

## FOCUS

### ON THE PM'S NATO COMMENT

British MP Tobias Ellwood in shock, and an analysis of the reactions to PM Garibashvili's GLOBSEC comments **PAGE 2, 3, 7**



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## Marisha Mikiashvili - Young Ambassador of Georgia to The Netherlands

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

**M**arisha Mikiashvili, a student at Leiden University in The Hague, is a clear example of the fact that if you want something bad enough, there's no reason you can't get it. After finishing school, she decided to continue her studies at a European university, seeking new challenges and to get to know a foreign culture. She was offered funding by leading universities in Spain, France and Italy, although her main target was the Netherlands.

"When I sent the application to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I didn't think I'd get through, because it was very difficult to get into my program and to beat the competition," she tells us. "When I heard I'd got into the international relations program, I was overjoyed. I finally decided to continue my studies in The Hague."

It was not easy to go it alone in a foreign country, in a strange environment, but she says she aims never to miss an opportunity.

Continued on page 10



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BONDS				STOCKS			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
GRAIL 07/28	85.66 (YTM 7.46%)	+0.1%	-0.0%	Bank of Georgia (BGEOL LN)	GBP 30.15	-6.2%	+1.9%
GEBGG 07/23	99.90 (YTM 6.55%)	-0.2%	-0.1%	Georgia Capital (CGEOL LN)	GBP 8.20	-2.7%	+1.9%
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	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	72.66	-7.3%	-8.4%	GEL / USD	2.6100	+1.0%	+4.9%
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 962.73	+0.3%	-1.0%	GEL / EUR	2.7899	+0.4%	+2.2%
				GEL / GBP	3.2506	+2.2%	+4.6%
				GEL / CHF	2.8720	+0.7%	+3.3%
				GEL / RUB	0.0322	+0.3%	+3.5%
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	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
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FTSE 250	18 722.90	-1.1%	-3.6%	GEL / AMD	0.0067	+0.6%	+4.3%
DAX	15 664.02	-1.1%	-1.6%	GEL / UAH	0.0707	+1.0%	+4.9%
DOW JONES	32 908.27	+0.3%	-3.4%	EUR / USD	0.9355	+0.6%	+2.7%
NASDAQ	12 935.29	+3.6%	+5.9%	GBP / USD	0.8038	-0.6%	+0.4%
MSCI EM EE	34.96	-3.7%	-3.7%	CHF / USD	0.9107	+0.6%	+1.7%
MSCI EM	958.53	-1.3%	-1.9%	RUB / USD	81.2679	+1.0%	+1.7%
SP 500	4 179.83	+1.6%	+0.3%	TRY / USD	20.7620	+4.3%	+6.7%
MSCI FM	2 075.72	-1.0%	-3.4%	AZN / USD	1.6978	+0.0%	+0.1%
				AMD / USD	385.7500	-0.1%	-0.1%

# The Repercussions of PM Garibashvili's Message to Europe and NATO

COMPILED BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, stated at the discussion held at the Global Security Forum that "one of the reasons" for Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the latter's intention to join NATO.

The moderator of the discussion in Bratislava asked Prime Minister Garibashvili why, in his opinion, Russia had started the war in Ukraine, to which Garibashvili replied: "I think everyone knows the reason. One of the reasons was NATO, the expansion of NATO - isn't that right?"

To the additional question of the moderator, whether he thought the expansion of NATO was a provocation for the war, Georgia's PM said: "I don't want to speculate on this, nor do I want to quote the Russian government, but one of the reasons was Ukraine's will and intention to become a member of NATO, and that's why we see these results."

He added that it is probably the most challenging time since World War II.

"Although we had very difficult days in 2008, I want to remind everyone that the first war happened in Georgia. 20% of our territory is still occupied by Russia. They did not leave after the 2008



war, they stayed and built two military bases on our land."

Garibashvili claimed that if Georgian Dream had been in government at that time, they would have done everything to avoid that war. He then turned to the issue of candidate status.

"I think it was an unfair and unjustified

step. What message does this send to Russia? 'We, the Europeans, are leaving Georgia, which is two or three times ahead of Ukraine and Moldova'? If we are talking about merit, it should have been awarded to Georgia, based on the work done. Let's ask our European friends - why did they not give candidate status

to Georgia? We have neither arguments nor explanations. Moldova and Ukraine were also given 12 priorities, but their status was given in advance. This is the difference. We don't understand why. We were only told that Ukraine is at war. We were also at war in 2008, 20% of our land is still occupied, so where is the

difference? Moldova is in a difficult situation - there is no element of rationality in that decision. If Georgia does not get this status by the end of the year, it will be a very big mistake," the PM stated.

POLITICO wrote in response: "NATO aspirant country blames NATO for Russia's war on Ukraine. Georgia wants to join the military alliance and the EU, but prime minister's new remarks won't go down well."

Shalva Papuashvili, the Parliamentary Speaker, defended the PM, saying: "The Georgian PM's comments on NATO enlargement, which he said was one of the pretexts for Russia invading Ukraine, resulted in various and largely mistaken or deliberately distorted interpretations. I believe Georgia has the right to have a say when it comes to regional and international security, and Mr Garibashvili's words should be understood thus."

MEP Miriam Lexmann later responded to these remarks with: "PM Garibashvili's comments were not distorted. They were calculated, cynical and only serve the interests of one man while undermining those of the Georgian people. At what point do they contribute to helping Georgia achieve the 12 recommendations and moving forward with EU candidacy?" "Говорит Москва! (Moscow speaking)" is how MEP Rasa Jukneviene assessed the Georgian PM's statement.

## Ukraine Latest: Drones Attack Russian Oil Refineries; Children Die in New Missile Attack on Kyiv



Image source: Reuters

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Drone attacks on Russian soil continued into their second day, with reported strikes on two oil refineries roughly 50 miles from Russia's highly important Black Sea oil export terminals, local authorities said.

One of the attacks caused a fire at the Afipsky oil refinery, which was put out, and the other attack caused no damage, local officials said.

The Afipsky refinery is about 50 miles east of Novorossisk, a Black Sea port that is home to a key Russian oil export terminal. The other drone attack hit the Ilsky refinery, Russia state media outlets reported, which is some 40 miles east of Novorossisk.

The drone strikes come just a day after a highly rare attack on Moscow which also used drones and damaged some residential buildings, causing two injuries but no deaths, according to Moscow officials. Russia's government blames Kyiv for that attack, while a Ukrainian presidential advisor denied his govern-

ment's involvement but expressed joy at seeing such an occurrence.

Meanwhile, several people have been killed in shelling in the central and eastern Ukrainian regions of Dnipropetrovsk and Russian-occupied Luhansk, according to local officials.

### **RUSSIA SAYS IT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO TAKE 'SEVERE MEASURES' AFTER MOSCOW DRONE ATTACK**

Russia's Foreign Ministry said it has the right to implement the most "severe measures" after Tuesday morning's drone attack on Moscow, which it blames on Kyiv.

"Assurances by NATO officials that the Kyiv regime will not launch strikes deep into Russian territory prove to be completely hypocritical," the ministry said in a statement.

"Russia reserves the right to take the harshest possible measures in response to the terrorist attacks by the Kyiv regime," it added.

A Ukrainian presidential advisor denied the government's involvement in the strikes, but said that "we are pleased to watch and predict an increase in the

number of attacks." The drone strikes caused "minor damage" and two injuries but no deaths, Moscow authorities said.

### **CHILDREN DIE IN NEW MISSILE ATTACK ON KYIV**

Two children and an adult died, and more than a dozen people were injured, in a new night-time missile attack on Kyiv, the BBC reported.

Russia has been subjecting the Ukrainian capital to regular aerial attacks with missiles and drones.

The latest attacks occurred in the eastern Desnyanskyi and Dniprovskyi districts.

Ukrainian officials said details of the dead and injured were based on preliminary information.

One of the children killed was between 5 and 6 years old, while the other was 12 or 13, the Kyiv city military administration wrote on Telegram. Both were in Desnyanskyi district.

The attack was the fourth this week, and comes after 17 attacks were launched on the Ukrainian capital throughout May. Most took place at night, although at least one occurred during the day.

In a number of early morning posts on

Telegram, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said a "series of explosions" had taken place in the city, and that rescuers had been dealing with fallen debris and fires.

He said 14 people had been injured - nine of whom were taken to hospital.

Meanwhile, Russian-backed officials in the occupied part of Ukraine's eastern Luhansk region said five people had been killed and 19 injured by Ukrainian shelling at a poultry farm on Wednesday.

In recent weeks, Russia - which launched its full-scale invasion on Ukraine in February 2022 - has been using kamikaze drones as well as a range of cruise and ballistic missiles to attack targets in Ukraine.

Kyiv has been heavily targeted, and analysts believe Moscow is trying to deplete and damage Ukraine's air defenses ahead of a long-expected counter-offensive, which the Ukrainian government has been planning for months.

### **PUTIN SHOWS 'ZERO INCLINATION' TO END WAR IN UKRAINE, WHITE HOUSE SAYS**

The White House said that Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown "zero inclination" to end the war in Ukraine as the conflict approaches its 500th day.

"The Russians have shown no inclination of being interested at all in a negotiated settlement," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said during a White House briefing.

"I think this week, as you have all seen, Russia has continued to wage a brutal, completely unprovoked war against Ukraine," Kirby said, referencing a slew of Russian air strikes across Ukraine.

He added that so far this month, Russia has launched 17 air assaults on Kyiv.

### **RUSSIA SAYS IT WILL TARGET WESTERN WEAPONS SUPPLY ROUTES IN UKRAINE**

Russia will target and strike any Western weapons supply routes it detects ahead of Ukraine's anticipated counteroffensive, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu was quoted as saying by state

media outlet TASS.

Shoigu noted that Ukraine's Western allies are boosting arms deliveries to Kyiv prior to what he described as an upcoming "large-scale" Ukrainian offensive.

The defense chief said Moscow was imposing "effective fire damage on the enemy" and that Ukraine's Western-supplied arms would not change the result of his country's "special military operation," which is the term the Kremlin uses for its full-scale war in Ukraine that began in February 2022.

### **BIDEN ADMINISTRATION APPROVES NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE WORTH \$300 MILLION FOR UKRAINE**

The Pentagon announced a new security assistance package for Ukraine worth \$300 million. The latest package is the 39th tranche of weapons and contains artillery and anti-armor defenses as well as ammunition.

The US has provided approximately \$38 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's invasion in February 2022.

### **GERMANY CLOSING RUSSIAN CONSULATES**

Germany will close four out of its five Russian consulates, the German government said Wednesday, in response to a move from Moscow to limit the number of German diplomats in the country.

Russia will still be allowed to operate its embassy in Berlin and one general consulate, according to Reuters. Germany, meanwhile, will only be allowed to have 350 officials in Russia.

The move comes amid deteriorating ties between the two countries amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Germany's foreign ministry specifically cited Russia's new limits on staff when it announced the consulate decision.

"This unjustified decision is forcing the federal government to make very significant cuts in all areas of its presence in Russia," a spokesperson said, according to Reuters.

# The NATO Question Remains for Georgia



Georgia's Prime Minister answering questions during GLOBSEC 2023 in Bratislava, Slovakia. Photo from GLOBSEC

OP-ED BY MICHAEL GODWIN

**D**uring a discussion held in Bratislava for the Global Security Forum (GLOBSEC), Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stunned European and American audiences when asked what the cause was for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "One of the reasons was NATO, the expansion of NATO," he asserted, adding that "I don't want to speculate on this, nor do I want to quote the Russian government, but one of the reasons was the will and intention of Ukraine to become a member of NATO, so we are seeing the results."

The NATO expansion response has been, even prior to the 2022 invasion, the excuse for the litany of overt and covert actions against Ukraine by Russia. The talking point is routinely parroted by pro-Kremlin propagandists and talk shows inside Russia, and continues

to be at the nucleus of pro-war messaging. Sadly, these talking points have even seeped into Western and now Georgian voices.

However, this point has been repeatedly debunked and a brief clarification is due. NATO's "expansion" by admitting new members is only fueled when nations apply willingly, and these are only admitted after achieving stringent defense, economic, and judicial requirements. Conversely, Russia's expansion has unanimously been one of conquest by force. Crimea, Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Donetsk, and Lughansk never applied in an open and transparent process, but were taken under the boot of the Russian military.

These territories also show that Russia's fear about NATO expansion rings hollow. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (until after the invasion) had little to no potential for NATO membership when they were targeted. In each case, the people of those nations sought protection from the very attack that was launched against them. Simply put, if

one continues to abuse its neighbors, then why should that individual be surprised when those neighbors make friends with someone else for protection?

The link, or more accurately the lack thereof, between NATO's open door policy to new members and Russia's fear of encroachment is absurd. For self-loathing pundits in the West to claim that there is some moral fault for NATO and Europe at large is asinine and without foundation. Additionally, for Georgia's Prime Minister, who openly complains about not being given a shorter pathway to the West, it is puerile.

Almost concurrent to the Prime Minister's statements, President Salome Zurbishvili reaffirmed the nation's commitment to European integration. Speaking in Brussels at the European Parliament, she insisted that Georgia was aimed at a "reunification with its European family". She also sternly warned Russia from meddling in the nation's Western aspirations.

"I appeal to Russia, don't try to interfere with the aspirations of the people of Georgia, for Georgia's democracy," she said. "Defense against Russia is important. Even today, Russia continues to occupy Georgia and conducts a hybrid war against the Georgian people." Such a firm rebuke of the Kremlin should be the norm in Tbilisi, yet much of the government stands by the Prime Minister instead.

These dichotomous views on Russia frame the split Georgia is experiencing. Poll numbers still see high support for EU and NATO application. A National Democratic Institute (NDI) poll conducted in and around the capital in March saw 82 percent of respondents in favor of EU membership and 73 percent in favor of NATO membership. However, the ruling party seemingly refuses to capitulate to the wishes of the people they claim to represent.

In his predictably combative tone, Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian



Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili speaking at the European Parliament in Brussels. Photo from the European Parliament

Dream party, echoed the Prime Minister's statements, saying "Russia did not like Ukraine's aspiration to join NATO and this was one of the reasons for the military aggression." MP Mamuka Mdinardze likewise toed the line, reiterating that "yes, Russia is irritated by NATO's expansion, and yes, it is fighting against it." However, a multitude of Members of the European Parliament responded with heavy criticism.

"The current government of Georgia has become a carrier of the interests of the aggressor Russia," MEP Petras Austrevicius shared on social media, adding a call that the West should reassess its relationship with Georgia. A joint statement by 18 of the largest non-governmental organizations in Georgia, including the Human Rights Center and International Transparency-Georgia, responded to Garibashvili's statements with reminders about the reality of the situation surrounding Ukraine and NATO.

"We remind the Prime Minister that

Ukraine's membership in NATO is a historical choice of the Ukrainian people, which is confirmed by the Constitution of Ukraine," their statement reads. "We also remind the Prime Minister that the Helsinki Act defines the sovereign right of each country to join any treaty or alliance at its own discretion." The 18 NGOs framed the PM's statements as "completely in line with the Kremlin's narrative" and reminded him that he "represents a state whose people, with an absolute majority" support a move towards the West.

Ultimately, for Georgia, the NATO question is not only one of foreign policy and diplomatic relations, but one of domestic priorities and sovereignty. Additionally, it should act as a call for citizens, diplomats, and the business communities to rally in support of pro-Western initiatives, and urge the government to reassess its incorrect, immoral, and unethical positions on Ukraine and Europe at large.

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# The Importance of Being Earnest



The Importance of Being Earnest. 1952 adaptation. Source: tcm

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

**N**otwithstanding the borrowed title, this is not just about Oscar Wilde's charming aestheticism, but about the two-centuries-

old Victorian-age comedic farce that once made us ruminate over numerous issues of human mendacity, which has a happy end in the famous play, but which may have disastrous consequences in real life. The mocking (by Wilde's genius) the culture and manners of those old times might be quizzically extrapolated on our behavioral paradigm of the 21st

century. Why not have fun of that quality and magnitude if the fun is available and affordable? So, let's embark on it without any further delay.

The ambiguity of the word 'Earnest' in Oscar Wilde's masterpiece asks for direct reflection in our contemporary era, and in this particular society of ours in Sakartvelo, especially the political realm, we

inadvertently find ourselves in, where the value of being earnest has lost meaning. Instead, the streets, debate arenas, media premises and even war theaters, are full of Earnest-like figures who want and have the ability to present us their fabrications as genuine nuggets of truth, using the mastered-by-them tools of mendacity to feed their falsehood to the public in as palatable a fashion as possible. And this is sadly easy to achieve in the milieu of deception and hypocrisy we are currently living in, one which sees us toiling away for the piece of bread we deserve to earn.

The active political animals of our time, be they good or bad, always seem artificial, because they usually put on a deliberate performance and, when on stage (a platform with a rostrum, or a TV screen), pretend to be earnest. They can't help being an 'Earnest,' but they find it almost impossible to be earnest. And why is that? Are they put into motion by a specific psychological drive that gives them the ideological configuration they have? Or could this be a trivial struggle for survival? After all, it is not only us, the sociopolitical wards, who are poised and ready to survive, but our overly conceited political guardians too.

Why am I talking so much about the people who have turned all their human and enlightening resources into potential bread-and-butter on top of their unbridled ambition to be well-known and influential? The only reason for me to grant them the infamous appellation of 'Earnest', especially those who are not yet in the driver's seat and are uncannily eager to somehow crawl to

those comfy chairs in the ruling part of our society, is the fact that they have totally taken over every scene of our life and want to establish the notion that politics determines the standard of living, and not vice-versa. No, my friends, politics will never be our feeder. It certainly has some clout on our wits and stomachs, but without properly handling our economic gear, we will never see light at the end of the tunnel, and we will never be capable of providing for that much indispensable demographic progress. We need some bread-and-butter to maintain enough strength to procreate new generations, feed them, nurse them and educate them. How could the endless political gibberish provide for that?

Folks, we need to work, and only after seeing the fruits of our labor can we start talking and practicing politics, arts and esthetics. Oscar Wilde's laughing at Earnest is not an idle thing. Being an Earnest is not earnest when we need to be earnest in both essence and action. And if we don't do this, in a twinkle of an eye, time will pass as the centuries have, as we search for a better life. The importance of being earnest will never fade away, which in first place means to be sincere when we look into that mirror and see a face looking back at us that hesitates to reveal the needed truth because we have already gotten so used to lying, even to ourselves. The importance of being earnest is what we have to start believing in, and the importance of being an Earnest is what should remind us that letting the tissue of a lie penetrate our soul could be lethal.

## The Black Sea Region and Global Competition in the Midst of the Russo-Ukrainian War

BLOG BY COLONEL RICH BRADY, U.S. MARINE CORPS (RETIRED), ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER, GEOCASE

**T**he Black Sea region is an area of geopolitical importance, connecting Europe and Asia and providing access to the Mediterranean Sea. It is also a major transit route for energy supplies, including oil and gas pipelines that connect Europe to Central Asia.

Given its strategic location, the Black Sea region is a focus of attention for many states and non-state actors seeking to influence the region's political and economic future. The region also faces a number of security challenges, including unresolved territorial disputes, economic and political instability, and the threat of terrorism and organized crime. Most notably, the region's political, security, and economic future is severely threatened by the Russo-Ukrainian War. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, followed by the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, has created significant instability in the region. The conflict has led to the displacement of thousands of people and resulted in a significant loss of life.

The conflict in Ukraine also highlighted the need for increased cooperation and coordination between the countries of the Black Sea region, who must work together to address common security challenges, such as terrorism and organized crime, while also seeking to resolve existing territorial disputes peacefully. Moreover, they must reassert their collective commitments to liberal democratic principles and collective security so as to thwart revanchist ideologies.

The ongoing political, economic, and security challenges in the Black Sea region were a backdrop before the recent Russo-Ukrainian War began in 2022. As

the Russo-Ukrainian War enters its second year, there are many reflections on what has happened, assessments on what is happening, and speculation on what will happen in the future. No doubt, the events in Ukraine are a watershed event for the 21st century.

For the first time in over 80 years, an invasion by force took place on the European Continent, resulting in irreversible changes to the structure and institutions underpinning international relations since the end of World War II. These changes will impact how countries compete and cooperate for generations, if not throughout the 21st century, and will have profound effects on the Black Sea region.

During the 20th century, from the height of the cold war through the "end of history" ushered in by the fall of the Berlin Wall, world order relied on multilateral cooperative agreements across security, economic, and social spheres to ensure peace and prosperity.

This structure flourished on the liberal idealist ideology that world leaders had achieved enlightenment, and that the interconnectedness of globalization would make the costs of war untenable. This ideology was not without precedent.

Writing of the precepts of World War I, Barbara Tuchman, in the opening lines of "The Guns of August," describes a scene of geo-political solidarity through the lens of the royal funeral of Edward VII of the United Kingdom. On the surface, the scene depicts the strong political, economic, and social bonds between nation-states. Underneath the scene lay the tectonic currents of systemic change.

Similar systemic changes are emerging today.

A broad discussion of future competition is emerging as countries, parliaments, presidents, and corporations respond to events in Ukraine. Francis Fukuyama posited in "The End of History and the Last Man" that competition was limited, as the universalization of Western liberal democracy had ascended



The Black Sea. Source: sofiaforum

to the final form of human government. Yet, Thucydides observations prove more resilient and relevant - that people...and countries...are motivated by fear, honor and self-interest. Moreover, as the Melian dialog reminds us, the strong do as they can and the weak do as they must.

Based on the realist view of international relations, the world is moving from a system dominated by multilateralism and cooperation to a new world order. The new, dominant world order is yet to emerge, but there are directional vectors along the lines of multilateral or bilateral agreements and transactional or cooperative relationships. New competitive strategies are emerging based on these options:

- Multilateral/Transactional arrangements where countries align political, security, and economic interest with blocks of countries who share similar interests along short-term time horizons.
- Bilateral/Transactional arrangements where counties align political, security, and economic interests very narrowly with individual countries along similar, short-term time horizons.
- Bilateral/Cooperative arrangements where countries align political, security, and economic interests with countries who share similar interests and with a long-term time horizon.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the enduring challenges of the Black Sea region have brought geopolitical competition and security concerns to the forefront. The conflict has had significant implications for the region, including the displacement of people, economic implications, and the potential for further escalation. It has also highlighted the limitations of international organizations in resolving conflicts, particularly when one of the key players is not willing to abide by international norms. These realities may lead some countries to pursue one of the new competitive strategies above. This would not be in their long-term interests, nor consistent with the shared interests that helped maintain peace on the continent for over half a century.

To address economic and political instability, the countries of the Black Sea region must work together to promote economic development and strengthen democratic institutions. This will require the development of common strategies to address economic and political challenges, as well as the strengthening of regional organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations to promote stability and security in the region.

Moreover, the West must continue to

strengthen its military presence in the Black Sea region, with NATO increasing its military activity in countries throughout Eastern Europe and into the Caucasus, and on the seas. Increased security includes more than "boots on the ground" and should involve high level staff talks and exercises, intelligence sharing, and war planning.

In conclusion, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has brought geopolitical competition and security concerns to the forefront for the Black Sea region. The conflict has caused significant, near-term implications involving displacement of people, economic disruption, and the tragic loss of life. It has also highlighted the limitations of international organizations in resolving conflicts, causing some to question the value of liberal-democratic, market-economic, and social institutions. This questioning may lead to the pursuit of other competitive strategies that are not aligned with multilateralism and cooperative relationships. This would be shortsighted. Only a commitment to those liberal-democratic and collective security institutions that underpinned the world order and secured peace throughout the second half of the twentieth century will see us through the revanchist threats that the Black Sea region is facing today.

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# The Essence of Economic Sanctions - Based on Accumulated Material and Practical Observations. Part 1

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPANI,  
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

Some time ago we tried to discuss the essence of economic sanctions, to which we devoted a large article. At that time, this reasoning was especially relevant for Georgia in the context of a very important military conflict in terms of geographical proximity and impact - the war initiated (and still ongoing) by Russia in Ukraine. Back then, when talking about this very fundamental issue, we were mostly limited to certain theoretical aspects of it. Today, looking back over the more than one-year history of the war between Russia and Ukraine, we will try to expand even further on some of the issues discussed then. We will also look at some of the practical problems of Western sanctions against Russia. Obviously, both then and now, we are reasonably understanding that somewhere we will not be able to fully say what we have to say, and somewhere what is said will turn out to be controversial. This is natural, since such "blunders" characterize the discussion of problems recognized by sanctioning science; moreover, without them, the discussion would be incomplete.

Before discussing new facts and circumstances related to the topic, however, we think it necessary to summarize and partially correct, so to speak, the opinions previously expressed. We think this will be useful for the current discussion of the question, and will serve as a necessary "introduction." Therefore:

- The mechanical abundance of sanctions (their implementation in "waves") does not always mean the effectiveness and efficiency of sanctions measures;
- Expectations of concrete practical benefits from sanctions are often exaggerated, and the instant "sanctions miracle" is mythologized;
- The specific purpose or content of sanctions is determined by the essence of the conflict or challenge itself; The essence of conflicts and challenges changes and evolves in the wake of changes and challenges in international relations themselves. Thus, a sanction that is effective in the context of one particular situation may be completely useless in another situation;
- The implementation of sanctions must be based on an understanding of their specific objectives and purpose, rather than on an agenda-driven or political and ideological impact; otherwise, a sanction measure that is far from practical rationality will soon fade and lose credibility, both for its target audience and in the eyes of its implementer;
- The imposition of sanctions is not a one-time act: a sanction or package of sanctions should be managed and monitored in the process, both in terms of necessary adjustments (escalation/de-escalation) and in terms of logistics; otherwise, the political and moral power associated with economic coercion may be squandered on one noisy but fruitless "shot";
- The practical application of the sanction is determined as much by the historical context at the time as by the degree of codification of international relations and the current level of technological development;
- The likelihood of success of sanctions is greatly reduced in relation to a closed or authoritarian target country; And a high degree of authoritarianism is directly related to a lack of informational sanity, control over public perception and atti-

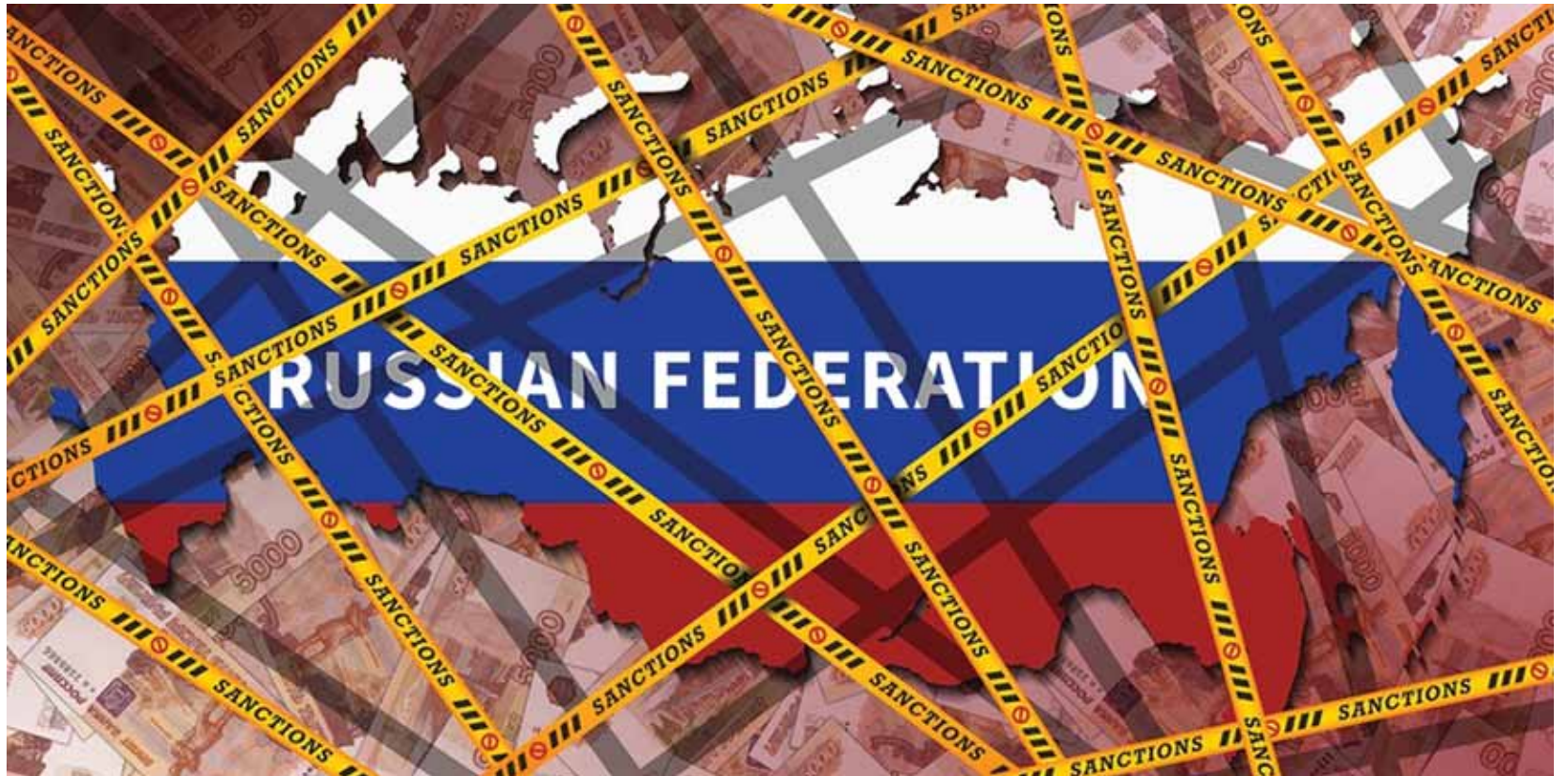


Image source: Shutterstock

tudes on the part of the authoritarian;

- It is advisable to pay more attention to imposing "smart" sanctions rather than comprehensive ones, in order to avoid as much as possible the "pain" of sanctioning an untargeted audience, while making sure that the full burden of sanctions is directed at the target audience;

- A plan related to sanctions should consider immediately after their imposition the order of a thoughtful exit from sanctions: the right balance of "carrot and stick" is one of the main prerequisites for effective economic coercion and deterrence;

- Given today's global interconnectedness, it is very difficult to affect others with sanctions policies in ways that do not impact you in some dose and scale. This is especially characteristic of the conjuncture of large economies, and as their degree of integration increases, the problem becomes all the more acute;

- Sanction is a form of economic coercion, although its connection with the economy is not limited to such coercion. Given the specifics of trade and business relations with a target country, economic coercion may be associated with the necessary preparation or realignment in one's own economy, especially with a view to the timely and less costly replacement of the exported commodity nomenclature. For its part, all this may be associated with the risk of squandering political credibility capital in the eyes of one's constituents;

- It is erroneous to think of sanctions as a universal recipe for resolving the fate of war and peace, and only their application to complex crises can be even more controversial.

Obviously, the war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the First World Economic War itself which is waged against it, will provide new theoretical and practical material for the direction of geo-economics, which is associated with the practical application of economic coercion or deterrence.

## EXPECTATION

The first wave of Western sanctions against Russia was launched back in 2014 as a result of the annexation of Crimea. To say that they had any effective influence on Russian policy would be wish-

ful thinking. In fact, looking at the processes that have developed since 2014, one need not go far to draw such a conclusion. Moreover, Moscow has intensively launched an import substitution program, especially in the sphere of agricultural products and imports from the Eurasian Economic Union. The so-called parallel imports, which generally characterize the sanctioned economy, have become a topical issue.

The war that began in February 2022 added a new charge to the sanctions pressure of the West. However, in this case, too, this pressure was gradually gaining strength, which probably explains the ability of the Russian economy to adapt to the sanctions conditions that were revealed at the initial stage. It should also be noted that, in addition to the measures taken by Moscow to reduce the sanctions pressure, among which the monetary policy of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation stands out, the lack of much enthusiasm on the part of foreign businesses to leave the Russian market helped to minimize the effects of the sanctions. After the first reaction, some turned to Russia again, some continued business through third parties or under a changed name, and some, instead of officially withdrawing from the Russian market, announced that they were suspending their activities. Understandably, it is not very pleasant to talk about this, especially when it comes to effectively restricting the aggressor country. However, to be objective, one must remember that one strong counterbalance to the stated idealism is the realist impulse to benefit through the interconnectedness of major economic systems. It is very likely that this impulse will determine the course of international policy and the dynamics of economic coercion measures in the future as well.

Speaking of Russia's response, we mentioned parallel imports and countermeasures of the Central Bank of Russian Federation. However, we should also mention other steps taken by Russia to bring itself to the present day, including maximum focus on the domestic market, capital reserve in the pre-aggression period, and greater activation of trade relations with neighboring countries.

The circumstances listed in this part of the article certainly do not suggest

that this most important direction of geo-economics - sanctions enforcement - is anything but a futile and fruitless exercise. Obviously not. Among the most difficult tasks facing the Kremlin today are finding additional funds to continue the war, the reputational stigma of sanctions, and the burden on the population (and business circles?). Over time, these tasks may even become insurmountable. Moreover, the further militarization of the economy in the Russian Federation creates the possibility of a repetition of the precedent of the Soviet Union. This threatens the unity and stability of the entire Russian state.

The practical point is something else: in order to achieve a real result, especially for such a complex, large and adaptable economic system, the expectation of an "instant" result of sanctions must be realistic. Achieving the goals of the sanctions requires time, consistency, and the broadest possible coalition of participating countries. That is why we have devoted the introductory part of the article to serve as a kind of supportive guide to the individual aspects discussed in the following chapters.

## THE PAST PERIOD IN ITS GENERALIZED FORM...

...has shown us that large-scale sanctions are characterized by two sides of the coin. In other words, unqualified supporters of the sanctions instruments have been given enough material for reflection, and for those who doubted the effectiveness of these instruments, the ground has been created for reassessing their attitude. More specifically, so far, the situation in the West and Russia is as follows:

Despite the initial blow, Russia's financial system remained relatively stable, and the Ruble regained its footing some time after Western sanctions were imposed. This interim success is also largely attributed to the technocratic approach of the Central Bank. We should also objectively mention the oddities seen in the Western approach. Among them are the belated decisions to take measures aimed at "breaking" the backbone of the Russian economic system - its energy sector - as well as the creeping, rather than immediate and complete blocking of the circulation of Western

debit cards inside the country and Russian financial institutions. An echo of a certain dissent, timidity, or "rationality" in the ranks of the Western coalition is that the Kremlin's income from Russian oil exports in 2022 was \$220 billion, 20% more than in 2021. As a result of the mentioned and a number of other circumstances, instead of the predicted 8.5% decline of the Russian economy in 2022, the actual decline was 2.2%. However, this is only the "bright" side of the aforementioned coin.

Clearly, parallel processes were developing in the sanctioned economy, which were almost impossible for Moscow to avoid, given the scale of enforcement measures and, accordingly, the potential of the participants in the anti-Russian coalition. For example, last January alone, the budget deficit reached \$25 billion, which directly affects the current account deficit. The situation is also difficult on the technological side: Moscow has been forced to replace high-end products, especially in the semiconductor sphere, with low-quality Iranian and Chinese products. Not to mention the everyday life side, such a radical change has a direct impact on the course of modern warfare.

It is also worth noting that the imposition of much more effective sanctions on the energy sector makes it virtually impossible for Russia to compensate for its sharply reduced revenues in any other way. It is true that the purchase of Russian oil by India and China has recently almost tripled, but even here it should be remembered that these purchases are made at a sharply discounted price. At the same time, first the embargo on crude oil and oil products from Russia by Russia's main export market - the European Union, and then the "price cap" established at the initiative of the G7 made it virtually impossible to sustainably develop the sector with new investments. Added to this was the ousting of Russian firms from the global capital market, which cut off one of the effective sources of making up for energy export losses at the expense of cash loans. If we turn to the numbers again for greater clarity, the International Energy Agency predicts that Russia's treasury losses from oil and natural gas alone will approach one trillion dollars by 2030.

Continued on page 7

# Tobias Ellwood MP - Garibashvili Showed His Cards... He Was Talking To Moscow

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE FOR RFE/RL

Among the reactions that followed the response of the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, to the question, "Why did Russia invade Ukraine in 2022" at the GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava, was one of indignation from Tobias Ellwood MP, a British parliamentarian and former military, and the Chairman of the British Parliament's Defense Select Committee: "Disgraceful to hear Prime Minister of Georgia (a state seeking membership of NATO & the EU) blame NATO for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This shows Putin's coercive influence and how seriously unstable Eastern Europe has once again become beyond Ukraine." The RFE/RL Georgian Service reached out to him for further insights on the matter. "PM Garibashvili's speech at GLOBSEC shocked everybody here, really, quite astonishing," Ellwood tells us. "The one country you would expect to be 100% supportive of Ukraine's situation is Georgia - Russia has taken a couple of chunks out of the country. And here we have a prime minister, blaming NATO, an organization that Georgia seeks to join, for the Ukrainian invasion. It's taken everybody by surprise. And I certainly hope that he will retract those comments. Otherwise, it will damage Georgia's reputation in seeking membership with the EU and, of course, NATO. It suggests something more sinister going on here, that Putin has got to him, that he's trying to hedge bets with both sides of where this war may go. And that is an

insult to democracy, to European security, and all the work that has been going on to support Ukraine."

**IT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN SHOCKING, BUT AT THE END OF HIS DISCUSSION, THERE WAS WIDESPREAD APPLAUSE. WAS THIS APPLAUSE FOR HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE EVENT, OR FOR WHAT HE HAD TO SAY?**

No, it wasn't applause for him. There was respect and applause for the event. It certainly wasn't directed at him. Nobody, absolutely nobody here at this conference supported his position. And for a prime minister to say this, I think is irresponsible and dangerous - it will set Georgia back unless it's corrected, if Georgia's plans to join the big European institutions.

**DO YOU THINK YOU WERE THE TARGET AUDIENCE FOR THIS PERFORMANCE OR WAS IT MUSIC WRITTEN FOR AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT AUDIENCE?**

I think he was talking to Moscow. He was directly appealing to President Putin that he's there and should the war go the wrong way, he will want to have a relationship in the same way that Viktor Orban has. Those are the cards he showed today.

**IS THIS REALPOLITIK PRAGMATISM THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH HERE? IS THIS A MACHIAVELLIAN PRINCE THINKING OF HIS VULNERABLE COUNTRY FIRST AND FOREMOST? BECAUSE IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS GOING FOR THAT ANGLE.**



Tobias Ellwood MP, a British parliamentarian

Well, there's no angle to take with Russia, other than to condemn an unprovoked invasion of another country. And this is what I think is surprising everybody here - it first happened in Georgia, this was the start of Russia showing its wider intentions to expand its influence. What surprised us was that it wasn't Serbia saying this. Had it been Turkey or Hungary, then perhaps it would have been less of a surprise, but for Georgia to come out and say these things, to hear those things from the Prime Minister of Georgia, that's what was truly shocking.

**LET'S DISSECT HIS STATEMENT POINT BY POINT, SHALL WE? FIRST, UKRAINE'S WILL WAS TO GET INTO NATO. SECOND, RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE FOR "WANTING TO GET INTO NATO." IS THE UNSPOKEN EQUATION HERE THAT WANTING TO GET INTO NATO MEANS WAR FROM RUSSIA?**

That's far too simplistic, that really is like a schoolboy understanding of the geopolitics. Russia is increasingly a geopolitical threat to the Western way of life. Even Finland, who had walked a very, very careful line, not wanting to upset their neighbors, feels that the security situation has now tipped so badly

that they feel they need the umbrella of security from NATO. Why do you think Georgia wants to join NATO? They want the support. They don't want to be invaded. It's as simple as that. Countries who don't want to be invaded, they join security alliances. That's the way it works.

**DESPITE THE IRE AT GLOBSEC AND FROM WESTERN OPINIONMAKERS IN GENERAL, IN GEORGIA THERE IS A JUSTIFIED DISILLUSIONMENT WITH HOW THE WEST HANDLED THE 2008 WAR. AND IT CAN BE A VERY POWERFUL ARGUMENT TO STOKE ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENT. WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THOSE WHO FEEL LET DOWN BY THE WEST?**

That is fully understandable. And I think there's a lot of soul searching in the West as to why we did not do more to assist Georgia, there's no doubt about it. We were too timid, too complacent after the end of the Cold War in the 90s. And we weren't geared up to it. And we got distracted by Iraq and Afghanistan. So, it's understandable that that's the feeling and response from Georgia, but it doesn't then justify the Prime Minister's comments when the West now steps up to the



PM Garibashvili's speech at GLOBSEC shocked everybody

plate, finally plucking up the political courage to stand up to Putin.

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS AT STAKE FOR GEORGIA? SO FAR, GEORGIA HAS CONTINUED ITS EFFORTS TO NAVIGATE. WHEN ONE HAS TO PICK A CAMP TO BE IN, WHAT IS THERE ON EACH SIDE?**

Georgia needs to look in the mirror and ask "Where do we stand? How does it look internationally?" It's not a good position in this day and age, when it's seeking greater strength and relations with the West, if it starts providing indirect support for Moscow.



PM Garibashvili speaking at GLOBSEC. Source: GLOBSEC

## The Essence of Economic Sanction - Based on Accumulated Material and Practical Observations. Part 1

Continued from page 6

The discussion of the statistical and arithmetic results of the Western world's sanctions against Russia is usually as extensive as the analysis of the geopolitical and domestic aspects of this mega-geo-economic confrontation. Neither this article nor the format of several broadcasts will suffice for a detailed discussion of this second aspect. Nevertheless, we will attempt to raise some critical and debatable points in order to better understand the big picture.

As has been said, the euphoria of expectation of a quick result appeared when sanctions were imposed against Russia. Over time, this euphoric mood subsided, and some practical nuances or necessary reminders related to measures of economic coercion emerged:

- The program of specific sanctions measures is a kind of marathon to achieve a tangible result;
- A much more realistic and practical

result of sanctions is the exhaustion of the economic potential of the aggressor's war machine, rather than a change in its external course;

- We mentioned realistic expectations, and probably one of the main expectations for authoritarian countries is that as a result of pressure, living standards will fall so low that it will cause civil discontent within the country. Two basic questions should be raised at such times: (a) How effectively will such discontent contribute to the necessary changes in the internal life of the country? (b) To what extent do internal changes lead to a change in the goals declared in the country's foreign policy and to a realignment of the country's foreign policy toward civilized principles?

In Russia's case, both issues are relevant. It should not be the case that, despite appropriate efforts, instead of a nuclear-armed Russian Federation deviating from international norms and standards, we get an "Upper Volta equipped with mis-

siles," to use the expression of the famous journalist Smiley.

At the same time, we look at the optimistic expectations of some sources of the so-called "post-Putin" stage with some skepticism. To summarize in a few theses, such skepticism is related to: (a) the historically expansionist nature of the Russian state, especially with regard to the neighborhood; (b) the brevity of the "democratic" era in contemporary Russia and the inability to grow into a lasting state and political tradition; (c) the style of governance, formed as the so-called "system", for the internal stability of Russia, which is based on a certain structure of relations due to the Russian ethnic character and historical past; At such times, the political course is mainly influenced by the "system" and not by who is at the head of it;

- With regard to Russian aggression, the deterrence purpose of the sanctions has hardly worked. It is highly likely that one explanation for this is the nature of

the "seeming" sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, their spinelessness and characterlessness. Thus, the main burden is now shifted to the second purpose of the sanctions - the depletion of the aggressor's military and economic resources, which is a long and labor-intensive process;

- The effectiveness of sanctions is determined not only by the maximum pressure on the target country. The necessary "effectiveness" is also determined by the adaptation of the economic systems of the countries implementing sanctions that will find themselves in the new reality. It should be noted that despite certain challenges, the Western system as a whole, from maintaining political unity to switching from Russian energy resources to alternative sources, is still coping with the new reality. Under these conditions, Moscow - for the time being - is unable to create a split or disagreement of such magnitude in the ranks of the Western coalition, which

would create a sufficient prerequisite for Russia to achieve a geostrategic advantage;

- The full realization of the objectives intended by the imposition of sanctions is a great challenge because: (a) the effect of sanctions is not static; (b) the target, usually an authoritarian country, has the ability to adapt to sanctions in its own way; (c) modern economic relationships allow for finding practical ways to combat sanctions, both by exploring new markets for action and by finding new revenue streams.

It is a fact that whatever the balance of strengths and weaknesses of Western sanctions against Russia, whatever the difficulty and complexity of effectively pressuring a large economy integrated into the global structure, whatever major "faults" characterize the theory and practice of sanctions in general, nevertheless we have ample reason to assert that...

To be continued.

# Liberty Supports Georgian Businesses to Present their Products to US Market

BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

As a part of the partnership between JSC Liberty Bank and the Globalize platform, the Globalize Conference was held on May 26, at the legendary Webster Hall in New York (USA).

The purpose of the conference was to connect the Georgian diaspora with investors, and all parties interested in tech and innovations, distributors, and other partners with potential business interests in Georgia, and to help Georgian business and tech companies to connect with potential investors and export opportunities in the American market.

Globalize is actively engaged in export, and helps Georgian exporters to expand to the US market. At the conference, Georgian tech startups presented their



ideas to potential investors alongside 30 Georgian businesses presented in the Webster Hall exhibition space.

"Liberty supports Georgian businesses to develop their products and grow in terms of global extension. Today, we are delighted our partner companies were given the opportunity to present their products to the US market," said Vazha Menabde, MSME Director of Liberty.

"The conference brought together businesses and investors, as well as helped us connect with the bank's existing and potential customers – the community of Georgian immigrants in New York. Liberty actively cooperates in this direction – our retail team has recently relaunched a set of products tailored to the needs of our customers living abroad and their family members," he noted, adding. "It is also symbolic that our first meeting with the US-based Georgian community took place right on the Independence Day of Georgia."

# Winners of the EU-Supported 'Meliora 2022' Announced at Grandiose Ceremony

The forth award ceremony of 'Georgia's Responsible Business Awards - Meliora 2022,' supported by the European Union (EU) and Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), and implemented by the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG), was held on 30 May.

An annual competition aimed at developing corporate responsibility in Georgia and promoting it throughout society, Meliora awards businesses for their best initiatives and projects contributing to the development of corporate social responsibility. As part of this event, the members of diplomatic corps and international experts presented awards to winners in various categories.

"It is important to make sustainable development and corporate sustainability an integral part of business operations," notes Eka Urushadze, Director of the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG). "Businesses should consider corporate responsibility as a strategy for future development. It is becoming increasingly common for consumers, employees, and society to demand that companies take a more active role in addressing environmental, social, and cultural issues. In this regard, competitions like Meliora help businesses to develop social and environmental projects and bring them to the attention of the public."

250 people attended the award ceremony, including diplomats, Georgian government officials, local and international experts, and civil society and business representatives.

60 companies participated in the Awards with 88 projects in the spheres of environment protection, ethical business operations, labor rights and community development.

The winners were revealed and awarded in various categories at 'Meliora 2022':

- Green Initiative: Winner large company - Tegeta Holding, project 'Tegeta for Environment' Winner SME: "Biodiesel Georgia", project 'Biofuel from Waste - Clean Environment and Energy Independence'
- Responsible Employer: Winner large company - Majorel

- Georgia, project 'Feel Good'
- Supporting Communities: Winner large company - APM Terminals Poti, project 'APM Terminals for Poti' Winner SME - Edena, project 'Support for Demotivated Women'
- Cross-Sector Partnership - Shared Responsibility: Winner SME - Qwerty, project 'Supergmiri.ge support'
- Transparency and Report on CSR and Corporate Sustainability: Winner large company - TBC Bank, project 'Sustainability Report 2021'
- CSR Manager of the Year: Winner - Ana Kukhaleishvili, company 'BIM Cube'
- Responsible SME of the Year: Winner - MBC

This year's jury for Meliora 2022 consisted of international (United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, Israel, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia and Hungary) as well as Georgian experts from public organizations and academic circles on a local and international level. The Award is supported by 28 organizations from all sectors – local and international business associations, government, international organizations, and the diplomatic corps.

GEORGIA TODAY spoke to Lela Khoperia, Head of the Program on Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility at CSRDG.

"This year we had a very high number of entries, which indicates that CSR and sustainability is becoming more and more important for Georgian companies. The most forward thinking businesses strive to move beyond mere considerations of business and profit, seeking to deliver transformational change in society and create more value within their organizations, and I hope the Meliora Awards also contribute to this growing interest," she tells us.

"Meliora has quite a strong development component built-in: apart from featuring the best CSR projects and initiatives, the contest aims to assist companies in developing and sophisticating their CSR programs, strategies and approaches. All participating companies will receive after the awarding ceremony the feedback from all jury members on each submitted project, with recommendations on how to improve their CSR activities and how



to make them more sustainable and aligned with best international practices. This is very valuable contribution from our jury members, which are world's leading professionals in the field of corporate sustainability and responsible business conduct," Khoperia notes.

"Apart from this, every year, on the day of the awarding ceremony, we conduct masterclass for Meliora participant companies on sustainability issues. This year we had an extremely interesting masterclass with outstanding

speakers: Tomás Sercovich, CEO of the Business in the Community Ireland; Audrone Alijošiute- Paulauskiene, Founder and Director of the Lithuanian Responsible Business Association (LAVA), and Beatriz Alonso, Senior Manager of Sustainability at BBVA Group (Spain). They talked about recent sustainability trends globally, as well as in their countries," Khoperia says.

Meliora is organized with the support of the European Union (EU) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) funded

project 'Civil Society STAR Initiative: CSOs as Sustainable, Transparent, Accountable and Resilient Development Actors in Georgia'. The project is implemented by the Consortium led by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and composed of the following CSOs: Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG), Civil Society Institute (CSI), Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), Education Development and Employment Center (EDEC), and Institute for European Politics (IEP).



# Carrefour Rewards Loyal Customers with Special Offers and Prizes During MyCLUB Anniversary



its continuous effort to provide customers with multiple options to choose from.

Get involved in Carrefour's Accumulation Programme Anniversary Raffle to

celebrate years of loyalty and get ready for unforgettable offers and surprises! And don't forget to download the Carrefour mobile application and digitize MyCLUB.



Carrefour, owned and operated by Majid Al Futtaim in Georgia, celebrates customers' long-lasting trust and loyalty every month. This time due to the anniversary of the loyalty programme, MyCLUB in Georgia, the brand is preparing special offers and numerous surprises for its customers from May 31 to June 21.

Within the framework of the campaign, users will enjoy great offers and will have a chance to participate in a raffle, by bringing physical "My Club" cards to any "Carrefour" branch, download the

MAF Carrefour Mobile application, available on IOS and Android, and get a chance to be awarded with special prizes on June 30, via Facebook Live.

MyCLUB is a Carrefour accumulation programme through which customers can exchange points for any product, take advantage of special discounts, cashback and customer-tailored offers.

Customers are at the heart of Carrefour's operations - a testament to which is its introduction of all the necessary products in one place for maximum comfort, self-service checkouts and loyalty programme. Its dedication to the

communities in which it operates is expressed in constant efforts to provide customers with a wide selection of high-quality products at the most affordable prices and create unforgettable moments for everyone, everyday.

The first Carrefour hypermarket was opened in Tbilisi Mall in 2012 and, since then, the brand has provided its customers with daily unrivalled international shopping experiences, accessible prices, and the highest quality fresh products. Carrefour provides locals with access to more than 40,000 food and non-food products, which reflects

# The First International Congress of Celiac Disease to Be Held in Georgia

Organized by the "Georgian National Celiac Association" (GNCA), on 3 June at 12:00, at the hotel "Pullman Axis Towers," the First International Celiac Congress will be held. Guests from five countries will attend the event. By special invitation, the congress's guests of honor are doctor gastroenterologists: from Turkey, Mr. Hakan; from Italy, Mrs. Jacqueline Pante; and the head of the nutritional department of Demirtz and company Dr. Schar. Georgian doctors are also to be among the speakers: Mrs. Mariam Ghughunishvili, pediatrician-gastroenterologist (Givi Zhvania Academic Pediatric Clinic), and Mrs. Nino Kheladze, children's endocrinologist (M. Iashvili Central Children's Hospital).

"The goal of the congress is to share experience and news in the field of celiac disease in the medical sector, as well as to raise awareness among the general public," said Ket Tabatadze, president of GNCA, who adds that GNCA's awareness-raising campaign in Georgia started at the end of 2022, immediately after the establishment of the organization.

"This year, Georgia joined the International Celiac May Month campaign for the first time. International Celiac Day - May 16 was celebrated in Tbilisi for the first time, and several activities

were held during the month," she says. "Thanks to all partner organizations for their trust, support, and cooperation, thanks to our members and all the people who support us. The GNCA team will continue to work and we will periodically introduce news to the public. Our main goal is to improve the quality of life for all people diagnosed with celiac disease," she noted.

Supporters of the event are the company Dr. Schar, Mrcheveli - Limbach Diagnostics European Group, Alliance Group, GPC, Europroduct, Georgita, Acto Pharma, Organika, Roxy and Primax.

"As the vice-president of the association, and first of all a parent, my goal is to show society, the state, and medical structures through the congress that 'together, the hard road is easy.' This is our slogan. It is important to share and receive information and adapt it to local realities. This is the European road, the road to European integration," said Gvantsa Bliadze, the vice-president of GNCA.

The National Celiac Association of Georgia is cooperating with the Association of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS) to become a member, which, as stated in GNCA, means even more education, more news, and better living conditions for people with celiac disease - for the people of Georgia.



# Marisha Mikiashvili - Young Ambassador of Georgia to The Netherlands

Continued from page 1

"Despite the fact that at first it was difficult for me to get out of my comfort zone, I soon realized that discomfort eventually leads to success."

She recently became the Young Ambassador of Georgia to the Netherlands. The program "Be a young ambassador of your country" is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and allows young people living abroad to become "young ambassadors," with a mandate of one year. The main goal of the program is for the chosen ones to help in the promotion of Georgia and protect the interests of the country.

"I took part in the grant project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and won," she tells us proudly. She says she wants to spend that one year productively, and she wants to use the opportunity to represent her country to the Netherlands.

"I plan to implement many interesting projects that will promote European integration, and introduce Europe to the rich history and culture of Georgia. I plan to hold various exhibitions, lectures, panel discussions and shoot a short film. For me, this is a great responsibility and I am ready to serve my country."

Along with the embassy, Marisha also works in the non-governmental organization "Youth Peace Initiative," the main goal of which is to involve young people in politics, diplomacy and peace issues. Marisha is the Chief Fundraising Officer, thanks to which she has close relations with representatives of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, foreign ministers and ambassadors of the EU countries. She is proud of the fact that she is a member of an organization where only young people work.

"There are only young people in our organization and we prove to everyone



It is crucial to embrace all the possibilities we encounter and remain open to what we see and hear, even if we perceive something as impossible, we should remember that nothing is truly impossible

around us how important it is to involve young people. We are the future of our country and the whole world, the future political, economic and social situation of the country depends on us, which means that all young people must take their share of responsibility so that our future is protected."

According to her, in our time, the opinion of young people is not taken into account and they are often ignored, even though "new blood" ideas, a different perspective and attitude are often the best way to develop. She emphasizes the need to listen to and involve youth in the life of the country, and in solving important issues.

"It saddened me that they did not attach much importance to the opinion of our teenagers. Over time, I realized how necessary it is to involve young people in any issue that concerns our present day and future. I believe most of all that every person has the right to express their opinion and every idea or opinion is very important and interesting in its own way.

It is especially important for Georgia to listen to its future generation because, as she says, "Now we are fighting various political, economic and social chal-

lenges, it is necessary to have a new vision, a new attitude and changes that we young people offer to the world."

One of her favorite topics is women's rights and women's involvement in the political, economic and social spheres. Among other things, she is an academic consultant at the "International Law Development Organization" in The Hague, an intergovernmental organization that serves to promote the rule of law.

"As an academic consultant, I work on a project on online gender-based violence against women and conduct various studies and develop recommendations on gender equality. In my opinion, the role of women in politics and not only in politics is vital, something which can lead to the legitimacy and effectiveness of democracy inside and outside the country."

The story of Marisha Mikiashvili, a young ambassador of Georgia, a fighter for women's rights, a member of an NGO and a socially active student, can serve as an example for any young person that nothing is impossible and the respect of other people, enthusiasm and determination are the most important keys on the way to success.

# Israel Celebrates 75 Years of Independence with Tbilisi-based Friends

BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

State of Israel at the Zurab Tsereteli MOMA museum.

The national anthems of both countries were sung, delicious Georgian wine was poured, and a beautiful spread was laid out featuring popular dishes from both countries.

Ambassador of Israel to Georgia, Hadas Ester Meitzad, spoke about the meaning

of that independence, and the valued friendship the country shares with Georgia, a relationship that spans decades, and between the two peoples – centuries.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence, formally the "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel," was proclaimed on 14 May 1948 by David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and from that moment, first Prime Minister of Israel.

The declaration declared the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the "State of Israel," which would come into effect on termination of the British Mandate at midnight that day.

Throughout their long history, the yearning to return to the Land of Israel was the focus of Jewish life. Independence Day is thus a celebration of the renewal of the Jewish state in the land where the Jewish people began to develop their distinctive religion and culture some 4,000 years ago.

The Central Bureau of Statistics announced that on the eve of Israel's 75th anniversary, the population of Israel



was estimated at 9,757 million, almost 12 times the population at the establishment of the state in 1948 (806,000). Jews today constitute 73.5% of the population, Arabs 21.0%, and Others 5.5%. About 75% of the Jewish population is comprised today of native-born Israelis, and more than half are at least second-generation Israelis. Since the establishment of the state, over 3.3 million immigrants have arrived in Israel. As a result, the allocation of Jews in Israel as a percentage of

total Jewish population in the world grew from 6% on the country's first anniversary to 44% on the eve of the 75th. [Source: gov.il]

Today, Israel is best known as an innovator – from USBs, Firewalls and other IT saves, to agricultural equipment that boosts yields and saves water, and pharmaceutical and medical wonders. It has more hi-tech start-ups per capita than anywhere else in the world, and is second only to the US in venture capital funds.

# The Personality of a People



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

**I**t does not need me to drum something up inside myself to be fascinated in culture in general, especially in the rich and hugely varied cultures of this country and region which has been my home for

the last 23 years. I seem to come by it naturally; it's just how I am wired. And one of the aspects of culture I am most drawn to, along with history, is the arts in all their expressive forms and media. My own simplest definition of culture? The personality of a people.

I remember the first time I found an English translation of Rustaveli, in St Petersburg, then another...learning about

the Nart epos, a Caucasus equivalent of the Norse legends...discovering glorious Georgian choral music, the wonderful ancient cave carvings of Gobustan in Azerbaijan, the lacily intricate stone khachkars (crosses) of Armenia. And so much more. What's not to love?

One of my new sets of friends this last winter in Tbilisi has been the Moyer family. Eli and Holly have been setting

up a project which I will let him describe in his own words:

"The Caucasus Culture Exchange exists to advance the cultures of the Caucasus region through art, civic engagement, and hospitality. We know that a people's artistic expressions carry some of their most cherished values, stories, and ways of understanding the world. Each culture is endowed with something unique to offer. But many cultures of the world are declining. Languages are dying, communities unraveling, and riches of history and traditions being lost. We believe it is worthwhile to save and strengthen, and even spark new growth, in these kinds of minority cultures. Our purpose is to champion the peoples of the Caucasus, especially through the wide expanse of their arts and creative expressions.

"To do this, we have established our new NGO on David Aghmashenebeli 109 (second floor) in the Marjanishvili area—a multicultural district and heart of Tbilisi's art scene. It is a center for gathering, creating, and exchanging. While some of the space is still being upgraded, we have a functional gallery and classroom space, an arts workshop, and our newly-opened coffee house, Corner House Coffee (<https://goo.gl/maps/tYkhYoJddtRlh4j97>). As with all that we do, the coffee house is more than a place for a good drink (though the drinks are good); it's an invitation into the hearts of Caucasus peoples through their arts. Come stop by! We look forward to welcoming you in."

I have also functioned as an invited mentor for several of the artists working with the Caucasus Culture Exchange. This has been a privilege, getting to

know and support them and the art they have been pursuing these last few months. The building has come a long way in renovation too, and has now begun hosting exhibitions to enhance the experience of those who come for a coffee.

The possibilities, also, for exploring the arts of the 50 or so peoples of the Caucasus and helping their practitioners work and display, are thrilling for me. Having got to know a few Georgian artists myself recently, photographers and painters (including one from Lechkhumi, bordering Svaneti), and starting to collect their work, has shown me how creative these people are. Only 49 or so peoples to go... And space for any of them to flourish, produce and show off the best of whom they represent in many different media. It is my hope that this project will not only encourage and exhibit Caucasus art forms, but will also encourage solidarity and friendship between peoples through their creative work.

Photos courtesy of Caucasus Culture Exchange

[www.caucasuscultureexchange.org](http://www.caucasuscultureexchange.org) (site to be live by Friday!)

David Aghmashenebeli 109 (second floor)(see map link above)

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)



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**I am Georgian and therefore I am European**

Zurab Zhvania, Council of Europe, 1999

