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## FOCUS

### ON GEORGIA'S NEUTRALITY

Despite their aims to maintain amicable relations with both sides, can Tbilisi keep up relations equally with Russia and the West?

PAGE 6

## CEPA's Swedish Researcher Anders Ostlund in Kyiv: Russia Is Done For, But How Many Have to Die Before They See It?

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

At first, I didn't believe the Russians would launch this new offensive. For me, it was just truly insane. I was very sure the Ukrainians would fight like crazy, and that they would do well considering their eight years' experience, number of veterans, etc. I just thought the Russians understood this too, and so would not attack, but of course, obviously, they didn't see it at all," CEPA's Swedish researcher Anders Ostlund, who has been in Kyiv with his family since the start of the war, tells RFE / RL, sharing his take on what's to come next in the war and predicting a dim future for Russia.

### WHAT TO EXPECT NOW? LET'S START WITH THE SIEGE OF MARIUPOL.

It's been six weeks now since analysts started saying that "Mariupol will fall within the next few days."

Continued on page 5



Mariupol. By Sergei Bobylev / TASS

## In this week's issue...

World Bank: Ukraine War To Cause Biggest Price Shock in 50 Years

NEWS PAGE 2

EU Cutting Back on Russian Gas and Oil amid Fears the War Will Spread

NEWS PAGE 3

The Age of Counter-Enlightenment

POLITICS PAGE 4

ISET Business Confidence Index | The Downward Trend Continues

ISET PAGE 7

Argokhi Permaculture and Rural Development Center Opened on Earth Day

SOCIETY PAGE 9

Caritas Czech Republic Supports Sustainable Waste Management Practices in Georgia

SOCIETY PAGE 10

Georgia Celebrates Easter

CULTURE PAGE 11

GALT & TAGGART											
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES											
Prepared for Georgia Today Business by											
As of 25-Apr-2022											
Markets					Markets						
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
<b>BONDS</b>				<b>STOCKS</b>				<b>CURRENCIES</b>			
GRAIL 07/28	85.92 (YTM 6.85%)	-0.3%	-2.5%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 12.54	+2.0%	+6.3%	GEL / USD	3.0386	-0.5%	-5.3%
GEBGG 07/23	100.20 (YTM 5.83%)	-1.3%	+0.3%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 6.10	-1.1%	+1.5%	GEL / EUR	3.2548	-1.1%	-7.6%
GEOPAP 03/24	96.57 (YTM 8.14%)	+0.1%	+0.8%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 12.84	+5.2%	+23.0%	GEL / GBP	3.8624	-2.8%	-8.6%
SILNET 01/27	97.67 (YTM 8.98%)	-0.1%	-0.4%					GEL / CHF	3.1679	-2.1%	-8.2%
TBC 06/24	103.29 (YTM 4.13%)	-0.5%	+3.2%					GEL / RUB	0.0405	+7.4%	+29.0%
GGU 07/25	101.10 (YTM 7.36%)	+0.1%	-0.1%					GEL / TRY	0.2056	-1.4%	-8.8%
								GEL / AZN	1.7918	-0.5%	-5.9%
								GEL / AMD	0.0065	+0.9%	+0.3%
								GEL / UAH	0.1005	-3.1%	-8.0%
								EUR / USD	0.9335	+0.6%	+2.5%
								GBP / USD	0.7849	+2.1%	+3.5%
								CHF / USD	0.9592	+1.5%	+3.1%
								RUB / USD	na	na	na
								TRY / USD	14.7777	+0.9%	-0.4%
								AZN / USD	1.6960	+0.0%	+0.0%
								AMD / USD	464.5800	-1.3%	-5.4%



# World Bank: Ukraine War To Cause Biggest Price Shock in 50 Years

**T**he war in Ukraine is set to cause the “largest commodity shock” since the 1970s, the World Bank has warned.

The war in Ukraine has dealt a major shock to commodity markets, altering global patterns of trade, production, and consumption in ways that will keep prices at historically high levels through the end of 2024, according to the World Bank’s latest Commodity Markets Outlook report.

The increase in energy prices over the past two years has been the largest since the 1973 oil crisis. Price increases for food commodities—of which Russia and Ukraine are large producers—and fertilizers, which rely on natural gas as a production input, have been the largest since 2008.

“Overall, this amounts to the largest commodity shock we’ve experienced since the 1970s. As was the case then, the shock is being aggravated by a surge in restrictions in trade of food, fuel and fertilizers,” said Indermit Gill, the World Bank’s Vice President for Equitable Growth, Finance, and Institutions. “These developments have started to raise the specter of stagflation. Policymakers should take every opportunity to increase economic growth at home and avoid actions that will bring harm to the global economy.”

Energy prices are expected to rise more than 50 percent in 2022 before easing in 2023 and 2024. Non-energy prices, including agriculture and metals, are projected to increase almost 20 percent in 2022 and will also moderate in the following years. Nevertheless, commodity prices are expected to remain well above the most recent five-year average. In the event of a prolonged war, or additional sanctions on Russia, prices could be even higher and more volatile than currently projected.

Because of war-related trade and production disruptions, the price of



Source: The World Bank

Brent crude oil is expected to average \$100 a barrel in 2022, its highest level since 2013 and an increase of more than 40 percent compared to 2021. Prices are expected to moderate to \$92 in 2023—well above the five-year average of \$60 a barrel. Natural-gas prices (European) are expected to be twice as high in 2022 as they were in 2021, while coal prices are expected to be 80 percent higher, with both prices at all-time highs.

“Commodity markets are experiencing one of the largest supply shocks in decades because of the war in Ukraine,” said Ayhan Kose, Director of the World Bank’s Prospects Group, which produces the Outlook report. “The resulting increase in food and energy prices is taking a significant human and economic toll—and it will likely stall progress in reduc-

ing poverty. Higher commodity prices exacerbate already elevated inflationary pressures around the world.”

Wheat prices are forecast to increase more than 40 percent, reaching an all-time high in nominal terms this year. That will put pressure on developing economies that rely on wheat imports, especially from Russia and Ukraine. Metal prices are projected to increase by 16 percent in 2022 before easing in 2023 but will remain at elevated levels.

“Commodity markets are under tremendous pressure, with some commodity prices reaching all-time highs in nominal terms,” said John Baffes, Senior Economist in the World Bank’s Prospects Group. “This will have lasting knock-on effects. The sharp rise in input prices, such as energy and fertilizers, could lead

to a reduction in food production particularly in developing economies. Lower input use will weigh on food production and quality, affecting food availability, rural incomes, and the livelihoods of the poor.”

The Impact of the War in Ukraine on Commodity Markets

The report’s Special Focus section offers an in-depth exploration of the war’s impact on commodity markets. It also examines how commodity markets responded to similar shocks in the past. The analysis finds that the war’s impact could be longer-lasting than previous shocks for at least two reasons.

First, there is less room now to substitute the most affected energy commodities for other fossil fuels—because price increases have been broad-based across all fuels. Second, the increase in prices

of some commodities is also driving up prices of other commodities—high natural-gas prices have raised fertilizer prices, putting upward pressure on agricultural prices. In addition, policy responses so far have focused more on tax cuts and subsidies—which often exacerbate supply shortfalls and price pressures—than on long-term measures to reduce demand and encourage alternative sources of supply.

The war is also leading to more costly patterns of trade that could result in longer-lasting inflation. It is expected to cause a major diversion of trade in energy. For example, some countries are now seeking coal supplies from more remote locations. At the same time, some major coal importers could step up imports from Russia while reducing demand from other large exporters. This diversion will likely be more costly, the report notes, because it involves greater transportation distances—and coal is bulky and expensive to transport. Similar diversions are occurring with natural gas and oil.

In the near-term, higher prices threaten to disrupt or delay the transition to cleaner forms of energy. Several countries have announced plans to increase production of fossil fuels. High metal prices are also driving up the cost of renewable energy, which depends on metals such as aluminum and battery-grade nickel.

The report urges policymakers to act promptly to minimize harm to their citizens—and to the global economy. It calls for targeted safety-net programs such as cash transfers, school feeding programs, and public work programs—rather than food and fuel subsidies. A key priority should be to invest in energy efficiency, including weatherization of buildings. It also calls on countries to accelerate the development of zero-carbon sources of energy such as renewables.

## MFA of Georgia Meets with President of Azerbaijan, Highlights Close Friendship Between Two Countries



**T**he Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Iliia Darchiashvili, met with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev. At the meeting, the sides reaffirmed the traditionally close friendship and strategic partnership between the two countries.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia highlighted President Aliyev’s personal contribution to deepening close partnership and friendship between the two countries.

The sides noted the importance of Georgia-Azerbaijan cooperation in various fields to ensure stability and development in the region, and in this regard, gave a positive assessment to the joint economic projects being carried out successfully.

Reviewing the security environment in the region and across the globe, the sides stressed the importance of peace and stability in the light of existing challenges. The Georgian Foreign Minister thanked Azerbaijan for supporting Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

During the meeting with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the sides welcomed the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Darchiashvili conveyed to President Aliyev the Georgian Prime Minister’s best regards and invitation to Georgia.

Darchiashvili started his official visit to Azerbaijan by laying a wreath at the Alley of Martyrs memorial and paying tribute to the memory of the national leader Heydar Aliyev.

## PM Visits Pharmacy Networks in Tbilisi

**G**eorgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili familiarized himself with sales and practical electronic and generic prescriptions for affordable pharmaceuticals imported from Turkey. Together with the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs Zurab Azarashvili, the Head of Government visited one of the pharmacy networks in Tbilisi.

The Prime Minister inquired into the level of public demand on medications imported from Turkey, also into the practical adoption of electronic and generic prescriptions system.

Garibashvili spoke with pharmacists and citizens, pointing out that the Government’s priority is to maximize access to medications for citizens while ensuring quality, the reason why, he said, all

pharmaceuticals imported so far and to be imported from Turkey meet GMP standards.

Turkey’s pharmaceutical market opened on January 17. Consequently, almost 250 types of medications, including for chronic diseases, are now available 60-70-80% cheaper than previously. Affordable medications from Turkey are available for sale in various large pharmacy networks across Georgia, and the list of pharmaceuticals and providers is constantly growing.

Pharmaceutical companies are actively cooperating with the Turkish side to enhance the diversity and affordability of the medications on the list. The Health Ministry has also proactively registered hundreds of medications, a step further simplifying the process of exporting medications into the country.

In addition, the Health Ministry is

implementing a pharmaceutical reform to enhance access to quality medications. As a result of this reform, physical (paper) prescriptions will no longer be issued. Instead, they will be given electronically. In addition, to maximize access to medications for the population, a system of generic prescriptions was launched on April 11, meaning that physicians indicate the generic, that is, the international name of the prescribed medication. At pharmacies, pharmacists offer to citizens the three most affordable options from the “positive list” of generic medications developed by the Health Ministry. As a result of these changes, it is up to citizens to choose medications from particular manufacturers, at prices acceptable to them. The pharmaceutical reform seeks to reduce amounts paid by citizens from their own pockets and to enhance access to quality medications.





# Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: 9 Weeks In



Images: EPA

BY ANA DUMBADZE

In the 9th week of the devastating war in Ukraine, the Kremlin halted natural gas shipments to Poland and Bulgaria in its toughest response yet to European sanctions, and explosions inside Russia near the Ukraine border have raised fears that the war might spread. Inside the country, Mariupol's last standpoint is being bombarded as leaders and citizens demand the opening of a humanitarian corridor for trapped citizens.

The highlights of another week of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are as follows:

## AIRSTRIKES ON AZOVSTAL PLANT, STREET FIGHTS CONTINUE

Russian forces were on Wednesday pounding the Azovstal steel works in Mariupol where the southern Ukrainian city's last defenders and some civilians are holed up, a local official said.

Petro Andryushchenko, an aide to the city mayor, said there had been no let-up in airstrikes on the Azovstal plant despite Russian President Vladimir Putin saying there was no need to storm it after

ian population from Mariupol.

On Wednesday, Ukrainians held a rally in the capital city of Kyiv to demand foreign leaders step in to open a humanitarian corridor for those trapped in Mariupol.

## UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES MEETS WITH PUTIN

Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed "in principle" to the United Nations and the International Committee for the Red Cross becoming involved in the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, the UN said.

Putin made the concession to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during their meeting in Moscow.

In televised remarks, he told Guterres that he still hoped for negotiations to end the conflict.

"Despite the fact that the military operation is ongoing, we still hope that we will be able to reach agreements on the diplomatic track. We are negotiating, we

do not reject [talks]," Putin told Guterres.

Guterres reiterated his call for Ukraine and Russia to work together with the UN to set up aid and evacuation corridors to help civilians in Ukraine. Guterres earlier met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov where he called for a ceasefire.

Guterres met with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv on Thursday.

Standing beside the wreckage of residential apartment blocks in Borodyanka, just north of the capital, Guterres was clearly saddened by what he saw, the BBC reported.

"When I see those destroyed buildings, I imagine my family in one of those houses now destroyed and black. I see my granddaughters running in panic," he said.

"The war is an absurdity in the 21st century - the war is evil and when you see these situations our heart of course stays with the victims, our condolences to their families. But our emotions - there is no way a war can be acceptable in the 21st century. Look at that"

## ZELENSKY: RUSSIA USING ENERGY TO BLACKMAIL EUROPE

On Wednesday evening, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia's was using energy to blackmail Europe, and Russia's decision to cut off gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria on Wednesday showed "no-one in Europe can hope to maintain any normal economic cooperation with Russia."

"Russia considers not only gas, but any trade as a weapon. It is just waiting for the moment when one or another trade area can be used," he said, adding that Russia "sees a united Europe as a target" and "the sooner everyone on the continent agrees that they cannot depend on Russia for trade, the sooner there will be stability."

The BBC reported that he also welcomed a deal with the EU to suspend duties and quotas on Ukraine's exports, saying Russia wanted to create chaos in global markets - especially for food.

"Ukrainian exports would help stabilize markets and support the country's economy during the crisis," Zelensky noted.

## RUSSIA IS SET TO MOBILIZE THE POPULATION FOR WAR WITH UKRAINE IN THE KHERSON REGION

"Russian occupiers intend to completely suspend the humanitarian support of the Ukrainian government in the region. The terrorizing of the Ukrainian population by Russian occupiers continues. In the village of Zolota Balka in Kherson, representatives of the Russian occupation forces held a meeting with the locals, where they announced that there would be no more "green corridors," and forbade people from leaving the settlement. In addition, they warned that in case of the bombing of their positions by units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the Russian occupiers would start bombing the settlement," said the General Staff of Ukraine, adding that in the day prior, the Ukrainian military had destroyed four air targets of the Russian forces.

declaring "victory" in Mariupol.

He added that street fighting continues on a part of the plant territory and noted that no agreement was reached on Wednesday to try to evacuate the civil-



# The World Standing by Ukraine: EU Cutting Back on Russian Gas and Oil amid Fears the War Will Spread



Image source: bbc.com

BY KETEVAN SKHIRTLDZE

The Russian Foreign Ministry has imposed sanctions on 287 members of the British House of Commons. The people now banned from entering Russia took the most active part in the establishment of anti-Russian sanctions in London and "contributed to the groundless whipping up of Russophobic hysteria in the UK," Russia claims.

British Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss

noted, "If Putin succeeds, there will be untold further misery across Europe and terrible consequences around the globe. We will never feel safe again. So we must be prepared for the long haul and double down on our support for Ukraine."

Russia's Gazprom informed both Bulgaria and Poland on Wednesday that it will cut off gas exports.

The two countries will be the first to be cut off from Russian gas since Moscow invaded Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded that "unfriendly" countries open accounts at Gazprombank to convert euro or dollar payments into rubles.

Poland has refused to comply with the new scheme and said it will not extend the contract.

The Polish government says gas supplies will not be affected, as it can source gas via two links with Germany, an upcoming link with Lithuania, and via an interconnector with the Czech Republic.

When Gazprom told Bulgaria's state gas company Bulgargaz that it would cease gas supplies, the Bulgarian government responded that this would not lead to gas restrictions, as it has found alternative arrangements for the supply of natural gas.

"Germany's network regulator said it was monitoring the situation and that "the security of supply in Germany is currently guaranteed," reported DW.

A European Union top official described as "blackmail" the announcement that Russia was suspending shipments of natural gas to Poland and Bulgaria.

The German economy minister, Robert Habeck, says the country is very close to completely halting imports of Russian oil.

Habeck said Germany has cut oil import dependency from 35% to 12% in eight weeks.

"Today, I can say that an embargo is now more in reach for Germany. In the coming days and weeks, we will continue to expand this independence and rapidly move away from fossil fuels. But as I said, what a few weeks ago seemed a

very large problem for Germany, has shrunk considerably, so that German independence from Russian oil is now very, very close."

The fear in Washington and European capitals is that the conflict may soon escalate into a wider war - spreading to neighboring states, to cyberspace, and to NATO countries suddenly facing a Russian cutoff of gas.

"Over the long term, such an expansion could evolve into a more direct conflict between Washington and Moscow reminiscent of the Cold War, as each seeks to sap the other's power," reported the NY Times.

The American secretary of defense has called for an effort to degrade the capability of the Russian military so that it could not invade another country for years to come.



Image source: dw.com



# Holy is that Holy Does

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Christ is indeed risen, but Easter, Hanukkah, Christmas, Ramadan, Diwali, Hajj or Palm Sunday – all these great spiritual celebrations step back and lose sense with Man's urge to fight; when Man imagines a foe out there and chooses to believe that that foe must be annihilated from the surface of the Earth, because that's the only thing that makes sense for Him at that particular moment of militant wrath and demoralizing frenzy. This is one of the most biting pieces of everlasting human cynicism, something we have found impossible to rid ourselves of in our thousands of years of existence.

There is no respite in the so called 'military operation' perpetrated by Russia against Ukraine: the all-consuming fire continues to rage, jets and rockets topsy-turvy from the sky and millions of bullets hiss and whistle around, all of



Each provided gun and rocket, bullet and shell will target a human being: They are all somebody's sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives



A Ukrainian soldier lights a candle during an Orthodox Easter service in St. Volodymyr's Cathedral. Source: AFP via GETTY IMAGES

them meant to kill. The world, as civilized and sophisticated as it seems to be, is not capable of saving the day for the scared and tortured Ukrainians.

To the worst consternation of the fighters of the current war, unlike more than a hundred years ago, the feuding sides are not to be given a chance to rest. A famed example is December 7, 1914, when a temporary break, right in the middle of the Second World War, was suggested to celebrate Christmas, and it saw the soldiers of the warring nations declaring their own unofficial truce in the trenches. Yet, it seems the luster of this wonderful example of humane behavior has faded and lost its moralistic power.

It is simply unbelievable that in our enlightened world, reason has no way into the thoughts and behavior of not

only the confronting sides per se, but of those who are watching the 21st century savagery from a distance, sending additional lethal means to the front for creating even more effective carnage. The paradox of Man's behavior in the handling of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is simply inconceivable: the Ukrainians were attacked by the Russians, and it is absolutely natural and understandable too that most of the world is enthusiastically rooting for Ukraine, and wants to help it out by supplying the devastated people with both humanitarian and military aid. On the other hand, each provided gun and rocket, every bullet and shell, will target a human being on whatever side he or she is. They are all somebody's sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and

those blind, wicked projectiles – again, made by Man – cannot discern between right and wrong or good and evil.

This said, a pondering mind might also think of the remote watchers of the war who could have played a pacifying role even before it started, but alas, they did not. On the whole, neither Russia nor the West had even the faintest clue what the prolonged Russo-Ukrainian battle would turn into, as they casually ignored each other's warnings of the incipient conflict and reciprocally suggested measures of precaution. The result: Ukraine's might is wasted and its beauty is gone, and will remain so for a very long time to come, not to mention the thousands who have lost their lives to this shockingly inane move. And, to the bitterest chagrin of the healthier part of human-

ity, nobody in the world, not even the famous politicians and diplomats, have any idea if all this blaze and craze is really worth it.

Meanwhile, the Christians of the world, united in their sacred belief that Jesus was born, crucified and brought back to life, have colorfully and exultingly celebrated Easter, as if the Holiness of their behavior has remained spotless and intact in spite of the Ukrainian bloodshed. Holiness has its own measures and weight, which are now being revised, because Holy are only those who behave in a Holy way. What an appalling disappointment it is that this dreadful war between the believers in Christ did not stop even for a second, even on the day Jesus proved to all of us sinners that death was defeated to let life triumph.

# The Age of Counter-Enlightenment

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

We live in the age of counter-Enlightenment. What seemed like a collection of dispersed autocratic and simply illiberal states, has now coalesced into a fully blown ideological movement premised on not only resisting liberal internationalism on an ad hoc basis, but exporting authoritarian models of governance.

Illiberalism's flag-bearers in China and Russia have also shown they can harness modernity. What was deemed an asset peculiar to the West, because progress was considered a direct result of liberal norms and vice versa, is now being fitfully mastered by its enemies.

Yet, the bad news comes with a good-news rider. If the United States wants to maintain global influence, it cannot simply seek to maintain the old world order. The appearance of serious rivals with a hostile ideology will stiffen America's resolve. This happened in the Second World War and in the Cold War. For the past decade or more, this ideological motivation has been lacking because China's competition was mostly still viewed as fitting within the framework of the liberal world order. China, the West wrongly believed, could be lured into better behavior by the self-evident benefits of cooperation.

Take China and Russia. Westerners



Putin and Biden: Biden's insistence on upholding democratic and liberal ideals suggests the US is willing to battle illiberalism. By Saul Loeb/Pool via REUTERS

expected poor economic conditions to liberalize or even bring down those regimes, but the reality is quite different. China gathered strength after the 2008 financial crisis and raised its profile through vaccine diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Russia, despite suffering from extensive sanctions, is growing more assertive in the South Caucasus, Black Sea and parts of the Middle East. Even in Iran's case, its most active foreign involvement coincided with the Western sanctions.

Illiberalism has been wrongly described as unstable and as a transitory stage in the evolution towards the liberal-democratic model. But armed with the trappings of modern technology, it is resilient and resourceful, and is a much longer-

term challenge than the crude communism of the past. Failure to deliver on its promises ultimately killed the communist dream, but failure to deliver in quasi-capitalist illiberal states will not bring down the order as quickly as some would think.

China and Russia's example makes illiberalism fashionable among the struggling states of Europe and Asia. In Georgia, Far-Right movements repudiate the tenets of liberalism and advocate the reversal of the entire political system, and, what is more important, seek closer ties with Russia. Their arguments are more nuanced though. Fearing a backlash, they explain the need to work with Russia as a geopolitical necessity.

All these problems are abetted by Rus-

sia's military presence on their sovereign territory and by troubled economies which create space for China's powerful economy. The governments in these once Soviet states are manifesting the ability to appropriate the liberal concepts on state and economy to advance their illiberal agenda.

The West has to look at this challenge from a wider historical perspective. Hopes for the eventual abandonment of the illiberal governing model are not as self-fulfilling. Bolstering the liberal order by strengthening rules-based policies is one approach. Another is to show that

liberalism is more attuned to the economic and governance progress. The means to shore up state institutions in those fragile countries should be sought.

The West should support the fragile states of Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia because there is still some hope they can take a better path. Recently, Georgia's politicians resolved a major political crisis by re-entering the legislature after months of boycotts. In Armenia, the decision to call snap parliamentary elections lowered political tensions. Illiberalism in the region, all Armenia's and Georgia's neighbors are less-than-liberal states, could easily engulf these tiny islands of aspiring democracy.

Illiberalism is essentially a counter-Enlightenment and is seen by autocrats as a return to normalcy in human and state relations. They hail the primacy of state and strongman rule or clique rule and create something eerily reminiscent of illiberal governments between the two world wars, when democracy could not survive pressures from within and without.

Biden's insistence on upholding democratic and liberal ideals suggests the US is willing to battle illiberalism. Whichever model prevails will ultimately define the world we live in and will be decisive for smaller states bordering illiberal powers. Military power matters, but the battle for hearts and minds is just as important.

Emil Avdaliani is professor at European University and the director of Middle East Studies at Georgian think tank, Geocase.



The West should support the fragile states of Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia because there is still some hope they can take a better path



# CEPA's Swedish Researcher Anders Ostlund in Kyiv: Russia Is Done For, But How Many Have to Die Before They See It?



Russia will be replaced by small, demilitarized and powerless republics with neutrality written into their constitutions. The Russian Federation is about to become a part of history

have the motivation, they have the brains. And now, more and more apparently, Ukraine also has the Western defense industry coming to assist it, and Russia cannot match that. It cannot match the arms factories of Europe and the United States. The only thing I'm really afraid of is nuclear warfare. I'm not even afraid of chemicals, because I think a chemical attack will backfire on Russia. So, I think Russia is done for. It's just a matter of how many poor Ukrainian civilians and soldiers need to die before Russia realizes this.

den and Finland act jointly. Finland is Sweden's closest ally, it's very tied to Finland, they really both want to go together. And now with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, public opinion is very close to tipping over 50% in favor [of NATO]. With all this pressure, the Social Democrats announced they would have an internal security policy debate. Obviously, this means they're preparing society for this change of policy. And I think we might see it soon.

or if it's going to be a political war. Hard to say, and I don't know when this will happen, but definitely this attack on Ukraine has sped it up big time.

I see Russia becoming very poor. I see Russia increasing oppression to compensate for the lack of money in Putin's regime. Russia will have one last thing to sell that the world will be willing to pay lots for, and those are its nukes. So, if there is a civil war or anything like that, in Russia, it could go on for a long, long time, because each party claiming territory would be able to cash in by giving up nukes. And the outside world would have a keen interest in having a nuclear-free Russia, including China, who might easily become a patron of vast territories in the Russian Far East. But I definitely see the end of the Russian Federation. The more Russia loses in Ukraine, the fewer allies, or rather, the fewer partners they will have, not that they had any allies to begin with. Putin will be remembered as Vladimir the Loser, not Vladimir the Great.



I think Russia is done for. It's just a matter of how many poor Ukrainian civilians and soldiers need to die before Russia realizes this

Continued from page 1

The defenders of Mariupol, they've had eight years to prepare themselves. It's been their calling to hold Mariupol. I don't think Mariupol will fall within the next week.

## DO YOU EXPECT UKRAINE TO MOUNT A COUNTER OFFENSIVE TO LIFT THE SIEGE?

I certainly think things are going on there that we're not aware of, I mean, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, they are really keeping it tight. Obviously, if I was Zelensky, this would be my highest priority. But if I was the head of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, maybe less so. It depends on the military calculation versus the political. From a strictly military point of view, Ukraine benefits from Mariupol holding out, because they're forcing Russian soldiers to attack in urban terrain. It's very hard to take such terrain in urban warfare. If Ukraine managed to slip in hundreds of soldiers and some ammunition and reinforcements, Mariupol could hold out for longer. Anyway, considering what we've seen so far in these over 50 days, it would be jumping to conclusions to say the city will fall anytime soon.

## ON TO DONBAS. THERE HAVE BEEN FEARS THAT RUSSIA STILL RETAINS SUFFICIENT FORCES TO ATTEMPT ENCIRCLEMENT TACTICS. DO YOU THINK THEY'LL BE ABLE TO PULL IT OFF?

Of course, they will try - going from the south towards Zaporozhye and from the

north towards Dnipro, to cut the Ukrainian forces in half. But then again, they also tried to have a flagship sail into the Black Sea. They also tried to capture Kyiv. They tried to capture Mykolaiv. They tried to capture Mariupol, which is right on the border. And they haven't been able to take it for more than 50 days. They tried many things, the Russians. But if there is any lesson there, it's that we should not underestimate them - if we underestimate them, we might make the same mistakes.

Of course, the Russians have failed in everything. They haven't done anything right. The only thing this army can do is parade on Red Square or hold stupid exercises with Putin watching through binoculars. They seem to be very good at killing civilians, executing, raping, looting. But in actual, normal warfare they don't seem to be very talented at all.

Ukraine has a very good chance. They

## WHAT'S GOING ON IN UKRAINE TODAY IS HAVING AN EFFECT ON YOUR OWN COUNTRY, WITH SWEDEN POISED TO JOIN NATO. HOW LIKELY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

NATO is seen as a big hypocrisy in Sweden, and it's been that way for a long, long time. Sweden has sort of been in the alliance with the United States ever since the end of the Second World War. So it was fake neutrality. But the Social Democrats have this thing with neutrality: it was very important for them as part of their ideology, yet, even though the social democratic governments were the ones behind an alliance with the United States, they did it secretly. It's hard for the Social Democrats to let go of this idea of neutrality, or, as it's called, of an "unaligned state."

## FINLAND EXPRESSING ITS OWN WILLINGNESS MUST HAVE TIPPED THE SCALES, THEN?

It's very important for Sweden that Swe-

## DO YOU PUT ANY STOCK IN THE RUSSIAN THREATS THAT THEY WILL RETALIATE?

[Laughs] Against Sweden and Finland? They have all their manpower tied up in Ukraine. Of course, they can try some bullshit with fly-overs or something, but no, I don't think so. It's just talk. We called the Russian bluff this time. Sweden has enough high quality airpower, we can strike back if that's the case. Finland can definitely strike back. They are probably, per capita, the best defended country in Europe.

## HOW DO YOU SEE THE END GAME PLAYING OUT FOR RUSSIA?

I think Russia will break up. It will be replaced by small, demilitarized and powerless republics with neutrality written into their constitutions. The Russian Federation is about to become a part of history. I don't know whether there's going to be an outright civil war in Russia and then, based on ethnicity, various nationalities within the Russian Federation will claim their own piece of land,



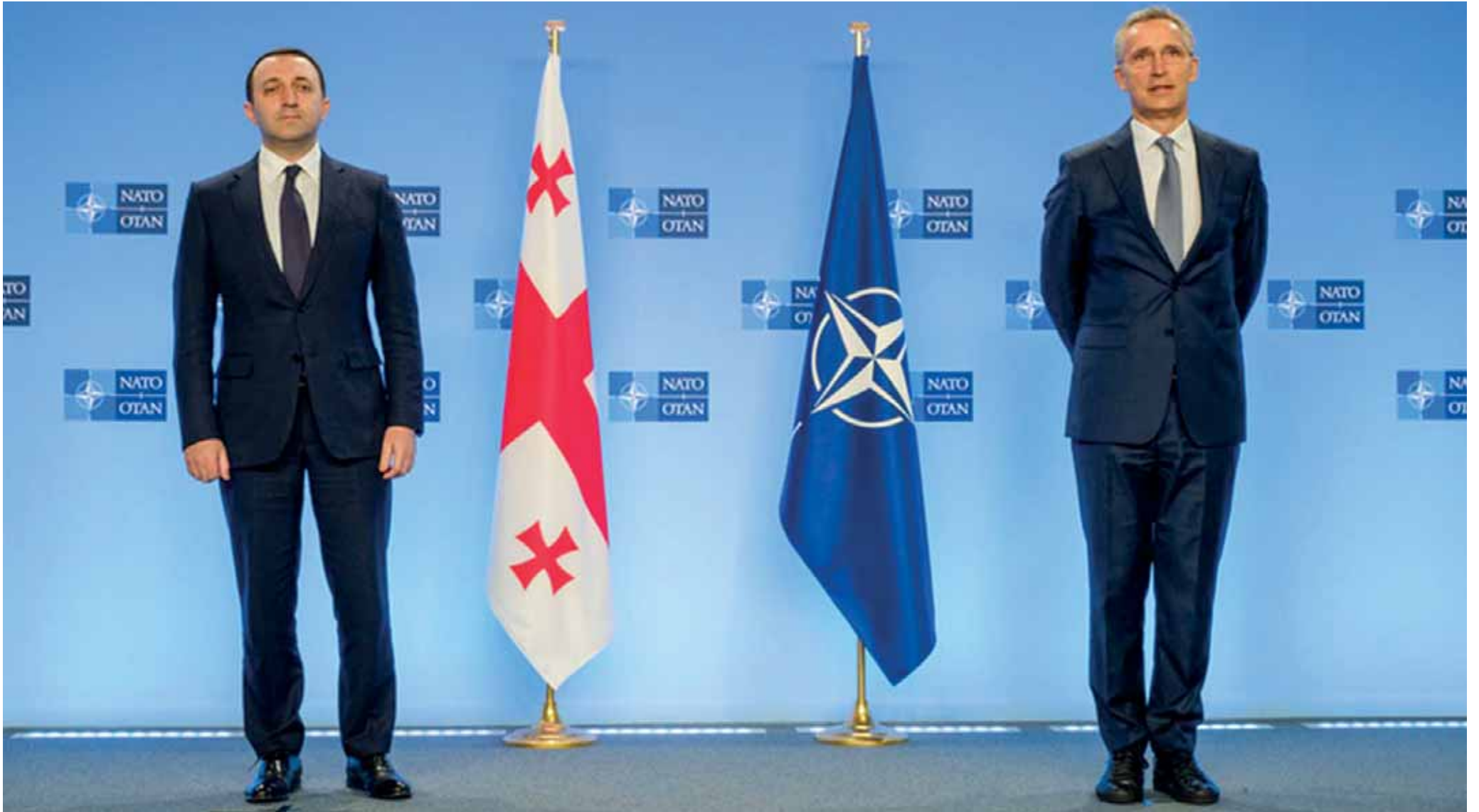
We called the Russian bluff this time. Sweden has enough high quality airpower to strike back if [threatened]. Finland is probably, per capita, the best defended country in Europe



NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, and Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde speak at a press conference after their meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Jan. 24. By John Thys/AFP via GETTY IMAGES



# The Switzerland of the Caucasus: Is Georgia's Neutrality Sustainable?



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili at NATO Headquarters. Source: NATO

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Leadership in Tbilisi has walked a thin line between two increasingly intimidating sides. Since the invasion of Ukraine, Europe and the larger West have rallied against Russia with a wide variety of unprecedented actions. In response, Russia has taken steps to bolster its own economy to counter the effects of the West and reach out to other third parties including China and India.

Georgia has long had social, economic, and political links to both sides. Trade and social connections to Russia have bent the nation to a stance of tolerance and appeasement, while deep-rooted aspirations to join NATO and the European Union continue the gravitational pull westward. These factors combine to force it into a curious position in the middle. Despite their aims to maintain amicable relations with both sides, can Tbilisi keep up relations equally with Russia and the West?

Prior to the invasion and ongoing war in Ukraine, Georgia had managed to keep a tenuous peace and amicable relation-

ship with Moscow. Despite the continued occupation of a fifth of the nation's territory, Russia also remained a significant economic heavyweight by bringing investment and businesses. In addition, the tourism boost from Russian citizens keeps matters peaceful at the street level.

In the wake of open warfare between Ukraine and Russia, the tone of conversation and relations seemed to change. With the aforementioned links, the Georgian government had been exceptionally hesitant to join any portfolio of Western sanctions. Following outcry from much of the population and the opposition in Parliament, attitudes began to shift, culminating with leadership joining much of the sanctions package. Additionally, Georgia submitted for membership and currently has an official questionnaire for integration into the EU.

However, the ruling party also accused opposition parties of instigating tensions. Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stated, "I am sure they are very frustrated that there's no war here today. Has anyone thought where we would be if Saakashvili was in power?" referring to the now imprisoned third president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, he continued, stating, "the war would first start in Tbilisi, then in Kyiv."

Just as it has been for other corners of Europe, the war has driven some such as Finland and Sweden to revise their neutrality. Both of these have agreed to submit simultaneously as early as mid-May. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson indicated that the invasion of Ukraine and the erratic behavior of Russian President Vladimir Putin had changed "everything."

Yet, Georgia has continued its attempt at keeping a low profile. This positioning has caused a split in opinion. On one hand, Georgia has little to offer by increasing sanctions, and may even deteriorate their own socio-economic position by doing so. On the other hand, this presents a very unique opportunity to embrace NATO and the EU and display the nation as Western, safe, and secure for travel and investment.

It is unlikely a monochromatic decision on either can be made. Siding with Russia is an instant loss. The expected backsliding into rampant corruption, loss of civil liberties, and potential economic repercussions from the West make this a deadly gambit. While a bankroll from the Kremlin can seem lucrative, the lessons of capitulation in Grozny after the Second Chechen War should be heeded.

This very situation led to the rise of the infamous micro-dictator and Putin pet, Ramzan Kadyrov. His iron rule and ruthless use of secret police and military forces has virtually eliminated any semblance of democracy, economic advancement, and personal freedom in the North Caucasian region. While it can be said this is an extreme version of capitulation, it should act as a harsh reminder of the tax Moscow imposes on its subjects.

Full and unwavering allegiance to NATO and the EU also has its pitfalls. While the allure of significant economic and national defense are immense, EU officials say Georgia has yet to show it can contribute appropriately. Acceptance under suspicion is unwise and leaves leadership in Tbilisi with an excessive burden with Brussels.

Russia is likely to view this move as an affront to their sovereignty, a ludicrous but threatening claim made in reference to Ukraine prior to their invasion. Similar threats are likely to be leveled against Georgia upon a path being open to the EU, and certainly to a path to NATO such as seen with Finland and Sweden. However, Georgia's size and NATO's inability to defend such a distant neighbor in a rapid manner could spell doom for the nation.

As a result of both these pathways, Tbilisi will have to carefully weigh their

decision. However, it is more likely the road to positive and meaningful development of the nation leads West. Ruling members in Parliament have routinely touted themselves as champions of democratic values, an open economy, and a progressive society. If these claims are not the stereotypical bloviations of political figureheads, then acting on these ideas is imperative.

Rarely in geopolitics is there such a distinct bipolarity of diametrically opposed positions and an impossibly thin line in between. Georgia historically has walked this thin line, from the ancient world to today. However, with the rapid increase of Eurasian tensions and interconnectivity on multiple levels, the sustainability of neutrality becomes highly questionable. Georgia's desire to toe this line and maintain a policy of appeasement for both sides may not be enough to keep from tipping in either direction.



Georgia's desire to maintain a policy of appeasement for both sides may not be enough to keep from tipping in either direction



Sweden's prime minister Magdalena Andersson, left, and Finland's counterpart, Sanna Marin, met in Stockholm on 13 April. Source: Reuters



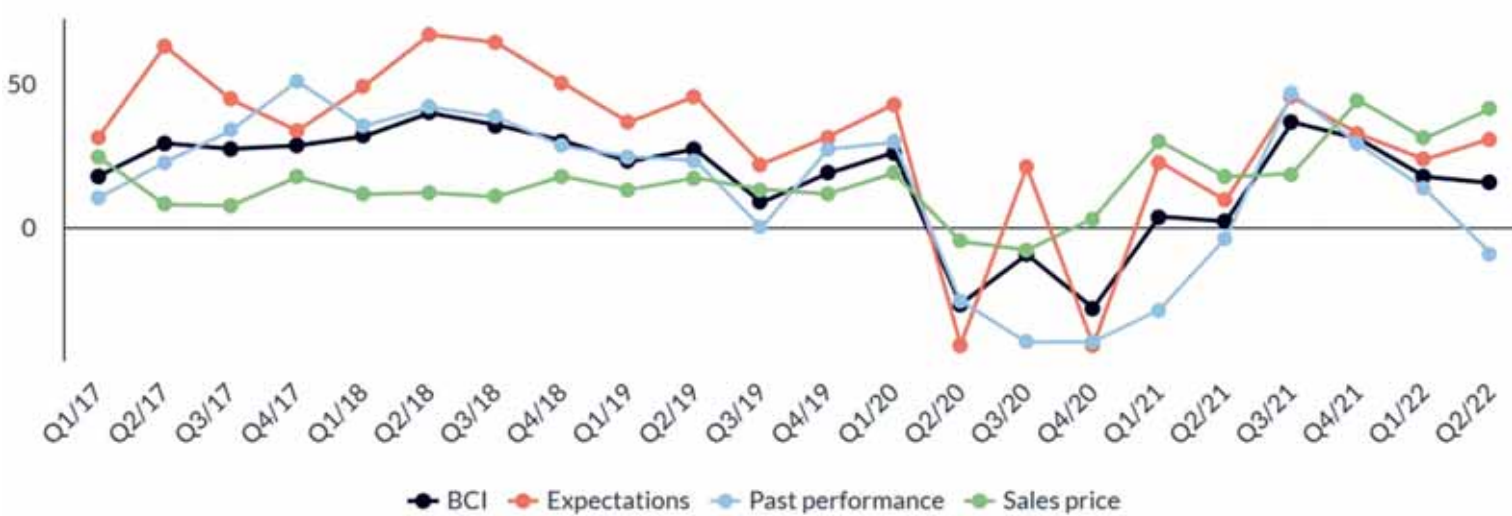
# ISET ECONOMIC INDICATORS

International School of Economics at TSU

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX

For more: [WWW.ISET-PI.GE](http://WWW.ISET-PI.GE)

## ISET Business Confidence Index | The Downward Trend Continues



Past 3 Months QoQ change by sector

Sectors	Q2/22	Change
Manufacturing	18.5	+37.9
Construction	-38.5	-87.1
Trade	-13.8	-45.4
Service	-13.7	-5.9
Agriculture	28	+22.7
Financial	13.3	-11.1

After a decrease in the previous two quarters, BCI has further decreased by 2.2, compared to Q1 2022, and reached 15.1 index points for Q2 2022. Expectations in the Georgian private sector have increased by 7.3 index points, reaching 30.6. The business performance over the past three months decreased significantly, reaching -9.5 points, indicating a downturn in production, turnover, and sales. Compared to the previous quarter, the Sales Price Expectation Index has increased, showing an increase in the market share of businesses that expect higher sales prices over the next three months.

Compared to Q1 2022, BCI decreased in construction (-29.7), and trade (-7.6) while it increased in agriculture (+22.6), manufacturing (+13.3), financial (+13.3), and service (+3.9) sectors.

Business confidence for the 1st quarter of 2022 has increased by 4.3 index points for large companies and decreased by 6.3 for SMEs.

### PAST PERFORMANCE

Businesses' Past Performance Index, which shows the development of businesses' production, turnover, and sales in the past 3 months, decreased significantly compared to Q1 of 2022 and reached -9.5 for Q2 2022. The biggest deterioration for Q2 2022 was observed in the construction sector (-87.1), followed by the wholesale and retail trade (-45.4), financial (-11.1), and service (-5.9) sectors. Past Performance Index increased for manufacturing (+37.9) and agriculture (+22.7) sectors.

Business activities in the past 3 months have deteriorated for both, large businesses and SMEs. For large firms, the index decreased by 18.5 points and settled at 3.3. For SMEs, the same indicator decreased by 20.9 and reached -23.5 index points.

### EXPECTATIONS

The Expectations Index increased by 7.3 index

BCI QoQ change by sector

Sectors	Q2/22	Change
Manufacturing	15.9	+13.3
Construction	-9.2	-29.7
Trade	21.2	-7.6
Service	12.4	+3.9
Agriculture	52.1	+22.6
Financial	31.7	+13.3

points for Q2 2022 and settled at 30.6. Prospects for the next three months have improved for all sectors except for the construction (-25.5) and wholesale and retail trade (-2.3) sectors. The highest increase is observed in the manufacturing sector (+80.7), followed by financial (+36.3), agriculture (+21.2), and service (+3.4) sectors.

Business expectations have improved for large firms (+17.7) and deteriorated for SMEs (-8.6).

61% of the surveyed businesses do not expect any changes in employment over the next three months, 11% of firms stated that they would hire fewer

employees in the future, and 29% think that they would hire more.

44% of the firms surveyed expect the economic condition of their businesses to improve over the next three months. 38% do not predict any changes, and 19% of businesses believe their business conditions will worsen.

### SALES PRICE EXPECTATIONS

The Sales Price Expectations Index increased to 41.4 points for Q2 2022. The index increased for all sectors, except for the manufacturing (-10.6) sector, with the biggest increase in construction (+35.9), agriculture (+34.8), retail and wholesale trade (+12.6), and service (+6.2) sectors.

Around 50% of all firms surveyed intend to increase their prices over the next three months. 3% of firms expect to decrease prices, and the remaining 47% are not planning to change their prices in the near future.

For Q2 2022, limited access to financing and a lack of demand continue to be the most significant obstacles for SMEs. Meanwhile, limited access to financing, labor force, and other factors is indicated as major constraints by large companies.

It should be noted that the present BCI results may be overestimated, as the survey only covers businesses currently operating and not those that have already exited the market. Firms which exited the market are, to some extent, more likely to demonstrate a negative outlook.

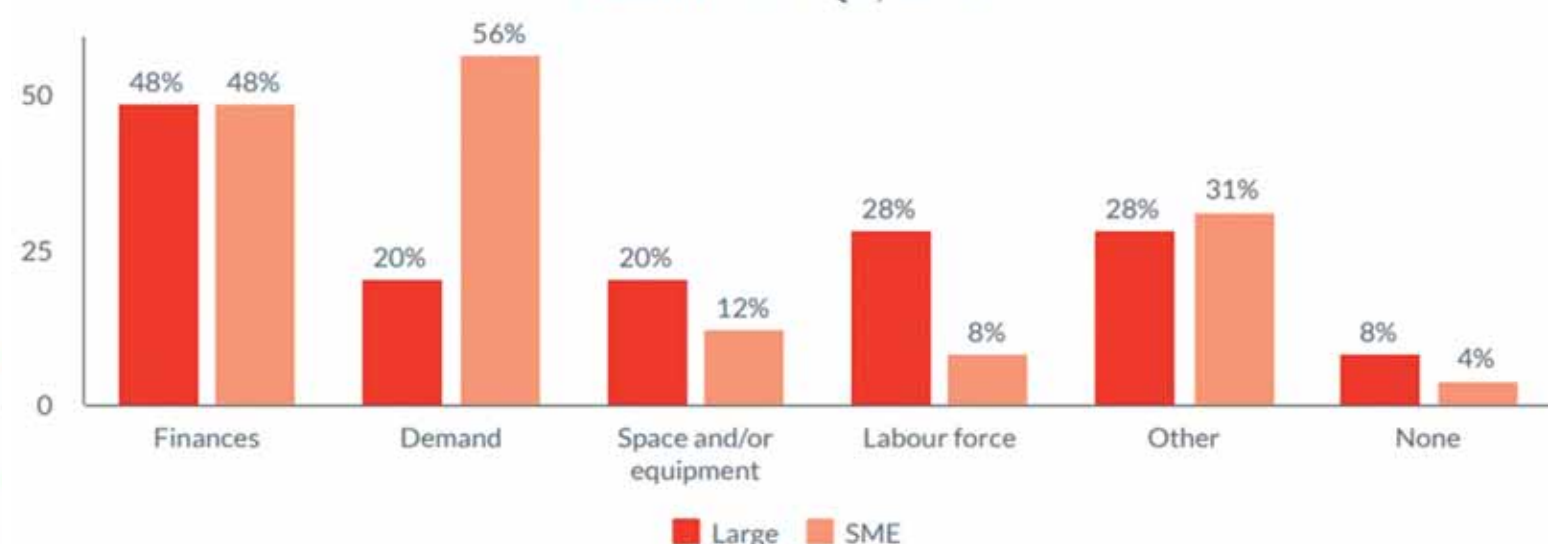
Expectations QoQ change by sector

Sectors	Q2/22	Change
Manufacturing	90.6	+80.7
Construction	7.7	-25.6
Trade	31.5	-2.3
Service	21.1	+3.4
Agriculture	63.3	+21.2
Financial	18.6	+36.3

Sales price QoQ change by sector

Sectors	Q2/22	Change
Manufacturing	35.2	-10.6
Construction	53.8	+35.9
Trade	40.5	+12.6
Service	39.2	+6.2
Agriculture	92.7	+34.8

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS CURRENTLY LIMITING YOUR BUSINESS? Q2, 2022



Category	Q2/22	Change
SME	8.8	-6.3
Large	20.5	+4.3



# Paul Pahi, Director of Golf at Tbilisi Hills Golf & Residences: I See Opportunities in Georgia for Golfers to Become Professionals and Compete on the Highest Level



Our goal as a team is to make Tbilisi a strong destination on the golfing map and have internationals visit not only Tbilisi Hills but Georgia in general

there's a big value in golf for kids and young people, because golf teaches them the core values, such as honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, and so on. I think golf lays a very good foundation for young people. And of course, golf is a social game for everyone, from 5 to 90 years old.

I also believe that people need to be more active in order to be productive and sharp, and golf is a great way to exercise. Golf can be played around the globe. Georgia offers a great opportunity for that - climate, weather... People play golf all year round. I see opportunities here for golfers to become professionals and compete on the highest level.

I listed some of the key areas that I believe are the most beneficial for kids. But in addition to that, Golf also gives young people a direction, I'd say. In the UK and US, for example, there are very strong college golf programs. There are scholarship offers around the globe for very good golfers. Having a very good goal to get to college team where your education is paid, where you get to travel, you get to meet new people, get to learn the language, culture... I think this is very valuable. I was studying in US, I did my professional degree in England, and I managed to travel around the world,

from Australia to the US, so I think there are so many good sides of golf and the list is endless.

## WHAT MAKES TBILISI HILLS STAND OUT AMONG ITS COMPETITORS?

Tbilisi Hills is the only professional 18-hole golf course in Georgia, so there are no competitors as yet.

The biggest challenge in developing golfing in a new country is to get people to try golf and to break some clichés associated with the game.

Tbilisi Hills has a variety of programs for kids. Quick introductory lessons, where you don't have to have experience, regular weekly lessons. This year we launched a school project that invites kids to learn free of charge. It's a great way to get kids to try and experience golf.

I do wish there were more golf courses coming up in Tbilisi. I don't see this as much as competition as an opportunity to grow the game, and for the city to become stronger as a destination. We've seen examples of governments support-

ily, to spend time with my kids and my wife.

Since I love the game of golf, I love to be in charge of Tbilisi Hills. I like the fact that I'm in charge of every aspect of the game and business, from green-keeping and improving the quality of golf courses to understanding how to manage and work with Georgians, establishing junior programs, and coming up with international tournaments to put Georgia on the golfing map.

## CAN YOU GIVE US AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR'S SUCCESSES AT TBILISI HILLS?

Of course, the last two years have been challenging, mainly due to Covid. I think we've managed in a smart way, and also we've been fortunate that golf is a game played outdoors, in very safe environment. Despite all the restrictions and challenges, over the last two years, we had around 300 people signing up for our beginners' green court courses. We've gained a lot of new members, both Georgians and internationals. We've also managed to host different international



INTERVIEW BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES AND ANA DUMBADZE

ate's Degree in Professional Golf Management at the Professional Golfers Career College.

Paul is a professional golfer, a friendly coach, and a big fan of kids learning golf. GEORGIA TODAY sat down with him to find out more.

## WHY GOLF? AND WHY GEORGIA?

As I have a great passion for the game and for the business, I decided to come and help grow the game in Georgia. Golf has so many benefits. It starts from being active, to networking. But mainly, I think

Paul Pahi became Director of Golf at Tbilisi Hills Golf & Residences in December, 2018. Before that, he was Head Golf Professional at Niitvälja Golf and General Secretary at PGA of Estonia.

On the way to becoming a golf professional, he took a Foundation Degree in Professional Golf at the University of Birmingham and a Specialized Associ-

ing the growth of the number of golf courses in many countries worldwide. It has boosted economies, as golfers spend more than usual visitors. This is good value for a destination.

What I'd like to see at Tbilisi Hills is that at one point we have so many golfers and there's a need for additional golf courses in Tbilisi. And, of course, to see a properly developed junior program that introduces the game to new people. Having constant growth in young people. Our goal as a team is to make Tbilisi a strong destination on the golfing map and have internationals visit not only Tbilisi Hills but Georgia in general.

## HOW DID YOU COME TO LEAD TBILISI HILLS? WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES IN THE POSITION? WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT BEING LEADER OF THE TBILISI HILLS TEAM? DO YOU GET OUT ON THE COURSE OFTEN YOURSELF?

I was invited to join the Tbilisi Hills team by a friend of mine who was one of the owners at that time. I had a strong background in developing the game in Estonia on different levels. My priorities here in Georgia are to get Georgians to play golf, and to attract foreign guests to visit the country and Tbilisi Hills. And of course, to do it in a business-oriented way.

When achieving this goal of improvement here and there, it gives me more energy and pleasure, which keeps me going. I get to play golf myself as well, as often as want to. But managing a course takes a lot of time. I have a big family, and I want to be supportive to my fam-

events and tournaments and we've become better known in our target markets.

## WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR 2022 AND BEYOND?

Well, I hope the [Ukraine-Russia] war will end very soon and we can move on to normal business. Of course, we plan to continue our growth among both local players and international visitors. Over the next few years, we're planning to establish a very strong base for junior golfers, with structured lessons, to help juniors not just to try golf, but to stay in the game and experience all the benefits it offers. And we also have an ambition to host bigger international events and also professional tournaments.



Golf teaches young people the core values of honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, and responsibility





# Argokhi Permaculture and Rural Development Center Opened on Earth Day



**O**n April 22, CENN, with financial support from the EU officially opened the Argokhi Permaculture and Rural Development Center. The event was filled with tree planting, wall painting, a poster exhibition and a short address by local eco-activists and women's cooperatives.

The Center offers a complete service for organizing training, workshops, working meetings, strategy planning meetings, seasonal schools, Eco-talks and other events. The space will also serve as a hub for local youth who want to work on new projects, learn, and innovate. It offers accommodation for up to 10 people, local farm-to-table cuisine and a selection of resources necessary for work meetings.

The center is based on permaculture principles and promotes smart, green living in co-existence with our nature.

Permaculture integrates land, resources, people and the environment through mutually beneficial synergies – imitating the no waste, closed loop systems seen in diverse natural systems. Permaculture studies apply holistic solutions that are applicable in rural and urban contexts at any scale. It is a multidisciplinary toolbox including agriculture, water harvesting and hydrology, energy, natu-



Earth Day was first celebrated on April 22, 1970, and today includes a wide range of events, joined by 1 billion people in more than 193 countries

ral building, forestry, waste management, animal systems, aquaculture, appropriate technology, economics and community development.

The opening of the center was funded by ongoing CENN projects EU4Youth

- Development of Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (SEED) for Green Growth; EU Climate Program (GEO-CAP), both supported by the EU; and Sustainable Forest Management for Rural Development – funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC).

The event was symbolically held on Earth Day, attended by representatives of government agencies, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector. The participants were addressed by the Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Solomon Pavliashvili; Governor Irakli Shioshvili; the Mayor of Akhmeta Municipality, Alex Pitskhelauri; the Executive Director of KRDF, Board member Iza Bekauri; and CENN Executive Director Nana Janashia.

“It’s been more than 50 years that over 200 countries have been celebrating Earth Day each year. Georgia is no exception,” said Deputy Minister Pavliashvili. “The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture is actively working to raise awareness about environmental challenges such as climate change and its impact, waste management, and the sustainable management of forest and soil resources, among other important environmental topics. I am very happy

that today we are joined by incredible youth who are sharing and spreading modern knowledge and information in their communities, and who are role models for our society.”

Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 every year and its goal is to unite the world’s population under environmental goals. Earth Day was first celebrated on April 22, 1970, and today includes a wide range of events, joined by 1 billion people in more than 193 countries. The theme for Earth Day 2022 was “Investing in Our Planet” which focuses on tackling climate change and calls on governments, citizens and businesses to take their share of responsibility in the face of this threat.

“This year’s Earth day theme is Invest in our Planet and is focused on tackling climate change. Therefore, we are celebrating this year’s Earth Day by open-



The center promotes smart, green living in co-existence with our nature

The large-scale clean-up campaign is financially supported by ongoing CENN projects - EU4Youth - Development of Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (SEED) for Green Growth; Georgian Climate Program (GEO-CAP).



ing a new center that is based on the principles of permaculture,” stated Nana Janashia, CENN’s Executive Director. “The center was founded by CENN with the support of the EU and aims to raise youth awareness about environmental topics, and to encourage their active engagement.”

In relation with Earth Day, CENN plans yet another exciting event – on April 29, the Organization, with the support of the EU and the Austrian Development Cooperation, plans to launch cleaning campaigns dedicated to Earth Day throughout Georgia.

Those wishing to participate can join in, in Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara, Imereti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti regions and pre-selected cleaning places in Tbilisi.

The locations include: Akhmeta, Kachreti (Gurjaani), Mushevani (Bolnisi), Gori, Zemoseri (Khashuri), Akhaltsikhe, the Buknari-Tsikhisdziri coastal area, the surroundings of the Enguri Arch Dam, Tkibuli, and Tbilisi.

Cleaning promotions will be held on April 29, from 3:00 PM.

“Get involved in Earth Day events. Join us to take care of our planet together,” CENN tells society.



The center was founded by CENN with the support of the EU and aims to raise youth awareness about environmental topics, and to encourage their active engagement





# Greening: Etseri, Svaneti

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

At last, with a few fits and starts, spring is here even in these highlands. The last bastions of snow, those piled up from rooftops in the most sunless corners of house and barn, are dwindling straight into the air even as I write this. The sun is getting higher every day in its arcs, and also there are no more nights left where the snow melt or sublimation is halted by below freezing temperatures. The “ice dragons,” whose entry into literature I performed not so long ago, have all fled into the clouds, rivers and Black Sea to await their next winter’s manifestation.

The mountain wall the other side of the Enguri River from us has had a new covering of Sahara dust, turning its snows light orange. The color contrast became visible to my wife yesterday on her morning run (a new thing): she saw and heard an avalanche there, the fall exposing the still pure white snow next to the North African desert sandfall which is known to reach this far and further yet.

A neighbor and I have done some fence repair, crucially timed. You wait until the snow is gone, the ground no longer frozen but still soft from all that moisture running over and through it. If you try digging in too early or late, the soil will be too hard from either frozenness or baking by the sun. You use a straight crowbar to make the post holes, then pound the necessary sharpened-ended oak posts in with either a sledgehammer or a heavy enough

ax. (Our sledgehammer’s wooden handle burned away in the garage fire, and is now being replaced with the right hard wood by a friend of mine here who will share its use. But we do have a solid enough ax for the pounding.)

An extra step which I then do is to pound the earth all around the post as hard as I can, to give it some extra solidity. Then you re-wire the fence section to it; in our case, as is common here, a whole meters-long section of fence had been knocked over and flattened by “snow dragons”. If you leave fences unattended, you are asking for cows to wander in and munch on your fruit tree seedlings, flowers, vegetables or whatever they fancy.

You also check all the intact fence posts, slats and wires for weaknesses. Pound in the former if they have been forced out of the ground a bit by winter. Tighten everything up, for cattle will seek any weakness to exploit, break, enter, and wreak havoc!

My wife also puts me to work turning over soil with a spade where she intends to plant a few things. Potatoes, onions, greens, flowers, pumpkins. Again, while the soil is still between frozen hard and baked hard! This is best done outside the heat of midday, especially mornings before the cool of the night has bled away. I replace the outdoor black plastic water runoff hose which we keep trickling all winter to stave off pipe freezing as best we can. In its place goes a longer rubber hose for watering the garden with.

This year we have no livestock at all, the chickens having quietly moved on last summer, without much mourning



to be honest. Some were killed by predators: dogs, foxes, stoats, raptor birds; others simply migrated to other barns. We didn’t bother to seek them. The barn is now full of things from the burnt-out garage anyway, especially salvageable firewood from the roof, metal sheeting also, and the scrap metal (“jarti” in Georgian) about which I wrote last week. The jarti guys will be back soon to cut up the burnt-out car and we’ll get at least some cash for that.

Photographically, the monotones of winter have given way to a rush of colors: the greens which the eye thirsted for half a year, dusty browns of roads. Flowers will blossom soon, and add their own hues. So it’s a season where color is much more dominant, and I must think harder how best to capture the moods in black and white, which is now likely to remain my nearly-exclusive palette. Whether the subject be landscapes, nature, journalism, culture, portraits, I intend to try to portray it in monotones as much as possible.

Welcome back, spring. Winter dazzled me in new ways, but your arrival is entirely delightful too. We’ll make the most of you.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the “Svaneti Renaissance” Facebook group, now with nearly 2000 members, at [www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/). He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: [www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti](http://www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti)

## Caritas Czech Republic Supports Sustainable Waste Management Practices in Georgia



BY NINA KOPALEISHVILI

Environmental pollution remains one of the major challenges of the modern world. Proper waste management and recycling practices are important not only to avoid negative effects on the environment and save natural resources but also to play an important role in ensuring the health of the population. Caritas Czech Republic has been working in the environmental sector since 2019 and most of its projects aim to develop responsible waste management practices in the regions of Georgia.

Caritas Czech Republic’s environmental projects cover several areas, including support to the infrastructural development of the regions of Georgia for sustainable waste management and providing technical assistance through consulting and expert support. These interventions include the introduction of waste separation, recycling and composting practices in Racha-Lechkhumi

and Kvemo Svaneti region and working on solving various problems associated with waste management in Dusheti and Khulo municipalities.

### DEVELOPMENT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROCUREMENT OF GARBAGE TRUCKS

Waste is a resource that, if managed properly, can bring some economic benefits. Waste recycling reduces energy consumption, pollution of the environment and the need for waste disposal areas. Waste such as glass, paper or cardboard, metal and plastic can be collected separately and recycled so that the amount of waste in the environment and landfills will be significantly reduced.

With this in mind, Caritas Czech Republic’s environmental interventions have been addressing waste separation and recycling issues since 2019, raising awareness about sustainable waste management importance and introducing relevant practices in the regions of Georgia. At the same time, with various donors’ financial support, our organization has supported the infrastructural develop-

ment of the regions for waste collecting, separation and recycling.

Within the UNDP-Czech partnership, in 2019, Caritas Czech Republic has developed a Sustainable Waste Management Plan for the Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Area and its auxiliary zone, which was later incorporated into the existing Waste Management Plan of Dusheti Municipality.

With the financial support of the EU ENPARD programme, our organization procured and handed over a 20m<sup>3</sup> garbage truck to Khulo Municipality, which significantly improved the waste management practices in the area. As for Dusheti Municipality, SlovakAid supported the procurement of 14m<sup>3</sup> garbage trucks and garbage containers equipped with modern standards worth 100 000 Euros. Furthermore, Oni Municipality was provided with a 7m<sup>3</sup> separate waste collection machine, 135 pieces of 240-liter containers and 60 pieces of 1100-liter containers required for the collection of separated waste.

Ekaterine Meskhrikadze, Caritas Czech Republic’s Project Manager says that with SlovakAid financial support, Oni Municipality’s cleaning service coverage area has importantly increased:

“The results in terms of waste separation are significant. Oni Municipality now has an opportunity to successfully separate waste and facilitate the recycling practices, resulting in a small but significant contribution to the landfill in terms of waste reduction. And this aims at mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gases”.

Successfully implemented model of waste recycling in Oni municipality formed the basis for uniting the rest of the municipalities in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region around the inter-municipal model of waste recycling. With the financial support of the Government of Lithuania, the European Union and KfW, Caritas Czech Republic raised awareness about waste recycling



importance among the municipal governments and the population of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region. This has contributed to taking important steps to implement sustainable waste management practices in rural areas.

### VILLAGE UTSEBA BECOMES A ROLE MODEL FOR DEVELOPING GOOD COMPOSTING PRACTICE

In the regions of Georgia, up to 60% of the waste in landfills is organic waste, which decomposes and releases carbon dioxide and methane. This contributes to climate change and is also harmful to human health.

Composting is one of the simplest and most cost-effective methods of preventing environmental pollution. Recycling food and other organic waste into compost provides a range of environmental benefits, including improving soil fertility, reducing soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions, recycling nutrients, and mitigating the impact of droughts. Compost is rich fertilizer for organic farming.

Manana Metreveli, a resident of village Utsera of the Racha-Lechkhumi and kvemo Svaneti region, has been making compost in the ground hole for years. Through the environmental project carried out by Caritas Czech Republic, she received a wooden compost box along with necessary equipment for compost making and underwent relevant training sessions on how to make compost properly. Manana says that the box is too big

and as she lives alone, she invites all the villagers to make the compost together in her yard:

“They often bring the waste to my yard and call over me – “here, Mananiko, I brought the waste to put in the compost”. I am especially happy when children are actively involved in such activities – they see what we are doing and repeat it, and they feel responsible. Raising awareness on this topic is of great importance, and in this regard, the guidelines distributed by Caritas Czech Republic and the practical training sessions conducted on the spot played a great role.”

Manana says that despite her own experience of making compost for years, after Caritas Czech Republic’s training sessions she found out some information that she did not know before:

“I did not know that some household waste can spoil the compost. For example, I used to put cheese in the compost, but at the training sessions provided by Caritas Czech Republic, I learned that it is better to avoid putting it in compost as it attracts rodents.”

Caritas Czech Republic provided 56 subsistence farms and 15 schools in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region with all the necessary equipment for making compost.



# Earth Day Celebrated on April 22

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Every year on April 22, Earth Day is celebrated.

In 1970, with the founding of Earth Day, another idea for the development of public consciousness was laid. The fight for a clean and healthy environment is becoming more urgent every day as climate change becomes more and more apparent every day. As awareness grows, so does the mobilization of civil society, which today is collectively protesting against climate change around the world. April 22 is a remarkable date in this respect.

Earth Day is universally recognized as

the biggest event in the world, celebrated by more than a billion people in various parts of the world each year. This day carries an idea that serves to change global, national or local policies for the benefit of the planet.

The Earth Day 2022 theme is Invest In Our Planet.

On this occasion, organization EARTHDAY.ORG, together with its partners, presents the Earth Day Climate Action Summit.

“We need to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century to keep the global temperature below 1.5°C. Join us to learn about some key solutions that will help us deliver the greenhouse gas reductions needed by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement,” announced EARTHDAY.Org.



## CULTURE



# Film Academy Cancels Salome Jashi's Film 'Taming Garden' Screenings

BY KETEVAN SKHIRTLDATSE

Georgian film director Salome Jashi posted on her Facebook page to announce that the film academy had canceled the screenings of her documentary film “Taming the Garden.”

“Those of you who were going to come screening of ‘Taming the Garden’ at the Cinema House, all the sessions except today’s were canceled by the Film Academy. The reason for the cancelation, as director Mindia Esadze, President of the Georgian Film Academy, implied that it is unacceptable for them to show “a work that causes differences of opin-

ion and divides society on political grounds.”

The film director noted that Esadze had not seen the film, adding that the film causes more diversity of thought as well as feelings, than differences.

“Georgian politics in the film is not mentioned, and even if it was, so what?” writes the director.

The film was nominated for the European Film Academy Award.

Jashi also stated that she is looking for a hall to continue screening the film, and to share with the audience the experience that the entire film crew has put together.

Today’s session will take place at 20:00 at the Cinema House. After this session, a question-and-answer session with Paul Rimple in English is scheduled.



The President of the Georgian Film Academy said it is unacceptable to show a work that...divides society on political grounds

# Georgia Celebrates Easter

BY ANA DUMBADZE

On April 24, Orthodox Christians, including Georgians, celebrated the holiday of Easter.

Georgians preserve particular traditions around Easter.

Georgian households dye Easter eggs red on Red (Good) Friday. The red-shelled eggs represent the blood of Christ.

People bake or buy a special Easter cake Paska. Paska symbolizes Golgotha, the site where Jesus was crucified.

On Saturday night, the day before Easter Sunday, the most devoted Orthodox Christians go to church and attend an overnight special service conducted in almost every church across the country.

The day after Easter, Georgians take food and wine to cemeteries and feast near the graves of their loved ones. They perform egg-tapping and egg-rolling traditions to tell their ancestors that Jesus has risen. The cracking of eggs symbolizes his resurrection from the dead. Georgians usually leave lit candles at the graveside and roll the red eggs across the grave.



Image: Prominent Georgian 19th century artist, Primitivist Niko Pirosmani – “Lamb and Easter Supper” (1914)



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