

## Assistance for Socially Vulnerable Children to Increase to 150 GEL Starting June 1

**O**n Prime Minister Garibashvili's decision, assistance for socially vulnerable children is to increase from 100 GEL to 150 GEL, being 341 million GEL of this year's total budget.

"I would like to start with the issue of protecting children's rights. Caring for them and bettering their social conditions is one of our team's main duties, and we have taken more than one step in this direction. A year ago, on my decision, we doubled social assistance for socially vulnerable children, from 50 to 100 GEL, and now we have decided to increase this assistance to 150 GEL per child starting June 1.

"This year's total budget in this component will make up 341 million GEL, and we have also decided to continue this assistance every year because caring for children is our direct duty. Of course, we all take to heart the conditions of socially vulnerable persons. Said decision applies to over 215,000 children.

"We also plan to issue and increase other types of assistance, including by launching new programs for socially vulnerable citizens. Our main goal is to provide as much support and assistance as possible to socially vulnerable persons. This targeted assistance must be provided to this very end," Garibashvili underlined.

## Tbilisi City Assembly and Red Cross to Deliver Medical Aid for Ukrainian People

**T**bilisi City Assembly and the Georgia Red Cross Society signed a mutual cooperation memorandum to support the Ukrainian people with medication this week.

Giorgi Tkemaladze, Chairman of Tbilisi City Municipal Assembly, and Nino Osepashvili, Secretary-General of the Georgia Red Cross Society, signed the memorandum.

"Tbilisi City Municipal Assembly, together with the Georgia Red Cross Society and the private sector will significantly contribute humanitarian aid to Ukraine. I want to thank all of the participants, the Assembly, and the staff members, as well as private companies who were eager to take part in this process," Tkemaladze said.

Tbilisi City Municipal Assembly and the Georgia Red Cross Society are to support the socially vulnerable community with medical aid in Ukraine, with the Georgia Red Cross Society taking responsibility to purchase medication with donated funds and deliver it to the Ukrain-



ian Red Cross Society.

"The situation is terrible in Ukraine today. Assembly members and staff are actively involved in humanitarian activities. We have purchased medical drugs

for socially vulnerable people. The Memorandum signed with the Georgia Red Cross Society will ensure delivery of the medication to the Ukrainian Red Cross Society," stated Zurab Chikviladze.

## 13,000 Internally Displaced Families to Receive New Housing in 2022-2025

**W**ithin the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) Resettlement Program, up to 13,000 Internally Displaced Families are to receive new housing in 2022-2025.

Up to 7000 Internally Displaced Families will receive compliant with international standards, fully renovated apartments in newly constructed residential buildings. The construction works start in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, and Borjomi in the spring of 2022 and will be gradually completed. At this stage, the construction of 700 apartments in Kutaisi is in the final stage. They will be handed over in autumn. The approximate budget of the program is 700,000,000 GEL.

Within the Alternative Resettlement



Photo source: agenda.ge

project, where IDPs search for housing themselves, and House in Village project, up to 6000 IDPs will be provided with housing. The total budget of the projects

is 200,000,000 GEL.

The program is aimed at providing IDPs with proper housing and dignified living conditions.

## Parliament Speaker: Georgia, Azerbaijan Play Major Role in Building Regional Peace



Image Source: ITV

**G**eorgia and Azerbaijan have always played a major role in building peace in the South Caucasus region, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Shalva Papuashvili stated at the press conference after meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart Sahiba Gafarova this week.

According to Papuashvili, the visit of the Azerbaijani delegation to Georgia is symbolic, as this year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of dip-

lomatic relations between the two countries.

The Speaker underscored the significant role of Georgia and Azerbaijan in ensuring peace in the region.

"Both countries should use this historic role to jointly promote peace, stability for the well-being of our countries and the region as a whole," he added.

According to Papuashvili, the meeting addressed the strategic partnership between countries and historical inter-ethnic ties.

Papuashvili thanked his Azerbaijani colleague for supporting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and, on his part, reaffirmed Georgia's unwavering support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

The Speaker of Azerbaijan's National Assembly stated that the parties discussed several regional topics and issues related to strengthening relations between countries.

"Azerbaijan and Georgia are friendly countries, strategic partners. This friendship is based on history," Gafarova stated. The guest thanked her Georgian counterpart for inviting and hosting the Azerbaijani parliamentary delegation to Georgia.

As part of the visit, Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan also met with PM Irakli Garibashvili and President Salome Zurbishvili.

During the meeting with Garibashvili, the parties discussed the friendly relations and strategic partnership between the countries.

The Head of the government praised the resumption of the meetings of the intergovernmental economic commission of the two countries. They also emphasized the importance of further development of the existing transport and energy projects, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, and the



Image Source: ITV

South Caucasus gas pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian pipeline (TANAP) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP).

At a meeting held at Orbeliani Palace, President Zurbishvili invited Gafarova to the International Conference of Women Leaders on Peace and Security. Gafarova expressed readiness to take part in the forum.

The Presidential Administration reported that the sides discussed the importance of further deepening bilateral political, economic and cultural

relations. The meeting addressed the current developments in Ukraine, the situation in the region, Black Sea security, and the importance of peace.

"Establishing peace and stability is important for further development of our region and full use of its cultural, economic or transit potential," the President noted.

She also emphasized the significance of European integration for the country. The Speaker of Azerbaijan's National Assembly arrived in Tbilisi on April 19.

# Week 8 of War in Ukraine: Russia Starts New Phase of War



Image source: REUTERS/Alkis Konstantinidis

BY ANA DUMBADZE

In the 8th week of Russia's invasion, heavy fighting is still going on in several cities of Ukraine. It is suggested that this phase of heavy fighting will last about two weeks, signifying the bloodiest moment of this war to date, and it will necessitate a large sacrifice for Ukraine, experts say.

## APRIL 18

"Ukraine's coordinated resistance has put the Russian army in a difficult situation and has slowed down Russia's advance. Attempts by the Russians to capture Mariupol caused great damage to the local population. A large amount of infrastructure has been destroyed and the population has suffered significant losses," read a statement from the British Ministry of Defense, citing intelligence data.

British intelligence says the occupation of target settlements near Mariupol is similar to what Russia did in 1999 in Chechnya and in 2016 in Syria.

"This is despite the fact that the Russian Ministry of Defense announced on February 24, that Russia will not strike cities and will not threaten the people of Ukraine," the British intelligence service said.

"The statements of the Russian occupiers about the imminent fall of Mariupol are not confirmed - the Ministry of Defense hopes that the Ukrainian army will be able to break the siege of the city," said the head of the Main Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, Kyrylo Budanov, in an interview with SPIEGEL.

He noted that the Russian occupiers have repeatedly stated that the city has been taken, which has not yet happened.

"Mariupol is a monument and an example of the heroism of our people and soldiers. The fall of the city has been talked about for a long time - the Russians first claimed that the city had already been captured, then said that its capture was inevitable, but, as you can see, it has

not happened yet, Budanov said.

The head of the main intelligence division also said that Mariupol would endure and not fall.

Budanov is convinced that "at some point, the Ukrainian army will be able to break the blockade."

Russia called on Ukrainian soldiers in Mariupol to lay down their arms and surrender, to which the Ukrainians refused. The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, said that if Russia destroys the Ukrainian military in Mariupol, peace talks with Russia will become impossible.

## APRIL 19

Russia started a new phase of the war in the Donbas region, representatives of the Ukrainian authorities, including President Volodymyr Zelensky, reported.

"We can now confirm that Russia has started fighting for Donbas, for which they have been preparing for a long time. A big part of the Russian army is now focused on this fight," President Zelensky said.

Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24 from three directions: from the north, in the direction of Kyiv, from the east from the Donbas region, and from the south from the Crimean Peninsula. After several weeks of unsuccessful attempts to take Kyiv, the Russian army completely withdrew from the Kyiv region in the direction of Belarus and began concentrating and regrouping its forces in the south-east, from where it is now attacking the Donbas region.

The war has so far claimed thousands of lives, including more than 200 children. Many Ukrainian cities have been totally destroyed.

Ukrainian officials in the Kharkiv and Luhansk regions have reported heavy bombardments by Russian forces, acknowledged a retreat from one important town, but claim to have successfully repulsed Russian attacks elsewhere, reported CNN.

"The mayor of Kharkiv, Ihor Terekhov, said on Ukrainian television that the city was being 'constantly bombarded.' He accused the Russians of 'bombing residential areas, residential buildings, where

there are crowds of people. There were hits today in the city. There are wounded and dead. Several hospitals and the city perinatal center were destroyed."

"Terekhov said that 30% of the city's population had left since the invasion began, but added that 'as a rule people do not want to leave the city,'" reads the article from CNN's Tim Lister and Julia Presniakova.

As reported by CNN, in the neighboring Luhansk region, the head of the regional military administration, Serhii Haidai, said: "The battle [for Donbas] has already begun, with multiple intensifications of shelling with all types of weapons, and attempts to break into the cities."

He said that because of Russian attacks "the number of settlements without electricity, water and gas is growing."

"There are only the remnants of infrastructure," he said, with 35 settlements without power - 21 completely and 14 partially, and 37 without gas. "There is no water supply in the towns of Rubizhne and Popasna," he said.

Based on the same source, Russian forces are on the edge of both towns.

"Popasna is being shelled massively," Haidai said. "In Zolote, shells hit a five-story building, several people were killed, several people were injured."

Haidai also spoke about the Ukrainian troops' retreat from the town of Kremynna in the Luhansk region Monday amid intense shelling.

"There was a battle at night; our troops retreated to positions that helped them defend themselves," he said.

"For a long time, our troops held the line of defense in Kremynna," Haidai said. "Freshly mobilized soldiers were thrown at them, reconnaissance was carried out, there were many attempts to attack. The enemy fired with GRAD, aircraft, mortars, artillery, and tanks. It no longer made sense to stay there. Our defenders would simply die, and there would be no point in that. That's why our defenders moved away from Kremynna."

"Our defenders, first of all, act so as not to harm citizens. The enemy, on the other hand, strikes at everything in its path," he said. "They no longer try to make breakthroughs, but just level everything to the ground."

"The Ukrainian Defense Ministry reported some successes elsewhere in the east, saying that Russian attempts to advance around Izium had been repelled. Russian forces have been arriving in the Izium area after the town fell at the beginning of the month, but they've made little progress since," reported CNN.

## APRIL 20

Ukraine received fighter jets to help resist the Russian invasion, as Moscow intensified its offensive in the east, where a besieged officer in Mariupol warned Wednesday that his forces were facing

their "last days, if not hours".

The commander of Ukrainian forces making a stand in Mariupol issued a dire warning Wednesday, saying his fighters holed up in the Azovstal steel plant were "dying underground."

In audio messages sent to The Washington Post, Major Serhiy Volynia of the 36th Separate Marine Brigade, holding out against an advancing and much larger Russian force, appealed for other countries to help them secure a way out.

"While the world is asleep, in Mariupol, the guys are dying," Volynia said. "They're suffering losses. They're being bombed, torn up by artillery, and they're dying underground surrounded by the wounded and the living."

His comments came as another deadline was set by the Kremlin for Ukrainian forces in Mariupol to surrender. Previous deadlines issued by Moscow had been refused.

Russia's state-run news agency Wednesday reported that a "mop-up operation in Mariupol" was "nearing its conclusion," citing a statement from a pro-Moscow separatist group in the area.

"Ukraine has reached an agreement with Russia to establish a humanitarian corridor for the evacuation of women, children and the elderly from the besieged city of Mariupol," said Ukrainian Vice Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk. "Given the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Mariupol, we will focus our efforts here today," she wrote on Facebook.

Thousands of people have been stranded for several weeks in the port city of Mariupol, which is under siege by Russian forces.

Ukraine hoped to evacuate 6000 women, children and elderly people from Mariupol on Wednesday if its preliminary agreement with Russia held.

Mayor Vadym Boichenko, who left Mariupol, said 90 buses were waiting to head to the devastated southern port city. He cautioned that the agreement was still only a preliminary arrangement and that about 100,000 civilians remained there.

According to Reuters, a small group of civilians was able to leave the besieged city of Mariupol in southern Ukraine. According to eyewitnesses in the port city, dozens of people boarded a small convoy of buses and left the planned evacuation point for Zaporozhye.

Charles Michel met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv. Zelensky said he and the President of the European Council discussed sanctions against Russia, support for Ukraine's defense and financial sector, and the questionnaire necessary for EU membership.

"A great friend of Ukraine - the President of the European Council, Charles Michel is in Kyiv today. We discussed sanctions against Russia, our state's defense and financial support, and answers

to the questionnaire in line with EU criteria. Thank you for the important meeting with the people and for the solidarity!" Zelensky wrote on Twitter.

Michel's show of solidarity comes after European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell traveled to the Ukrainian capital earlier this month.

On Tuesday, Western leaders had promised to provide more help to Ukraine during a videoconference convened by US President Joe Biden, which Michel participated in along with other EU leaders.

## APRIL 21

Ukrainian Vice Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk reported that the humanitarian corridor from Mariupol did not work as planned.

"Unfortunately, the humanitarian corridor from Mariupol did not work as planned today. Due to the lack of control over their own military in place, the occupiers were unable to ensure a proper ceasefire.

"Also due to their disorganization and negligence, the occupiers could not provide timely transport of people to the point where dozens of our buses and ambulances were waiting.

"Tomorrow morning, we will renew our evacuation efforts. To our people in Mariupol: we will fight for each of you!" she wrote on Facebook.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the sides to hold a humanitarian pause in Ukraine for four days starting April 21.

Kyiv agreed with the appeal for a four-day humanitarian truce during Easter, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said.

"We fully share the opinion that a humanitarian break is necessary for the safe evacuation of thousands of civilians that want to leave dangerous areas of the ongoing hostilities, first of all from long-suffering Mariupol," the ministry said.

First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN Dmitry Polyansky on Tuesday said that he was skeptical about the idea of an Easter truce in Ukraine because Ukraine hadn't observed previous armistice agreements. Polyansky said that the Defense Ministry in Moscow should make a decision on a possible truce.

The head of the Donetsk People's Republic Denis Pushilin told TASS on Monday that Antonio Guterres' proposal for a humanitarian pause to safely deliver humanitarian aid is potentially dangerous, as "Ukraine always uses ceasefires to regroup its forces and reinforce positions."

Russia rejected the UN's plea for an Easter break to the fighting early on Thursday morning.

# The World Standing by Ukraine: Weapons and Financial Support Increased

BY KETEVAN SKHIRTADZE

European Council chief Charles Michel, representing EU member states, arrived in Kyiv on Wednesday as Russia continues its new offensive in the east of Ukraine.

Michel and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky discussed sanctions against Russia, support for Ukraine's defense and financial sector, and the questionnaire Ukraine is completing in its bid for EU membership.

Michel's show of solidarity comes after European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell also visited the Ukrainian capital earlier this month.

On Tuesday, Western leaders promised to provide more help to Ukraine during a videoconference convened by US President Joe Biden, which Michel participated in along with other EU leaders.

The European Union approved an additional 500 million Euros for military

equipment for the Ukrainian Armed forces, and Pentagon press secretary John Kirby told reporters that the US will deliver 18 Howitzers and 40,000 artillery rounds to Ukraine in the coming days. The US has also delivered "additional aircraft and the aircraft parts to help them get more aircraft in the air."

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned the US that transferring weapons systems to Ukraine could lead to "unpredicted consequences."

## A CALL FOR WEAPONS, NEW OR OLD

President Zelensky stated this week that until Russia returns internally displaced Ukrainians, until it "returns thousands of children," it should not get money from European states and companies.

"The EU has no right to sponsor deportation. Ukraine should receive EU candidate status quickly," he said. "Just as the Russian troops are destroying Mariupol, they want to wipe out other cities and communities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions."

He then again asked for more weapons to be sent, noting that it was "unfair"



Image source: Then24.com

that Ukraine has to ask for what its partners have been storing in a warehouse for years. If they have weapons that Ukraine needs here and now, he said, then it is their moral obligation to help Ukraine protect freedom and save the lives of thousands of Ukrainians.

## UK

UK PM Boris Johnson said this week that Britain will increase the supply of military equipment that Ukrainian needs, noting that the war "has turned into an artillery conflict."

The United Kingdom has included

more than 200 Russian individuals and legal entities in its list of sanctioned individuals.

## FRANCE

President of France, Emmanuel Macron, said that France "doesn't need" Russian gas and that they will continue to push for sanctions on Russian gas supplies.

"Europe depends on Russian gas, but France doesn't need it," he said.

He denied reports that it was on his initiative that the issue of an embargo on Russian oil was postponed until after the presidential elections in France.

## JAPAN

Japan is sending drones and anti-biological and chemical weapons equipment to Ukraine in the face of increased threats from the Russian side to use such weapons in the renewed fight.

"The Defense Minister of Japan has decided to send special equipment and drones to the Ukrainian government. The struggle of the Ukrainians to defend their country continues, and as such, Japan will continue to help it," said the Ministry of Defense of Japan.

## LITHUANIA

Lithuania has handed over heavy mortars to Ukraine. The amount of weapons transferred to Ukraine was not specified, although it is known that the cost of military aid delivered by Vilnius is in the tens of millions of Euros.

"Vilnius handed over heavy mortars to Ukraine, the cost of all military assistance to Kyiv is tens of millions of Euros. We gave Ukraine help in form of heavy mortars, I won't name a number, but we definitely donated more than one," said the Defense Minister of Lithuania.

# Tired of Being Politically Correct: Former Ukrainian PM Yatsenyuk Lets His Emotions Out on the Western Foreign Policy, Macron's "Crap," and Georgia's Lack of Support

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE FOR RFE

**T**he way the Ukrainian military is fighting like hell and how courageous Ukrainian men and women are in uniform is actually one of the biggest examples in the contemporary world of really heroic actions. The sunken flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, "Moskva," was a farewell to Putin and his Moscow, - Ukraine's former Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk told Radio Free Europe's Georgian service in a wide-ranging interview, speaking from an undisclosed location in Ukraine.

**RUSSIA RETREATED NOT OUT OF GOODWILL, BUT BECAUSE THEY HADN'T FULFILLED THEIR MILITARY OBJECTIVES. WHAT TO EXPECT NOW? WHAT ARE THE KREMLIN'S NEW OBJECTIVES AND IS UKRAINE PREPARED FOR THEM?**

As he failed to reach his initial targets, Putin switched to Plan B, and two days ago he actually made a rare public appearance to disclose his new plan, which is to take over the eastern part of Ukraine with Donetsk and Lugansk, and to establish his rule there. I expect there will be very bloody and severe battles in the east of Ukraine, and Putin will do his best with his military to achieve a victory before the ninth of May, which is the Victory Day in the Soviet Union.

**WHAT PERCEIVABLE PACKAGE COULD HE OFFER HIS DOMESTIC AUDIENCE ON VICTORY DAY?**

I don't want anyone to deliberate what Putin is ready to sell to his so called public voters, because the Russian people are the same criminals as Putin - 80% of the Russian population supports Putin's policy. So I don't distinguish them.

**I'VE SEEN WESTERN OPINION-MAKERS QUESTION THOSE POLLS. DO YOU BELIEVE THEY ARE GENUINE?**

I can question the numbers, whether it's 80%, or 70%, or 65%, or 85%, but I don't question the general sentiment of the Russian people. And the general mood is anti-Ukrainian, anti-Western, anti-freedom. This is the axis of evil. And it's not just Putin, because it wasn't Putin fighting in Irpin or Bucha, killing innocent Ukrainians. It isn't Putin in Mariupol. These are his soldiers, and they are Russians. It's like Nazi Germany. Russia is the only country that needs de-nazification, because Putin is a real Nazi style leader. And his people are contaminated with these kinds of Nazi-style policies against Ukrainians. And not only Ukrainians, against everyone who wants to live a free and fair life.

**DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN WIN THIS WAR IN CONVENTIONAL TERMS, AND, IF YES, HOW DO YOU PICTURE IT HAPPENING?**

I strongly believe that Ukraine will win this righteous war. I strongly believe that our victory will come. I do understand that it will take a very bloody, difficult, dramatic route. And look at all the suffering, all these tragedies that have unfolded in Ukraine. 11 million Ukrainians have already been displaced. Millions of Ukrainian refugees, huge casualties, a very high death toll. And this is the real tragedy. But we have just two options: To win, or to lose; to survive, or to be exterminated by the Russians. So, in a sense, we have only one option: We as Ukraine, and we, as part of the free world, must win and survive. There is no alternative.

**SO WHAT HAPPENS IF RUSSIA GOES FULL ON EXTERMINATION**



**TACTICS? THEY INSINUATE THAT MARIUPOL WON'T BE THE ONLY CITY TO END UP LIKE MARIUPOL IS TODAY.**

In terms of Putin and Russian tactics, no doubt they will do what they did in Grozny, in Aleppo, in Mariupol. And they've got the same commander. A brutal, bloody asshole, like everyone in the Russian military. So they will definitely try to apply this tactic and they've done so in a number of areas in Ukraine - in the Kyiv suburbs, in Mariupol, in Chernihiv, in Kharkiv - the tactics of the Russian military are very clear: To kill everyone and destroy everything. So that's the reason a supply of lethal defensive and offensive weapons, and I want to focus on offensive weapons, is desperately needed for the Ukrainian military.

**IS THE WEST DOING ENOUGH AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT?**

We've seen a tremendous change in Western politics. I really commend the US administration, and bipartisan support in the United States, the UK, and actually across the entire European Union. That's what Putin didn't expect. And this was a very big misjudgment on his part: He was completely convinced that the western world is fragile, and the response to such brutal aggression against Ukraine would be weak and ineffective. The West has changed its policy towards Russia: It has turned the tide.

**IRREVERSIBLY SO?**

I would like to think so. But thinking as a politician, I have doubts. And these doubts have grounds, for example, Hungary. We see very close ties between our neighbor and close partner Hungary and our adversary - the Russian Federation. France - let's pray that Le Pen loses these elections, but on the other hand, she got around 20% of the French voters. For me, this is a way to read the sentiments of a certain share of the French people. She's anti-Western, anti-NATO, and actually pro-Putin.



We have just two options: To win or to lose; to survive or to be exterminated by the Russians



The Russian people are the same criminals as Putin. 80% of the Russian population supports his policy, so I don't distinguish them

**SINCE YOU MENTIONED LE PEN, IT WOULD BE UNFAIR NOT TO ASK ABOUT PRESIDENT MACRON. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF HIS RECENT QUOTE ON GENOCIDE, AND ON RUSSIANS AND UKRAINIANS BEING BROTHERLY NATIONS?**

You know, I am tired of having to be politically correct. So my answer is that I am very pissed off. Mr. President, we are not one nation with Russians, we are completely different. And if you need a historic report to prove it, I am ready to deliver. We highly appreciate your support. We highly appreciate that you decided to be on the same page with every other European Union member state and with our American and British allies and partners. I do appreciate this. And I do understand that you want to win the elections. Even I want you to win the elections. But, please, don't say such crap.

**WE HAVE A VERY INTERESTING U-TURN IN GERMANY: UNREPENTANT MERKEL AND REPENTANT STEINMEIER, WHO WAS TOLD HE WASN'T WANTED IN KYIV, AND SO CANCELLED HIS TRIP. THEN THERE'S YOUR AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY WHO HAS BECOME A THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE GERMAN POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT. HOW DOES THE GERMAN PANORAMA LOOK RIGHT NOW?**

Let me start with President Steinmeier, and his cancelled visit to Ukraine. I believe it would be better for German-Ukrainian relations to have the German president visit Kyiv. He represents the state, he publicly acknowledged that he

was wrong about Russia, and he represents a big swath of the German electorate. So, in the current circumstances, it is best to have him as a friend and ally. German politics has changed dramatically, which is good for Germany and good for Ukraine. But, mainly, this is good for Germany, because Germany was completely and heavily reliant on Russian oil and gas - a so called investment, strong economic, financial and even political links with the Russian Federation. This kind of policy made Germany weaker, not stronger. The new German government has realized that they have to actually launch a new era of German foreign policy.

**DO THINK THIS NEW ERA WILL LAST?**

That's a big question. There are different sentiments in German society. And it's not only about sentiments, it is about very clear economic data, high inflation, high unemployment, high utility bills; about the competitiveness of German goods in the European Union and globally. Germany has to realize that in the short-term, they need to pay the price. And this price is nothing compared with the price Ukrainians are paying, just nothing. We're talking about 1% of their GDP, or two additional percent inflation, or another few 10s of billions of Euros that have to be injected into the German economy. So it's nothing in the short-run. But in the long-run, if Germany stays the course, as they initially decided, this will make Germany stronger. This will increase the competitiveness of the German economy. And it will make Germany more secure. So it's up to the German political establishment to decide. Conventional wisdom, and they are well aware of what conventional wisdom is about, says that they have made the right choice. Now they have to execute this choice, to start down that road.

**MOLDOVA AND GEORGIA HAVE, FOR THE LACK OF A BETTER WORD, "INTERESTING" STANCES ON UKRAINE. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THE SITUATION?**

You are being politically correct, I will not be: What they are doing is wrong. Period. Both of them, Moldova and Georgia. They suffered a Russian invasion in Transnistria and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They know the Russian playbook. We all shared the same values. And in these dramatic and challenging times, it was so important for the Ukrainian people, and for people of Georgia and Moldova, to show real unity to stand as one united front, to impose sanctions against Russia. If Ukraine falls, both Moldova and Georgia will fall. Period.

**THE REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARGUE THAT IT COULD END UP MAKING THEIR COUNTRIES SUFFER JUST AS UKRAINE IS RIGHT NOW, AND IN THE VERY FORESEEABLE FUTURE. A FAIR JUSTIFICATION?**

This is very old, outdated and untrue justification. Let's go back into history: Russia never needs any kind of pretext - they will always find one. So, I want to reiterate once again: We are fighting for Ukraine. We are fighting for freedom in Europe, and we are fighting for Georgia and Moldova too. We are at the front in this fight. If Putin succeeds in taking over Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova will be next, because he wants to restore the entire Soviet Union.

**LET'S GO BACK TO 2014. YOU'RE A NEWLY APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER, AND THE RUSSIANS OCCUPY CRIMEA, WHICH WILL LATER, AS WE KNOW, BE ANNEXED. CAN YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?**

The same day Russia occupied Crimea, I was appointed by a constitutional majority as the Prime Minister. My recollections: An entire country on fire, no government, no military. I asked the General Chief of Staff to provide me with the data, how much real military we had. His answer: Combat-ready, just 5000 troops for the entirety of Ukraine. We had a Treasury of just 108,000 Hryvnas, around \$10,000. For the entire country. The day I was sworn in as Prime Minister. 5000 combat-ready troops and \$10,000 for the entire country. This was the reality. These were the facts. And when the Russian military took over Crimea, the Ukrainian military in Crimea refused to execute the orders of the Commander-in-Chief and acting president. And then the Russian military started to prepare a large scale offensive in Donetsk and Lugansk. No police, no local government, just complete disaster.

But you know what? I was totally convinced that we would survive. I said to everyone in the government, "folks, we are on a kamikaze mission," I said it publicly, in the house. "And we are going to accomplish this mission. I'm not sure whether we'll survive as politicians or members of the government, but I have no doubt that Ukraine will survive." The same goes for right now. I strongly believe that Ukraine will survive. Yes, there's going to be drama. Yes, it's a very bloody war. Yes, lots of suffering. But you know, in the long-run, there is what I call "global justice." Russians always tried to conquer us, to exterminate us, to kill us, to wipe us off the global map. But we always came back, we always reemerged. So I believe that in the long-run, we will win this war.



Germany has to realize that in the short-term, they need to pay the price. And this price is nothing compared with the price Ukrainians are paying

# Ukraine: Georgia's Learning Moment



Georgian soldiers receive classes from the United States Marine Corps in the National Training Center "Krtsanisi". Source: Georgian Ministry of Defense

ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL GODWIN

**A**s the invasion in Ukraine nears the 60-day mark, lessons from the battlefield are already making their way into strategy and brainstorming sessions across NATO. The beginning of studies and changes in doctrine are being discussed by many of the senior military leadership of the alliance. After seeing the reality of both manpower and technology on the ground, Georgia too should be taking notes.

Despite it being almost 14 years since Georgia last engaged Russian forces in open conflict, they are far from being out of the Kremlin's sights. With Russian ambitions in the South Caucasus potentially being questioned, it is likely the Russia Bear will not hesitate to violently remind the residents of the region of their power.

Georgia has been dealing with the occupied territories and the forces stationed there. The nation will need to go back to the planning board to reassess how they intend on keeping their sovereignty. Three key takeaways from the struggles of her Black Sea neighbor can help; the weakness of tanks, a refocus on junior leadership and warfighting basics, and awareness of electronic and informational warfare.

Armored vehicles have long been a hallmark of the modern battlefield. However, the image of the bastion of power and armor that the Main Battle Tank (MBT) one had has largely been shattered. Massive improvements in targeting and penetration capabilities for man-portable anti-tank tools have leveled the playing field.

In addition to other weapons, the United States-supplied FGM-148 Javelin has now become almost legendary, or meme status, in the Russo-Ukrainian war. Commonly seen on social media but also on clothing and other mediums, a stylized image of a saint dubbed "Saint Javelin" has even become a symbol for the staunch Ukrainian defense units. The unique top-down attack of the Javelin's missile allows it to strike the top of a target where the armor is weakest. This has led to scores of destroyed, damaged and captured Russian armor.

This, along with the British NLAW anti-tank rocket, has allowed small units of light infantry in urban or suburban terrain to become the main threat. These units are able to use the terrain, the distances, and their agility to strike deci-

sively against Russian threats almost anywhere. In a rekindled conflict in Georgia, defenders will need to harness this ability. One matter of note is the terrain.

Central Georgia and the land around the capitol are particularly hilly, even somewhat mountainous and wooded. This is exceptionally difficult for heavily armored vehicles and favors a light infantry defender. The skillful employment of Georgian units with these anti-tank weapons and technology could stall a Russian attempt to take the city.

Since 2018, Georgia has received 118 Command Launcher Units (the targeting and fire control component) and almost 500 missiles from the United States. Compared with their numbers and performance in Ukraine, this would likely be insufficient in the defense of Georgia. Getting these systems into the hands of Georgian soldiers, as well as potentially to volunteer units as well, is imperative as a precautionary measure.

Another focus for Georgian commanders, and even the individual soldiers, is a return to fundamental warfighting tasks. The pillars of shoot, move and communicate are often overshadowed by advanced technology and a reliance on artillery. It is essential that battalion and below units are able to execute ambushes, layered defense, and exploit openings on the battlefield.

In Ukraine, commanders have been

able to utilize these small unit tactics successfully against a larger, heavier force. A key component of this tactic is the decentralized leadership model, which allows smaller units to operate semi-autonomously on the battlefield. By delegating decision-making authority to junior officers and non-commissioned officers, these agile attacks become more deadly.

The Russian army, long steeped in its Soviet-era rank model, has been incredibly slow to develop their non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps. This has resulted in poor or a total lack of immediate decision making in combat. The United States, only one example in NATO, has notoriously poured immense resources into training and educating its junior leadership. Coupled with the earned experience an NCO brings, this ensures that doctrine is grounded by real-world examples.

Georgian NCOs should likewise be invested in and developed as the backbone of their units. Increasing the agility and speed of defense units against a Russian invasion, just as in Ukraine, is what decides victory. While Russian NCOs have neither the authority nor in many cases the experience to react properly, the initiative stays with the Georgians.

One of the latest developments seen on the modern battlefield is still being witnessed in Ukraine. The electronic

warfare component is something that Russia touted prior to the invasion, but has only deployed in limited capacity. While it could be postulated that this is to limit their tactical exposure, it is more likely that it is because of the inadequacy of these systems in real combat.

Exploiting this, Ukraine has operated freely in the electronic space. From communications to loitering munitions targeting, many systems have had free reign to enable the Ukrainian defenders. On the Russian side, there have been shortcomings of which Georgia can take note. Open source intelligence has shared leaked Russian army radio frequencies. Among these leaks are recordings of everything from Ukrainian music to messages "trolling" the Russian soldiers on the receiving end.

While the enjoyment of sending music across military radiowaves is one strategy, others have taken to sharing leaked tactics and movements to Ukrainian leadership. This lack of radio encryption is a grave vulnerability for the Russians, or any army in such a predicament. For Georgia, the ability to read the Russian movements during a conflict could collapse any attempt to storm Tbilisi.

To exploit this, Georgian command needs to establish a special expeditionary group and invest resources into interception and jamming devices. NATO used these devices in Afghanistan to simultaneously jam and listen in on

enemy radio communications. When this is coupled with other technologies, it can also triangulate the enemy position for targeting by artillery or ambush forces. This signals intelligence, often referred to as SIGINT, needs to become a component of the active defense of the nation.

While these three subjects are not a comprehensive list, it is a piece of the larger knowledge corpus. Georgia, ever learning from NATO and other friendly partners, has the material at hand. Ukraine, sadly thrust into this position by the ambitions of a dictator in Moscow, can provide lessons for other potential targets of the Kremlin. Georgia is still at the top of this list. Additional measures provided to reduce the threat of Russia's armor, developing the tactical decision-making body of NCOs, and SIGINT technologies on the battlefield are all highlights of the Ukrainian lesson.

This lesson is sadly still ongoing. Ukraine and Russia have little incentive to agree to each other's ceasefire offers. Ukraine refuses to cede its sovereign territory and Putin could never abandon his attempt at conquest for risk of losing political face. Despite this tragedy, Georgia has a unique opportunity to see the Bear in action and learn in real time. Command staff should not squander this opportunity to better prepare for a defensive action that is more likely to come again than not.



Ukrainian soldiers fire US-supplied Javelin missiles during military exercises in Donetsk region, Ukraine, prior to the invasion. Source: Ukrainian Ministry of Defense

# The Change Triggered by the War

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Not exactly unexpected, the extent to which the Russian-Ukrainian war has spilled over its edges, being a “win or bust” on the part of both sides. The question is no longer who wins the war, but what happens to the planet as a result, notwithstanding the fact that this is not a world war in the physical sense, but by the level of moral involvement, it does happen to be a global military affair. Perhaps it will indeed be given the appellation WWII, and there will be no exaggeration in such a nomenclature, because a much higher number of countries are engaged in the process, this way or that, than in any other warfare in history. The majority of analysts are refraining from making any substantial prognosis, however, cautious that a stray prediction might have a negative effect on their reputation as experts.

Now that the mishaps of previous world wars are in the past, hardly anyone wants to imagine that the same misfortune will overwhelm Mankind once again. Many would say it looks like a war movie, with familiar images of savaged human lives that will never fade from our memory. But this is no source of solace, of course, in the current situation we humans find ourselves in, seemingly out of the blue.

Most political scientists around the world speak in morose and pessimistic tones when they judge Russia's current behavior and its prospective place among the nations of the world, saying that Russia will lose even if it wins this war, in depleting resources, worldwide anger, criminality of action, Putin's doubting entourage, Ukrainian resistance, shrinkage of energy resource clientele, economic drawback, possible financial default, pacifistic mood of millions of Russians, and the detrimental overall impression that Russia makes on the rest of the world, losing friends one after another and winning enemies in droves.

Although this might all be true, the Russian state and its military machine are still hanging in there, ceaselessly ready for another assault on those tireless Ukrainian fighters, keeping the world in diabolic suspense and fearful expectation. Yet, we seldom hear any comments from western experts as to whether Europe and the United States did their affordable best to prevent this war in Europe, having treated with flagrant insouciance the Russian entreaty to refrain from augmenting NATO membership at the expense of Russia's national security, concluding that Russia will end this war with the opposite results it expected to achieve before its intrusion into Ukraine, and predicting that NATO and the European Union will come out from the conflict not weakened and splintered, but better armed and more



Image source: scitechdaily.com

tightly united, covering even wider borders of Russia than they had hoped to covet before the war.

The world has been threatened many times in the past, but the world's leaders always steered away from the dilemma of another world war. Not this time, though! Why? What happened? Why is this situation any different from the ones we faced before? These questions are still waiting for relevant and scientifically corroborated responses, although

it might be too early yet to expect helpful answers. Following the raucous disintegration of the ill-fated USSR, the West made it a rule to let Russia feel like a second-rate state, and who knows how fair it was or how well it served the world's best interests of peaceful development. Not that this could be the reason for the current war, but there might still be a vestige of truth in this unpopular idea.

What I know for sure, thinking at the

grassroots level, is that friendship, understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation might work much more fruitfully than derision, contradiction and animosity. I believe things could have been much better today on the planet, had useful coexistence been honored between East and West, and North and South. Instead, all of us are the victims of the controversy and confrontation which has taken over the world, all of us sailing in the same rocking boat of losers.

## Russia and Iran: Natural Partners in Enforcing an Alternative Order



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian leader Ebrahim Raisi. Image source: Twitter

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

Moscow and Tehran are increasingly cooperative. Both loathe the liberal world order and feverishly contest it on the global stage, and more specifically in the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, creating a momentum for advancement of bilateral relations. This is, however, where the troubles begin. Concrete moves in economic and military realms are constantly postponed. Partnership remains with significant limits.

Iran-Russia relations seems to be on a growing track after Ebrahim Raisi came to power. A good reflection of the seeming uptick in bilateral ties is Raisi's January trip to Moscow.

The meeting took place before the announced joint Russian-Chinese-Iranian

naval exercise in the Persian Gulf. Yet another and more significant development has been the nuclear talks in Vienna where Russia plays an instrumental role.

Since Raisi took over, his administration's emphasis on the Eurasian vector in Iran's foreign policy has gained momentum: progress in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, closer ties with China, and the pursuit of more intensified ties with the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

When Raisi visited Moscow, hopes for advancement in bilateral relations were high. This, however, did not materialize, as talks about deeper military cooperation did not result in anything specific. Trade, too, is stagnating, having exceeded \$3.5 billion in 2021, but falling short of what Russia enjoys with other regional powers. Here, Turkey comes to mind, with which Russia's economic ties are near the \$20-\$25 billion mark.

Though Iran-Russia cooperation seems

to have a momentum propelled by wider global issues, it nevertheless lacks the dynamism peculiar to Russia-Turkey or Russia-China ties. The scope of Moscow's cooperation with those states is much bigger, and Turkey and China are far more significant economic players than Iran, which remains constrained by US economic sanctions.

Iran and Russia portray themselves as civilizational powers which find themselves constrained by the liberal world order. The two therefore see each other as natural partners (perhaps even allies in this specific case) in matters of opposing and eventually pushing against the collective West in a broad array of issues, ranging from security to military affairs.

Based on the civilizational approach, the Islamic Republic and Russia envision a different kind of world order. More chaotic, less structured through official alliances, for Moscow and Tehran, the

anti-liberal world order should be based more on pure traditions of the great powers' competition of the past. Spheres of influence, government to government decisions over exchange and incorporation of lands without fear of repercussions - flouting international law will be less of a concern as principal international bodies upholding multilateral structure should be either weakened or disbanded altogether. Great power relations would also involve the introduction of the concept of regionalism, when big Eurasian states will be striving to dominate certain geographic areas in between by shutting out non-regional actors.

Close Russia-Iran ties will have a considerable impact on the way things shape up in the South Caucasus. This is the area, along with the Caspian Sea, where Moscow and Iran seek to establish a post-liberal order. To be sure, Iran has far fewer levers of power to influence the process, but in closer partnership with Russia, the Islamic Republic will be able to shape the geopolitics of the region congenial to Tehran's security and economic interests.

The South Caucasus has indeed been transformed into a theater of greater interest for Iran. Ever since the end of the Soviet Union, the region has been an area where Tehran strived to advance its position. It was, however, not a primary concern for the Islamic Republic. The Middle East was and remains the space where Iranian power is shaped and projected.

The results of the second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 and proposed changes to the military, economic and trade patterns in the South Caucasus left Iran if not entirely sidelined, then with significantly limited potential to influence the process on the ground.

To this should be added the re-emergence of Turkey as a major power in the region. A historic rival to various Iranian empires of the past, Turkey's growing clout is being seen with much

concern in Tehran.

This drives Iran into Russia's embrace. A long term picture could thus be seen: Russia and Iran finding more common ground on various issues, from building a more convenient security environment by blocking non-regional powers, to containing Turkey's disruptive entry into the South Caucasus. Moscow and Tehran both loath Ankara's growing ambitions, as the latter is now more actively looking toward the Caspian basin and the Central Asian region.

Iran feels comfortable with Russia's position in the South Caucasus. The power which unilaterally controlled the region since early 19th century is now a power which shares Iran's near identical fears of Western economic and military expansion into the region. Georgia in NATO means bigger limits for Iran, as does the spread of democracy and the EU's economic power. Similarly, Azerbaijan's cooperation with Western powers also causes distrust and fears among Iranian politicians. As these concerns overlap with Russia's, the two are natural partners in trying to enforce an alternative order in the South Caucasus.

Contesting the liberal principles and the West-led multilateralism will remain a driving force behind Iran-Russia cooperation. It will, however, lack substance, making it fall short of what Russia enjoys in its other partnerships with Eurasian powers. The lifting of US sanctions could be a game-changer for Russian businesses to operate in the Islamic Republic. Perhaps greater antagonism with the West could push Moscow and Tehran further to find a fitting formula regarding Iran's far more substantive cooperation with the EEU. Until then, though, both states will remain mainly content with the broader opposition to the liberal order than advancement of ties.

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

# OP-ED: Russia Must Commit War Crimes to Win

OP-ED BY MICHAEL GODWIN

**N**ote: This article is purely opinion. It is NOT in support of or to rationalize the Russian military actions and alleged crimes in Ukraine. It is merely an attempt to explore why this option is even open to Russian soldiers and their commanders from the point of view of a Western military mind.

The world was shocked after Russian forces began to retreat from their positions around Kyiv. Scenes of the streets of Bucha left people enraged and in tears. Imagery from the surrounded bastions in Mariupol stun Western audiences. Even the breadth of the destruction of soldiers and military vehicles have brought a litany of powerful emotions to viewers. However, it should come as no surprise that this is what the Russian military is doing. This, in fact, is the only way the invasion force can possibly pull some semblance of victory from the fires of destruction.

The reasons behind the decision to commit these acts go back to Soviet military doctrine. Overwhelming firepower and an "active defense" model allow the enemy to take ground but be hammered by thunderous artillery until the attack is unsustainable. Once the force is broken and cannot attack further, the motorized infantry and armor crush the remaining force in an unrelenting storm of attacks and scorched earth advances. This, along with the infamous weather, were the undoing of both Napoleon and Hitler. Simple.

This has been the underlying strategy in virtually all of Soviet and then Russian military doctrine. However, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia forces faced a more insidious enemy; insurgents

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For Russian soldiers, this is simply a means to an end. Civilians are either an obstacle to overcome or a bargaining chip on the battlefield



Ukraine's Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova visits a mass grave in Bucha, on the outskirts of Kyiv, on April 13, 2022. By Fadel Senna/AFP via Getty Images

and guerilla light infantry. The fluid and regenerative nature of these types of forces were able to withstand the unrelenting and oppressive force. In Chechnya, they leveled Grozny in order to subdue it. However, this only emboldened the defenders, and resulted in massive casualties in the urban assault.

In 2008, they discovered the new face of modern warfare. While technically and tactically overpowering the Georgian Army, they were unable to coordinate between themselves and deliver a decisive blow. Several incidents of friendly fire occurred, even resulting in the accidental downing of their own aircraft. In a combination of both frustration and confusion, civilian structures were torched, Georgian cities bombed, and innocent civilians shot.

Then came the reformation. After the Russo-Georgian war, the Russian Ministry of Defense set out to deliver a massive overhaul of the armed forces. From advanced targeting and fire control systems on armored vehicles to the new Ratnik infantry combat kit program, the entire force structure was rebuilt.

Their first, more covert, invasion of Ukraine, in 2014, was conducted with immense informational and electronic preparation of the battlefield. As the territory was already of Russo-Slavic persuasion, it was far easier to coax popular support for a puppet regime. Syria (another venture deserving of its own deep-dive) was a venture exercising this power into the Middle East.

Fast forward to Ukraine 2022. A rapid

strike to change the regime became a dogged street to street fight. Russian forces suffered a massive logistical and rear security miscalculation, leaving expeditionary forces stranded, airborne forces cut off, and supply lines vulnerable. After almost two months, a forced withdrawal under the guise of "shifting to Phase 2" began. However, it revealed the only means with which the Russians could subdue territory.

Russian troops at the tactical level are wholly unable to engage and destroy an enemy without brutal and withering supporting fire and immense casualties. Despite the new look of Russian soldiers in Western-style kit, they are not far from their 1990s precursors. Coupled with abysmally low morale, poor training standards and inexperienced leadership, these forces know that brute strength and ignorance can still win.

One thing of note is the leadership structure in the Russian army. Unlike what many Western soldiers and veterans are used to, the Russians have a virtually non-existent Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) framework. In the United States Army, it is often said that the NCO is the backbone of the Army. Sergeants are the core of a soldier's upbringing in the formative years in their military service.

Millions, even billions by some estimates, are poured into the training, development, and broad education of America's NCO corp. NCOs are notoriously sent to various courses to expand their technical and tactical prowess. By

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The psychological distance between the Western and the Russian soldier is massive. For the Russians, the political and career goals are far more of a concern than the costs to achieve them

the time a junior NCO becomes a senior NCO, company or battalion level, they have over a decade of experience and training behind them. This is used extensively to train and develop the junior enlisted, and so the cycle continues.

The Russian army is a different matter. Russian army NCO are not tasked with the same leadership roles that many are

in the West. Rather than being tasked with the professional development of their subordinates, they are simply more senior soldiers. This significant change has been termed a difference between "enlisted professionals" compared to Western "non-commissioned officers."

Much of the leadership, command, and control responsibility is shifted to the officer corps. While their officer training regimen is certainly not subpar, it is very narrow in scope. Whereas many NATO officer candidate programs aim to build flexible and tactically creative leaders, the Russian model is focused only on teaching the technical aspects of the officers' occupational field. This tight focus on doctrinal thinking creates leadership that problem-solve on the battlefield in a linear method, with little room for deviation, leading to a fighting force that is prone to frustration and anger. As always, it is either the enemy force or the civilians that will bear the brunt of this. For Russian forces in Ukraine, it was both. In their mind, if the populace would not support them, they would be placed in a position where they had no choice.

The assault on civilian populations is the natural response to weeks fighting a determined enemy. Watching their squadmates killed by the dozens due to inept or delayed leadership decision making, reprisals are their natural response. The leadership is unwilling, unable, or both to contain this criminal violence. According to some intercepted radio communications, the tactical-level leadership were the ones encouraging the crimes. Rather than face an insurgency, the old Stalinistic tactic of "no man, no problem" has resurfaced.

While they attempt to take hard fought for cities, such as the coastal town of Mariupol, the mass destruction is only the tip of the iceberg. Again, incapable of precision strikes and defeating a near-peer enemy in urban combat, they have resorted to a "wasteland" strategy to achieve victory. Indiscriminate shelling would encourage the populace to leave and the defenders to surrender to preserve their city.

Striking key resources will cut them off from essential infrastructure, such as electricity and water. Regardless of the conditions of civilians on the battlefield, isolation and deprivation of essential resources for the enemy takes precedence. Russian commanders see this as a far more expedient method of warfare than what they saw as inefficient and tedious tactics used by the United States and NATO in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many operational level commanders are unconcerned with the rate of losses of both men and equipment. For them, the political and career goals are far more of a concern than the costs to achieve them. If this means leveling entire city blocks and incurring a humanitarian disaster, that is well worth the career boost of getting to report victories. Conversely, it would be a career ending move to report anything less than success. This is another holdover of the Soviet-era structure that has sadly remained and cost innumerable lives, both military and civilian.

The psychological distance between the Western and the Russian soldier is massive. For an American or NATO soldier to knowingly fire upon a civilian or civilian occupied structure or vehicle is virtually inconceivable. In the few times it does happen, the perpetrators are swiftly prosecuted, along with immense media fanfare. After their names and mugshots are paraded through the media channels, they often spend the rest of their lives in a military prison.

For Russian soldiers, this is simply a means to an end. Civilians are either an obstacle to overcome or a bargaining chip on the battlefield. As seen in Ukraine, they have seemingly attempted to use their deaths as a psychological weapon against Ukrainian defenders. Additionally, they are a virtual hostage to pressure Kyiv to sue for peace on Russian terms. While the full scope of the devastation has yet to be fully calculated, it is likely the full civilian toll has yet to be taken.



A Ukrainian serviceman walks amid destroyed Russian tanks in Bucha, on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine. Source: AP Photo/Felipe Dana

# Liberty's New Large-Scale Project for People with Disabilities

## Liberty is to implement the standards of the UN Convention on the Services of Persons with Disabilities



forming Liberty, introducing innovative banking products, and improving its service," says Tea Leshkasheli, Deputy General Director, Operations Director. "The Liberty strategy 'New Liberty for a New Life' envisions caring for people. Our vision is to improve the lives of people and their families in Georgia and offer them simple and affordable banking products and services. "Liberty is the third systemic bank with the widest network. We have been serving people with disabilities and their families for many years. In the process of transformation, it is important for us to create an adapted environment and offer services and products tailored to their needs. I am glad that experienced experts and people with disabilities are

involved in this process who will help us to manage the processes properly and create an action plan." "Liberty Bank's initiative to critically evaluate its activities in order to start positive changes was sincere and case-oriented," notes Ana Abashidze, NGO Partnership for Human Rights. "This is why we are happy to be involved with them in this work. With this initiative, the Bank began to implement systemic changes. We are also obliged to work with all important actors. When the private sector initiates such changes it is critically important and supportive of raising human rights standards. Working in partnership is the shortest and most effective way to quickly address the challenges faced by people with disabilities."



In the process of transformation, it is important for us to create an adapted environment and offer services and products tailored to their needs

Liberty Bank and the non-governmental organization Partnership for Human Rights announced the introduction of a standard in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and released a public access assessment report.

with disabilities, and the service standards will be fully aligned with the standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. "Our team's efforts are aimed at trans-



Based on the evaluation, a Liberty Work Plan will be developed that will make banking services accessible to persons with disabilities

With the initiative of Liberty's new team, an audit was conducted by the NGO Partnership for Human Rights to improve access to banking products for people with disabilities, and an accessibility assessment document was developed.

In the private sector and commercial banks, it was the first time that the international valuation methodology was used. Liberty invited experts, civil society, and people with disabilities to lead the process. A group of experts was guided by similar methodologies and, by synthesizing analogs, a thorough report was created, which will contribute to the improved services of persons with disabilities in the bank. Based on the evaluation document, a Liberty Work Plan will be developed that will make banking services accessible to persons



# #ForTheEnvironment: EFES Georgia, with Nikora Supermarket and Eco Geo Pet, to Collect and Recycle Plastic Bottles



lecting and recycling plastic bottles, the campaign will include actions to clean up the Black Sea beaches.

In order to cooperate in environment protection, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by the General Manager of EFES Georgia, Ertan Kurt, with the CEO of Nikora Supermarket, Temur Alexandria, and Ivan Petrushevsky, the Director of Eco Geo Pet.

"It is not the first environmental project in the framework of corporate



EFES Georgia has launched an environmental campaign #ForTheEnvironment in partnership with Nikora Supermarket and Eco Geo Pet, making EFES Georgia the first company to promote the process of proper management of plastic waste in Georgia.

project on environmental protection. The project envisages the large-scale collection and recycling of plastic (PET) bottles in the future. The joint project of the companies will include various environmental activities.

#ForTheEnvironment is a campaign initiated by EFES Georgia as part of its commitment to corporate social responsibility to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Along with col-



responsibility for EFES Georgia," says Nikoloz Khundzakishvili, EFES Georgia Director of Corporate Affairs. "Since 2012, we have had a modern, highly efficient wastewater treatment plant in our brewery to reduce our environmental impact. Our water treatment system collects, treats, and recycles the wastewater from our entire production process. "We are guided by and fully committed to the UN's Sustainable Development

Goals. Environmental protection goals, such as clean water, sanitation, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change mitigation measures are crucial for a company like EFES Georgia. "The new campaign #ForTheEnvironment makes EFES Georgia the first company [in Georgia] to promote the process of proper management of plastic waste and, most importantly, to involve our partners and consumers in the campaign."



# Japanese Embassy Planting Sakura Trees to Promote Peace & Goodwill on Japan – Georgia 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations



Continued from page 1

According to the ambassador, the arrangement of the boulevard is dedicated to the memory of the Olympic champion, Davit Khakhaleishvili, who was from Kutaisi, as well as 30 years of Georgian-Japanese friendship and diplomatic relations.

To find out more details about the above promotion, as well as the important anniversary and Japan's position regarding the ongoing international developments and the current devastating war in Ukraine, GEORGIA TODAY spoke to Imamura Akira - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Georgia.

**YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE WAR IN UKRAINE DEEPLY CONCERNS THE WORLD. MANY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS WERE INTRODUCED AGAINST RUSSIA, AND JAPAN IS A PART OF IT. ADDITIONALLY, THERE ARE ONGOING PROCESSES IN THE VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AGAINST RUSSIAN AGGRESSION. WHAT ARE JAPAN-GEORGIA'S JOINT ACTIONS TO HELP ACHIEVE A CEASEFIRE?**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force. This is an extremely serious situation that shakes the foundation of the international order not only in Europe but also in Asia. As such, it is unacceptable and we condemn it in the strongest terms. That is why we are resorting to unprecedentedly strong sanction measures against Russia and Belarus, together with the G7 and other countries. It includes both financial and economic measures such as excluding Russian banks from SWIFT and freezing their assets as well as removing Russia from most-favored-nation status.

We are extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and are committed to providing \$200 million for humanitarian assistance. Moreover, we have delivered non-lethal defense equipment from our Self-Defense Forces, changing our regulations restricting such transfer. We are accepting evacuees from Ukraine to Japan as well, issuing visas for those who, among others, wish to join their family members and friends in Japan. In the beginning of April Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa brought with him Ukrainian evacuees to Japan on government airplane from Poland.

Now is the time for the international community to show solidarity with Ukraine and resolutely respond in order to fully defend the foundation of the international order. We highly commend Georgia's response in this regard. Japan and Georgia have been closely cooperating, especially in the international arena, such as at the UN, coordinating our actions to isolate Russia. Both of us are acting together to promote the investigation of war crimes by referring the case to International Criminal Court. Recently, Japan and Georgia co-sponsored UN resolution to suspend Russia from Human Rights Council after hundreds of civilian bodies were found in Bucha. As Japan implements its sanctions, we closely monitor their full implementation and look to other countries including Georgia for cooperation so that there will be no evasion. We hope that Japan and Georgia with other like-minded countries to continue this strong unity to support Ukraine until our goal is achieved.

Russia's invasion has brought up energy and food prices and it is important to act together to ensure energy and food security and assist vulnerable countries. While we have requested some OPEC countries to stabilize the oil market, Japan and Georgia can cooperate in the energy and agricultural sectors to cope with the current difficulty. For example, we have been engaged in discussions with our Georgian counterparts to promote sustainable energy development. These measures are expected to increase Georgia's energy independence and contribute to emission reduction. We are also keen to support production of high-quality agricultural products by promoting farmers' qualifications. It will help Georgia to diversify its export market and reduce its dependency on Russia.

**GEORGIA AND JAPAN HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS IN ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS. HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE THE CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THIS PARTNERSHIP?**

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Georgia. Our relationship has been guided by shared values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights. We have been supporting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity from the very beginning of its

independence. I am very pleased to see the progress Georgia has made over the course of 30 years, and we are honored to be part of this process through successful implementation of various assistance programs.

There has been increasing number of high-level contacts in recent years, including the visit of President Salome Zourabichvili to Japan on the occasion of the enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in 2019. New Georgian Foreign Minister Ilya Darchiashvili recently met with Foreign Minister Hayashi in Brussels on the fringe of NATO Foreign Ministerial to discuss Ukrainian situation and bilateral ties.

Both Japan and Georgia enjoy a long history and tradition. The mutual interest in each other's cultures is never stronger than now. When I was giving lectures in various universities in Georgia to my good surprise, I saw many young people wanting to study Japanese. In Japan, people are now fascinated with what Georgia can offer especially in food and sports. For instance, in the Japanese Grand Sumo Tournament, Georgian wrestler Tochinoshin has made a great advance, and has become the most famous Georgian in Japan. Also, the Georgian dish Shkmeruli has become very popular, so now one can find a ready-to-eat Shkmeruli in Japanese stores.

As we look ahead towards the next decade we are entering a new phase of relations, and I see lots of opportunities here. One of the most prospective areas is the promotion of connectivity; the role that Georgia can play by connecting Asia and Europe. Due to sanctions against Russia the northern corridor that goes through this country is now facing problems. The advantage which the middle corridor that runs through central Asia and Georgia offers is drawing more attention. There is the Japan-EU high-level agreement on the promotion of sustainable and high-quality connectivity, which covers the cooperation in Georgia and sectors such as transportation, energy, digital and so on. We are hoping to identify, together with EU and Georgia, sustainable and high-quality projects in this region.

People-to-people connectivity is something that we've been promoting for a long time. One example is Japan International Cooperation Agency's training program that until now had invited more than 600 Georgian experts to Japan. In area of students exchange the Embassy is administering Japanese government sponsored scholarships for studying in

Japan. We are also helping Georgian universities to have more exchange with Japanese counterparts. Ties at the local level is gaining momentum, too. Tokushima Prefecture in south-western part of Japan, which hosted Georgian Paralympians last summer are keen to exchange experiences with Georgian municipalities in the field of sports for disabled.

Of course, there are challenges ahead. I have talked about coordinated action in response to the war in Ukraine, but Georgia also has its own occupied territories, like Japan which also has its territories illegally occupied by Russia. We fully support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Based on this position we recently issued statements which denied the legitimacy of so-called "elections" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia held in March and April, respectively.

We would like to continue our support to IDPs and conflict affected areas, including women and socially vulnerable people. We've already provided medical equipment to a clinic in Nikozi village which is very close to Tskhinvali, and now we're planning to help the construction of greenhouses near Mtskheta, where IDP women will be cultivating agricultural products.

**THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN GEORGIA IS PLANNING TO PLANT SAKURA SEEDLINGS IN SEVERAL GEORGIAN CITIES. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE NUMBER OF SEEDLINGS AND IN WHICH CITIES THEY WILL BE PLANTED?**

We welcome the initiative of the Georgian local governments and business community to plant Japanese sakura trees in many parts of Georgia to celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries. The Embassy has been helping to bring these sakura seedlings to Georgia, around 150 trees in all, brought by air from Japan.

The sakura or cherry blossom is our national flower. It is deeply entwined in our culture and history. When spring comes, Japanese people gather to watch sakura blossom and admire its beauty. This tradition goes back to at least 1000 years. This is called hanami, which literally means "flower watching."

Last month I had a privilege to plant these trees in the Georgian Patriarchate's garden as a symbol of our friendship. We planted them with a prayer for peace. Japanese people often associate cherry blossoms with transient nature of human being because the flower falls very quickly. Therefore, we often plant them with prayers for those who died especially in a war. So this time, we planted trees in the Patriarch's garden with the prayer for those who died in this tragic war in Ukraine, and with the hope for an immediate ceasefire in that country. We planted some extra trees in the

Sameba Cathedral garden with the same prayer.

Sakura trees have also been planted in the city of Kutaisi. This time it was in memory of the Georgian Olympic champion late Davit Khakhaleishvili, who was born in Kutaisi. He won gold medal in Barcelona in 1992 and had many friends in Japan. It was his dream to plant the trees in his native town. I hope they will grow bigger and start to bloom soon so that people in Kutaisi will enjoy the hanami.

**THE EMBASSY IS FOCUSED ON IMPLEMENTING VARIOUS CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN GEORGIA. WHAT CULTURAL EVENTS ARE PLANNED IN FUTURE?**

Yes, we plan a number of events to celebrate the 30th anniversary. This spring Writer's House in Tbilisi will organize a book launch to showcase a Japanese masterpiece novel titled "Sasameyuki" (a light snow fall) by famous Japanese writer Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. Just recently it was translated into Georgian for the first time. We'd like to focus on this book not only because it is a masterpiece, but also because it was written during the Second World War. Back then, the Japan's military regime banned this book which depicted luxurious life of a wealthy family. Despite of this pressure, the writer decided to publish it on his own budget.

We are of course concerned about the pressure on free media and restrictions on the freedom of speech in Russia and would like to share with the Georgian public how this challenging situation was faced by a brave writer in 1940s Japan.

This will be followed by film festival in summer in Tbilisi, as well as a Japanese food exhibition in the National Museum, called "Love Sushi." It will be a good opportunity for Georgian people not to just eat and enjoy sushi, but to understand the historical background, how sushi is eaten and enjoyed in Japan, to understand more comprehensively the sushi culture.

Afterwards, in July, we're planning to invite a Japanese pianist to participate in events in Tbilisi and Batumi. He is expected to participate in a music festival planned in Batumi. Then in autumn, we're thinking of holding a collaboration performance between Georgian ballet dancers and Japanese taiko drummers in the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theater.

We've recently successfully finished an exhibition "Saint Pirosmani" in Tbilisi. It is an exhibition of graphic art by a Japanese artist Harada Takehide who fell in love with art of Niko Pirosmani and film about him directed by Giorgi Shengelaia. Mr. Harada's works show how a Japanese artist understood this great Georgian painter. After Tbilisi, the exhibition will travel to other cities, including Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Kvishketi. I hope you will enjoy the events.



# Range Rover Batumi Gold – Updated Version of Legendary Model in GT Motors Showroom



Almost six months after its world launch, Georgian consumers were the first in the region to see the new version of the legendary Range Rover. An exclusive, closed show was held at the GT Motors showroom, which was attended only by the company's VIP users and Range Rover owners. Due to the current situation, GT Motors decided not to hold a grand event and it was possible to attend the show only by invitation.

After several months of waiting, Georgian car lovers were given the opportunity to see the new Range Rover Batumi Gold. One of the most expensive colors of the model was named after the Georgian seaside town, it became known in October and that is why the expectations were high.

One of the inspirations of the design-

ers of the British car giant was the impressive views of Batumi. Fascinated by the sunset of the seaside city, they created the color especially for Range Rover and thus won the hearts of Georgian consumers.

GT Motors says that all Range Rover models brought to Georgia have already been sold.

"We are glad to be one of the first in the region to introduce a new Range Rover. Obviously, you will meet different colors of this model in the showroom, however, it is not surprising that Range Rover Batumi Gold has received special attention. There is so high demand for it that we received pre-orders back in October, the day of its presentation. The fact that the world brand has named one of the colors of the car exterior after our seaside city is really important and honorable for our country. I am glad that

one of the reasons for this is the successful cooperation with Jaguar Land Rover," said Temur Ustiashvili, General Director of GT Motors.

In addition to the beauty of Batumi, Georgia also attracted attention with the successful work of the office. GT Motors has been successfully cooperating with Jaguar Land Rover for 14 years. The Georgian office has been a leader in the region for the last three years and is among the top five countries. Success in terms of customer service is also remarkable. In this regard, the Georgian office of Jaguar Land Rover is in the top three in the region.

"The cooperation between Jaguar Land Rover and GT Motors started 14 years ago. This business relationship is getting stronger from year to year. GT Motors has an excellent team and it is also noticeable at today's event. They have a really

special relationship with their customers. Georgian customers were the first in the region to whom we introduced the new Range Rover. The smile on the faces of the guests is very pleasant to see. I understand that this car causes a lot of special emotions in Georgian con-

sumers," said Rob Preston, Sales Director of Jaguar Land Rover Regional Office.

All the new Range Rover models brought to Georgia have already been sold because of the high demand. For the same reason, at this stage, orders at GT Motors are limited.



## Dealing with the Jart: Etseri, Svaneti

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

I should be glad that the Jart in this case is NOT the one I know from my science fiction reading. That one is a creation of one superb writer, Greg Bear, in his books Eon and Eternity. Bear's Jarts are an alien species which humanity in the future has fought long and hard. They are large, very menacing looking beings with many limbs, like a monstrous lobster analog, very hard to kill, and very clever. They also play a mysterious but vital role in cleaning up the destiny of the Universe as it nears its conclusion, and in this way are indispensable, love them or not.

MY jart, more correctly jarti, is simply the Georgian word for scrap metal. So, much less menacing, not even animate by itself, and even able to make you some cash if you have any of it to sell. The going rate for steel jarti in my region is 70 tetri per kilogram; each kind of metal has its own price. The worst it can do is scrape you (your fault anyway) and make you think twice about when the last time was that you had a tetanus shot. It is also unlikely to be playing a major part in how the Universe ends, so there's that too. Burnt-out, rusty or both, it's still worth something.

My wife happened to be within earshot yesterday when the a jarti van was making the rounds in our village: we had been waiting for this chance. You see, when the fire of January 15 took out our garage full of stuff, one of the main byproducts of that event was scrap metal.



Tons of it, if you include the Toyota 4Runner, which you can, as that's all it is now: jarti.

The two men had a look through what was still in the garage, and then I took them to where the real stash was, the barn. My group of 7 young volunteer guests who had been with us during the fire had made themselves hugely useful in the days that followed. One of the main tasks they helped with was the

simple sorting through of everything left in the garage, and taking to the barn of all the potential jarti. There it had sat until yesterday.

The guys had their own scale. Just as well as ours had also... burned in the fire. They piled it up with load after load of metal, putting each set into the van, which began to fill up nicely with the stuff, and kept a running written record of weight totals to add up. A defunct

washing machine joined the collection, having spent some months in Tbilisi getting repaired to no avail. In the end, we massed up 500 kg of jarti, or 350 GEL's worth, which is nothing to turn your nose up at.

They will be back for the bathtub which has been sitting unprettily in our yard since we bought the house and took it out there, waiting for me to persuade my wife to part with it instead of filling

it with dirt and flowers, which in my opinion will do nothing to prettify it anyway. She's had a decade of chance to do this and has not, so, there's another 100-200 kg of jarti money waiting. The men will also bring a "Bulgarka", as an angle grinder is called in Georgian-borrowed-from-Russian (actual meaning: a Bulgarian woman... some fascinating etymology there). With this, they will spend a day cutting up the car into manageable chunks, weighing them as they go, and then pay us more money for our trouble. The deal is that we throw in lunch as this is an all-day job. I doubt that I can talk them into wearing the ear protectors, without which I do not do any loud work, having learned from my father's work-induced deafness, but one can always try.

I'm no metal sculptor, or I could make a Jart out of jarti, and our welding apparatus was lost in the fire anyway. The play on words would be limited to that tiny group of people who have both read Greg Bear and know Georgian; currently this group stands at one declared member, myself. Oh well, I might get my wife to agree to let me buy some ART from the jarti money, which would be something most satisfactory too.

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)

# Street Art Of Tbilisi



Photo by Mike Godwin

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

**T**hey say the world is a canvas, and Tbilisi is certainly one corner of this global art piece. Walking through the streets of any large European city, it is something that most citizens become numb to over time. Various tags from hopeful social up-and-comers, statements against authority, and even elaborate art pieces. However, that's not to say all of them are of this strain.

These in the latter category are often a unique form of art unto themselves. The naturally rebellious inclination of the youth engaged in these "paintings" lends to their anti-establishment themes. The social commentary embedded in

many of the pieces are widely varying. Socio-political issues, cultural tribulations, and traditional values are imbued variably. One theme that seems to permeate almost every piece is the near surrealism used.

Art is generally a highly debated topic. Objective viewers generally seek simple appreciation of the work as it stands alone. Others however seek to find deeper meaning behind the imagery, something relatable, or even a hidden message left for the viewer to decode. The art world is not without its own analysts, conspiracy theorists, and even provocateurs. With such a wide spectrum of styles and audiences, it's only natural such an ecosystem arises.

Street art is however something generally easier to consume. As it is something that is more poignant, it nonetheless

strikes a more emotional tone of the times in which they are painted. Georgia has been no stranger to socio-political strife. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has struggled to separate itself from these old machinations, both politically and socially. The typical divide between the youth and the proverbial old guard is certainly present here, and the art at street level is almost a mirror reflection of this rift.

Youth movements have been transformative in the country. In 2016, Tbilisi State University was the site of a week-long student protest. At first they were sparked by the Students' Union, discontent with the misallocation of monetary resources at the school. Later, these protestors began demanding a reformation of the school's structure and a reshaping of the institute's government relations.

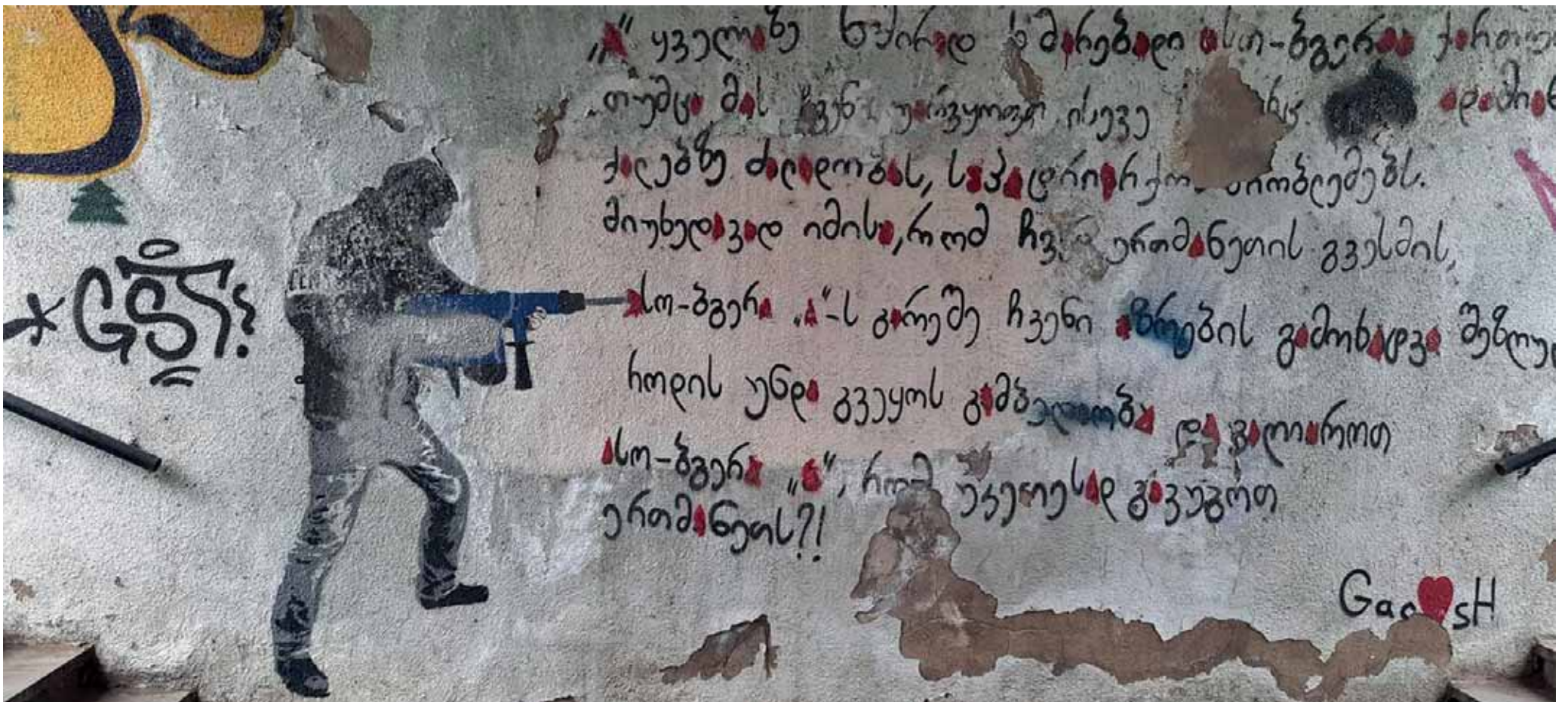
The next year, another movement took to the streets protesting the arrest of a popular rap duo, Birja Mafia. The police arrested them on charges of possession of "party drugs." It was the youth movement that claimed the drugs were planted by the police themselves, supposedly in

retaliation for the depiction of a police officer on a dog leash in one of the duo's music videos. This enshrined the counterculture movement that is still seen in various clubs and discotheques today.

More recently, youth movements have been at the center of the 2019 riots at the Parliament building. After Russian Member of Parliament Sergey Gavrilov gave a speech at the chair of the speaker of parliament, these movements were not shy about their position. Several images of police rubber bullet wounds on protesters only cemented their impassioned

stance. The imagery of children under fire outside the government building is still used as a reminder of the movement's sacrifices.

The counterculture and anti-authority sentiments are nothing new of any youth organization. There is always a yearning to make change and progress, while the powers that be are motivated to appease the larger populace and secure their authority. Of course, it's unlikely this will stop, but the street art will be a daily reminder of this everlasting schism in the cultural milieu.



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