment and intimidation, but is also unique in many ways and creates its own special difficulties for the victim.

Internet bullies can spread nasty rumours about their victims, creating a negative attitude towards them in others.

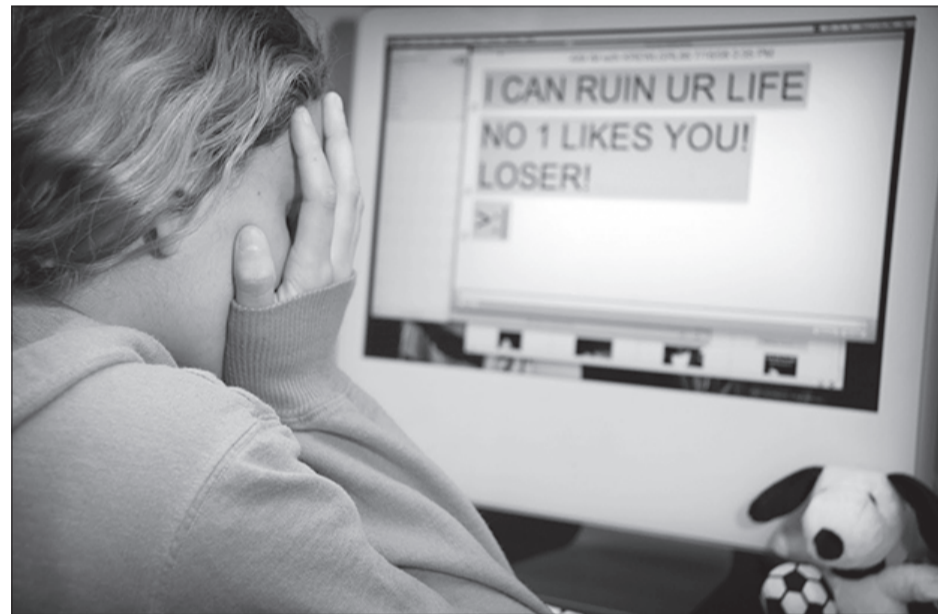
They can post information about the victim on sites devoted to hatred or pornography, which can make the person vulnerable to physical attack.

The main forms of cyber bullying are:

**Denigration** - the intentional presentation of the victim in a way designed to seriously damage their reputation in the eyes of the public, through the publication of material about them on web pages, forums and newsgroups and via e-mails and photo/video sharing.

**Cyber-stalking** - the systematic harassment of anyone, often sexual in nature, accompanied by threats.

**Impersonation** - the intentional impersonation of another person by gaining access to their accounts and passing themselves off as the owner of



the account, generally by deciphering and then using their password.

If contact information, or any other information, about a person is placed on the internet without their permission they should immediately contact the police. **But will the police take any action?**

Unfortunately, in practice, the competent authorities will only do anything about such a behaviour in the three cases: **a) If the case is political and involves senior public figures, b) If those dealing with it have a direct material interest in the matter and c) If the information disclosed constitutes a state secret.**

**International experience of combating cyber hooliganism**

South Korea drafted a law aimed at prosecuting internet hackers in 2007. In Europe, cyber hooliganism is not a crime in itself but various aspects of the process, such as the act of publishing someone’s personal information, are. In Germany for example hacking is civil offence but carries a penalty of up to 5 years in prison for adults. Teens usually face less severe penalties, such as probation or community service.



In the US state of Missouri in 2008 a law against cyber bullying was introduced after a teenager committed suicide, amidst much publicity, following repeated taunts by cyber bullies. In the state of New Jersey stricter laws were also adopted in schools and universities following another suicide. In spring 2011 an anti-cyber bullying summit was held at the White House. At this, delegates

The same thing had happened to three other girls who approached the police recently, one of whom is married with children. At first the police refused to help Aisha and the other girls, saying that there was nothing they could do. Only when they learned that Aisha had been driven to try and commit suicide by the bullying did they take a statement from her. Even then, the investigator from

from Facebook explained that in future they planned to create a special department to mediate any disputes about bullying.

**Cyber blackmail in Georgia**

In Georgia cyber crimes are not as big an issue as in other European countries but they are becoming increasingly common.

Victim Aisha M., 18, is a frequent user of Russian social network “odnoklassniki.ru”. One day a guy she did not know began to bother her by sending her abusive messages and she therefore blocked him. The day after she received a ‘friend request’ from herself - meaning that the hooligan had created a false account using her name and photos. She discovered that he had added erotic pictures to it and obscene comments such as “Hey people, if you can pay me 50 lari you will receive...” etc.

The hooligan then told the frightened girl that he would delete this fake account only if she gave him her phone number, but then he continued to blackmail Aisha by phone, with holding his own number when calling.

the Vake-Saburtalo District of the MIA told her that the police in Georgia will never be able to trace an internet or social network criminal because the “necessary technologies” do not exist in Georgia. He said that the only thing they could do was use the “old” method of phone tapping.

In Aisha’s case they are now trying to do this by tracing calls already made to her phone. But this has thrown up more difficulties. In principle, every phone user can request from their provider (Geocell, Magticom or Beeline) an itemised list of incoming calls and who made them. But Aisha cannot do this because her number is not registered in her name. She bought the number in the street in the Temka neighbourhood, and this is apparently illegal, as it is already registered to another person, as it would not be if bought directly from a Geocell, Magticom and Beeline office, where the phone number is automatically registered in your name on purchase.

**What does the law say about cyber hooligans?**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has told GT:

“According to the Georgian legislation, cyber crime is punishable under articles 284, 285 and 286 of the XXXV Chapter of the Criminal Code. When such crimes are committed, appropriate operational investigative measures are taken to identify the perpetrators and criminal proceedings launched.”

But the Code does not actually say anything about cyber blackmail and hooliganism in themselves. The relevant articles read:

**Article 284. Illegal Access to Computer Information**

**1. Illegally accessing computer information protected by law, i.e. information held in data-carriers, computers, computer systems or networks, and the blocking, loss, modifying or copying of such information, including actions designed to ensure the malfunctioning of the computer, computer system or network, shall be punishable by a fine, corrective service of up to two years in length or a term of imprisonment similar in length.**

**2. The same action committed: a) by a group conspiracy; b) by misuse of official position; c) by someone who had justified access to the computer, computer system or network concerned, shall be punishable by a fine, corrective service of up to two years in length, detention of up to four months or imprisonment for a term not in excess of five years.**

**Article 286. Violation of Rules on Maintenance of Computer, Computer System or Network**

**Violation of the rules on maintenance of a computer, computer system or network by a person who has access to that computer, computer system or network, through whose negligence has been caused a loss, blocking, modification or copying of computer information protected by law, or substantial damage, shall be punishable by a fine, community service of between one hundred and eighty to two hundred hours in length, restriction of freedom for up to two years in length and deprivation of the right to occupy a position or pursue a particular activity for a term not in excess of three years.**

**Identifying a cyber hooligan**

Can we identify these hackers? Yes, but a number of steps need to be taken. First of all we need their **IP address**. Every computer has its own external **Internet Protocol address (IP address)**, a numerical label which is assigned to each device (e.g., computer, printer) participating in a computer network, as each one uses the Internet Protocol for communication. At first glance, the identification of a particular user by IP address is very difficult. This is firstly because there are dynamic IP addresses which can change each time you connect to the internet and static IP addresses which are reserved for individual computers and don’t change over time. Secondly, in some networks several computers are connected to one external IP address, which means that the “sins” of one user can

result in the service providers ban all the other computers at once. Furthermore, only the administrator of the site where the compromising information has been posted can give you the IP address of the computer which posted it, and they are only obliged to do so if a court instructs them to, or on the official request of the competent authorities at the opening of a criminal case.

GT has asked the major internet service providers in Georgia, Silknet and Caucasus Online, how cyber abuse can be addressed. A representative of Silknet told us that if requested by law enforcement officers internet providers can submit information about IP addresses of cyber hooligans, but this is not enough in itself to identify a concrete person, merely the computer which was used. However internet providers have other mechanisms with which to identify cyber-hooligans and the Interior Ministry also has other mechanisms of its own.

Rusudan Kapanadze from Caucasus Online told us almost the same. “If the victim goes to the Police and a criminal investigation is launched, on the request of a court or prosecutor the internet provider is obliged to reveal the IP address of the computer used and also help the investigation process by applying other possible mechanisms necessary for the identification of the criminal,” she said. In fact, if you look closely, you will see that even in dynamic IPs, which change every time someone logs on, you can identify the country of residence and provider of any hacker. Some providers, such as Firefox for example, hide the actual IPs of users and force the server to believe that their true IP is just a proxy which hides their real IP, so it is increasingly difficult to find people’s IP addresses. But it can be done.

At the moment police are unsuccessfully investigating Aisha’s case of cyber blackmail. They are trying to rid themselves of the need for a proper investigation by insisting that she obtains data about the victim from her telephone operator, which is impossible in this case, as previously stated. When GT asked the telephone companies about the illegal sale of numbers they at first refused to accept that this was happening, but then said that they cannot control the illegal sale of numbers because one person can buy several in their own name and then sell them illegally. However, others we have spoken to have pointed out that it is in the interests of the telephone operators to sell as many numbers as possible in order to get more clients, and they know very well that such numbers can be bought in the streets. However the police are taking no action against the vendors of these numbers, or the telephone providers, thus encouraging criminality at every turn, as cyber bullies can use this illegality to get away with their own crimes. So it appears Georgia has much work to do if it intends to help victims of crime such as Aisha.



# Honda Centre Opens in Tbilisi

Sena Motors has established a new Honda Centre in Tbilisi. The latest 2013 model Honda cars were unveiled at its opening, at which media representatives also took part in a test drive of a new Honda CRV.

Founder of Sena Motors Gia Alikhanashvili stated that Sena Motors has worked with various brands over the years, but has now decided to concentrate on Honda. Sena Motors has been the official representative of Honda in Georgia since February 19, 2012 and satisfies the requirements of Honda standard S3. S1 means the dealer provided effective showroom, S2 means it provides technical services, S3 means it operates a full service



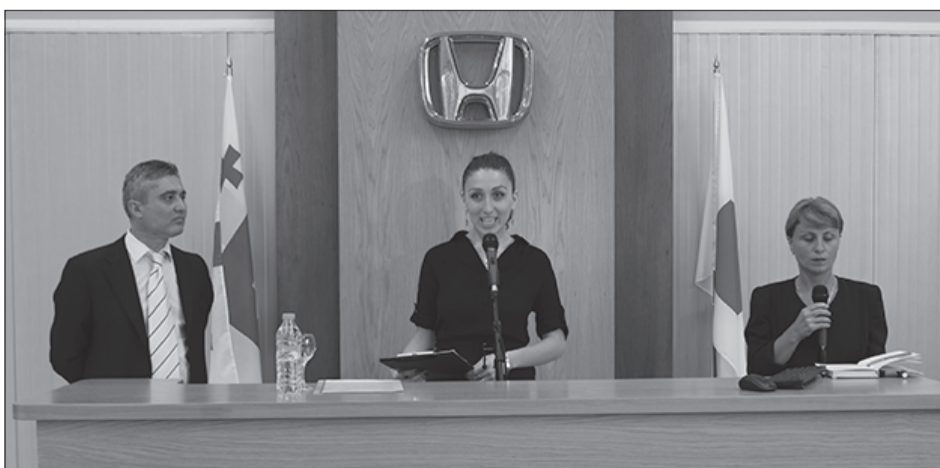
centre offering original automobile and parts.

Alikhanashvili also stated that a special service centre for second hand automobiles currently being used in Georgia has been opened, but since February the company has sold 24 new Hondas. "We are in a very good



price and quality segment", he said.

Honda's new official webpage was also presented at the Honda Centre opening. Representatives of The Embassy of Japan in Georgia and of Honda itself were also on hand to submit detailed information about the company and its products.



# Georgian Actor to Appear in Film by Oscar Winning Director

By MAKHA DEKANOSIDZE, GT

Georgia has come to the attention of the international film industry in recent times. World famous Hollywood producers and directors now visit Georgia quite frequently, and Michel Hazanavicius, who has an Oscar and 26 other major awards to his name, has joined them on a mission to find "new blood" in Georgia.

This is not the first time the French director has demonstrated an interest in Georgia. Film buffs will remember that his Oscar-winning film *The Artist* has a Georgian theme. It opens with the hero, George Valentine, escaping from prison during a

*How did you manage to attract the attention of this famous director?*

I accidentally came across an email which said that Michel Hazanavicius, the Oscar winner, would be shooting a film about the Chechnya War and was looking for actors in Georgia, both girls and boys, who knew English. To tell you the truth, I looked at this information with a certain scepticism. You can show your capabilities at a casting, but I have become a nihilist, as unfortunately nepotism and friendship still play a crucial role in the Georgian film world. Artists are oppressed by this, and therefore I have turned against castings. I only attended this one because



film called "The Russian Case" above the inscription on screen: "Long Live Free Georgia", and the hero is guided by this slogan in his fight against communism throughout the film.

The Georgian Times has been exclusively informed that Hazanavicius' new film is about not only Georgia but Chechnya. This is why Nika Kipshidze, the Georgian actor, will be appearing in it. 26 year-old Kipshidze has acted in the Rustaveli, Tumanishvili and Atoneli theatres and became known to a wider audience through "the Dasi" on Rustavi 2. He has appeared in "Stalin Live", "The Girl from Suburb" and "In the Middle of the City" and commercials for Likani and the Georgian Army. Here he talks to GT about his career and Michel Hazanavicius' project.

my friends insisted, hoping for better because a non-Georgian director was involved.

The first casting was not attended by Hazanavicius himself; he sent a professional casting team. I'd be lying if I told you that I was not excited, but as soon as the casting team asked me to do a brief improvisation about everyday life my anxiety went. I coped with the task and was told a few days later that I would be invited to a second casting. At this one they asked me to perform a specific scene from the film and said that I would be cast if I passed this audition.

*Which role was proposed?*

I can't tell you this! In the casting scene I played a Red Cross worker taking wounded people away from the war zone. The director did not at-



tend this time either. Only a few of the hundred people from the first casting were left, which encouraged me, but still I was not sure. Then they congratulated me on moving forward to the third casting, with Hazanavicius himself. I was happier than I had ever been. It would be a secondary role, but I might be able to work with a world famous director. So I went to the final casting very enthusiastic and optimistic.

I found that Hazanavicius is more modest and human than any director I have ever met. The difference between him and

Georgian directors is that he is very supportive, he wants you to show your talent and does not criticise. He was easy to talk to, you never felt that he was a big Oscar winning director, and this helped me and make it easier for me to interpret the role. Three actors were left; I was lucky enough to be the director's favourite, and now I have been confirmed in the role. You can't imagine the happiness I felt then and still feel now.

I do not want to speak badly about Georgian directors, but for two years I have been far

from both theatre and cinema. I used to go to all the castings and try and be active, but when I understood that this served no purpose I did not try any more, and was forced to leave my favourite job.

Therefore, what is happening now is a gift from God. God has seen how much I love this art. I cannot do anything else; I cannot deal with other professions. Therefore, I am grateful to Hazanavicius, as this part will help enrich my CV and I will gain great experience.

*What is the film's main message? If it is about the*

*Chechen War, do you know the director's position on this?*

I have not been introduced to the scenario; they were only visiting Georgia to find actors for secondary roles. As far as I know, Chechens were selected for the leading roles. The Georgian consultant to the casting team connects with me periodically, providing me with information. Shooting starts at the end of August, but special seminars will be held in Sighnaghi beforehand, and it seems that all the relevant details of the film will be given to me there.

## NEWS

### Secretary of Georgian Dream Political Council to be Irine Imerlishvili

Secretary of Georgian Dream Political Council to be Irine Imerlishvili Irine Imerlishvili will head the political council of Georgian Dream instead of Eliso Chapidze. InterPressNews Ozurgeti correspondent informs that closed session of Bidzina Ivanishvili and Georgian Dream leaders was held in Shekviteli today.

Ozurgeti majoritarian MP of Georgian Dream Zviad Kvachantiradze stated that the main topic of discussion was Eliso Chapidze's statement, who resigned as the secretary of Georgian Dream political council due to her family commitments.

### Davit Bakradze to be Presidential Candidate of National Movement

Davit Bakradze to be Presidential Candidate of National Movement Davit Bakradze will be presidential candidate of National Movement. The final result of the Primary was declared on the primary held at Expo Georgia. There were

four presidential candidates: Davit Bakradze, Giorgi Baramidze, Zurab Japaridze and Shota Malashkhia.

Online survey results were also declared. The leader in the online survey was Davit Bakradze.

### Human Right and Civil Integration committee of Youth Parliament hold a discussion

Human right and civil integration committee of Youth Parliament hold a public discussion of current situation and potential changes of the Compulsory Military Service in the European House today.

The meeting was attended the deputy head of legal department of the Defence Ministry, Kakha Shanshiashvili, Vice-colonels, SandroEliashvili and JabaPeranidze, the representatives of G1 defence politics and planning department.

During the meeting, current condition and expected changes were discussed. The young MPs presented positive and negative sides of the current structure and the forms of the military service.

The representatives of Defence Ministry informed society about potential decrease and increase of the period.

They spoke about burning issues for the society, how the military service prevented youth in professional development.

The young MPs made a survey regarding to the discussion topic and 400 citizens interviewed.

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# fanfan – the “IT” place in Batumi

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

**Batumi's stages and halls may host the world's jazzmen but the real home of the stars is a café/restaurant called fanfan. Famous people from a variety of different spheres visit this place – Ketato (musician), Sopo Nijaradze (musician), Tako Chkheidze (model), Uta Bekaia (artist), Levan Mindiashvili (artist), Tornike Bziava (director/actor), Tamri Bziava (actress), Kakadu (musician/artist/DJ), Natia Parjanadze (actress), Kote Kubaneishvili (poet), Kristi Kipshidze (model), Tusia Beridze (musician), Basa Potskhishvili (director) and many more. They all come here for a reason. fanfan is what I would call a restaurant with love. And love did happen here. It grew. It grew further. It even got people married. Most importantly, it has founded a super successful family business.**

fanfan café/restaurant is run by happily married couple Marika Chanturia and David Danelia, aka Mavne. The adventure began in 1998 when Nino Chubinishvili held a fashion show in Batumi. The home of famous writer Chabua Amirejibi, at #27 Ninoshvili Street alongside Batumi Boulevard, served as the venue. This is a historic building, over a hundred years old. I wasn't at the fashion show, but I have learned that it is what brought Mavne and Marika together.

Theirs is a lovely story of two people meeting, becoming friends first, then falling in love and finally getting married on December 31, 2010. But what really hooked me was the outcome. Years later, when they wanted to set up fanfan, Mavne and Marika rented the exact house they had met in. It is laid back, cosy, tasteful, chic yet homely, fancy but not uptight – a quite unusual place, decorated with fresh valley flowers, funky table covers, a bar made of mirrors and vintage tables and chairs, totally asymmetrical. It offers high quality service, the most amazing food and a wonderful subtle atmosphere. You will love everything about this place – you feel the vibe of the happy couple in every aspects of it, the touch of love sparking all over the place, and of course you will be enraptured by the stunningly gorgeous Marika herself. It is she who I interviewed for GT.

**Why establish a restaurant as a family business?**

Mavne was originally a sailor, since he gave up seafaring he got into the entertainment business. He has been around for quite a while now and is well known for his outgoing personality. He has a knack of making

people feel comfortable around him. He knows how to throw an “it” party. After living in Tbilisi for 2 years we decided it would be fun to go back into the entertainment business. Mavne wanted to run a chill place, where you can sit back, eat, play a game and communicate, rather than a night club or bar.

**Was location the most important thing?**

We started looking for a location in May 2012. We wandered through Batumi but nothing really caught us. When we passed this particular house Mavne once again voiced his admiration for it, as it was a very special place for us, but we never imagined that we could rent it. Even though a lot of our friends advised us to simply call



and ask we didn't dare. Finally it was Mavne who made a move. We met the owners, and surprisingly they didn't mind renting it out at all. They had one condition – that we had to keep the original spirit, vibe and authenticity of the place as it was, but that is what we intended to do anyway.

**How about the interior?**

Mavne called up Guga Kotetishvili (artist) and asked him to give the interior a touch. He did, and we thereby gained a partner.

**You were still looking for premises in May but you opened the business in June. How did you manage that?**

It's Mavne's thing. During never-ending remodeling works he will just say, “That's it, we are opening today at 8pm!” And it works. He has done this a few times now and did it again last year on June 9<sup>th</sup>. We were painting the window frames and then all of a sudden opened, just like that!

**How did it get so popular? Did you advertise it?**

No, there was no PR company for fanfan. Mavne made it happen. It's all about his experience, his friends gained through and outside the business. I used

to take pictures of friends visiting fanfan, just for fun, for me, yet they turned into chronicles. The iPhone, Instagram and Facebook are our main advertisers. Me taking pictures for fun and posting them on FB and Instagram promoted the restaurant big time. Later on I found out that not only our friends follow the chronicles of our restaurant but a lot of people we have never even met.

**I saw a DJ here the other night. Do you have events?**

Yes, but not often. Since its Mavne's place people expect loud music and dancing here. We want to break this stereotype. We do dance once in a while, but this place is not for dancing. It's for ‘dining and wining’. A DJ event doesn't bring in much



they had bumped into people they knew and were standing by the tables chatting. Even the rain outside, which was intense, wasn't creating a negative vibe, the customers were soaking wet but still smiling. Almost every day some people can't get in because it is packed, yet they keep coming, taking a chance that they might be able to get into fanfan. Once they do, they soon say – fanfan rocks!

But you don't have to take my word for it. **Ketato** (musician) told me, “This is the only place I go to in Batumi. I love the interior and the music, and the business is run by Mavne and Marika, my friends - this place is my home. My inner world clicks perfectly with the interior, energy, vibe, food and staff. I click with the overall atmosphere of fanfan. Last year I was working on the ‘Melodies of Vera Quarter’ project and had to be in Batumi for two months. I came here every day for a trout plate and a glass of white wine. This year I have switched to mussels with blue cheese and a

glass of white wine. I come here every day. I feel confident in saying that you can't get better mussels in blue cheese sauce than in fanfan. This place has a habit of luring you, once you are in you are hooked, you keep coming. I see a lot of tourists coming in here. The like the decor, the chairs, the light, and love the food and the environment.”

**Keti Gabadze** (founder of Kala Group) said, “I love going to fanfan. Mavne and Marika are my dear friends. I feel at home there – it's nice and cosy. Guga Kotetishvili knows how to make a public place comfortable, well balanced and homely. I love their food – great appetizers and delicious mussels and desserts, especially the lemon tart. Rumour has it that Mavne makes the best mussels ever. I haven't tried them yet, but I hope I'll get lucky next time I'm there.”

**Tornike Bziava** (director/actor) added, “I go to fanfan because the owners are my friends. I love the tasteful interior. As soon as you walk in you

feel you are a guest in a home you love to go to. You can sit back in the beautiful ‘saloon’ and run into any number of people you know. You gravitate towards people with a similar history and their sophisticated friends, all hanging out in the same place. You can't possibly buy this; it can only come from the owners of the café. My favourite dishes are the smoked salmon salad and other seafood salads. I love their cucumber soup too. Rumour has it that fanfan hosts many exquisite women. This indicates that it's both cosy and pleasantly unusual. I go to fanfan for every occasion – to eat, to relax, to work and for fun.”

You can see why I couldn't resist writing about this place. The food is delicious, the drinks are fantastic, the desserts are amazing and the atmosphere... well I have written a lot about it above. I dare you, put ‘visit fanfan’ at the top of your ‘to do’ list - go and see, taste, feel for yourself what everyone is talking about. You won't regret it!

## NEWS

### Georgia is ready for Transit Provision for Coalition Forces

Georgia's transit opportunity was a key talking point of the meeting at Georgian Defence Ministry today. Georgian Defence Minister Irakli Alasania and Commander U.S. Transportation Command, General William M. Fraser discussed ISAF reverse transit of NATO forces and cargos and alternative transit way through Georgia. At the meeting with American General, Defence Minister emphasized that Georgian side is ready to provide transit route for coalition forces.

Head of J4/J8 Logistics Operation Planning Division of JS, Major Giorgi Akhalmosulishvili delivered a presentation to the representatives of the USTRANSCOM on Georgia's transit opportunities. As Irakli Alasania highlighted, American partners are studying Georgia's infrastructural opportunities with great attention. “Georgia might be one of the alternative ways for unimpeded transit of forces and cargoes from Afghanistan before and post 2014. Our country offers NATO coalition forces suitable infrastructure and good potential option for transit. Today we had a very thorough discussion and we introduced partners our vision. As General outlined our future relations is so strong that it will be one more opportunity to continue Georgian-U.S. strategic partnership” - stated Irakli Alasania

General Fraser focused on the importance of the meeting as well: “It has been a very productive meeting. We very much have appreciated the partnership and relationship we've had for so many years. As we talked today we see opportunities and future relationship to build upon the things we have done together in transiting and supporting operations but also as we were returning equipment back to the United States that we can take it to the next level. Create opportunities from a commercial perspective will aid security and stability in the region”.

At the end of the meeting American General offered condolences for the loss of soldiers as they made sacrifices and defending freedoms of others to make a difference. Despite Georgia continues to stand with the US forces contributing in the operations shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan. Within the framework of the visit to Georgia, USTRANSCOM Commander will meet Georgian Prime-Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, as well Ministers of Regional Development and Infrastructure and Economic Development.



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