

Bidzina Ivanishvili Ranked 8th Among Europe's Disrupters in POLITICO's Annual List

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

POLITICO has released its yearly ranking of influential figures in Europe, categorizing them into three sections: The Doers, Disrupters, and Dreamers. Among these, Georgian former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili has been recognized as a Disrupter, securing the 8th position in the list.

According to a Politico article, Bidzina Ivanishvili, despite officially stepping back from politics to live a simpler life at a dendrological park on the Black Sea, is suspected of still influencing the ruling Georgian Dream party he founded. With an estimated wealth equivalent to a third of Georgia's GDP, Ivanishvili is allegedly steering the party towards closer ties with Russia, aiming to move away from the EU and towards Moscow. Critics argue that this shift has been evident since Russia's war in Ukraine, with Georgia refusing to impose sanctions on Russia.

Despite a majority of Georgians supporting EU membership, concerns are raised about the country's democratic mechanisms and human rights backsliding under Ivanishvili's influence, especially as Brussels considers Georgia's membership application. The article suggests

that Ivanishvili's decisions may impact Georgia's path toward EU integration in 2024.

"If you believe Georgia's former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, he has quit politics to dedicate himself to living the simple life at a dendrological park on the Black Sea. But Georgia's richest man (whose estimated wealth is around a third of the country's GDP) is widely known to be pulling the strings of the ruling Georgian Dream party he founded. His goal: to push Tbilisi out of the EU's waiting room and into the Kremlin's clutches.

Ivanishvili, born into poverty in a Georgian village, moved to Moscow to obtain a Ph.D. in economics, built an astronomical fortune in the 1990s in banking, metals, real estate, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture, and then returned home to found the Georgian Dream. He briefly served as the country's prime minister, before quitting that post in 2013 — while continuing to run the show, without needing to stand for pesky elections or be accountable or checked by any democratic mechanisms. Rumor has it the 67-year-old ultimately answers to Russia, where he built his fortune alongside its many other oligarchs.

In the past year, Georgia has



Disrupters

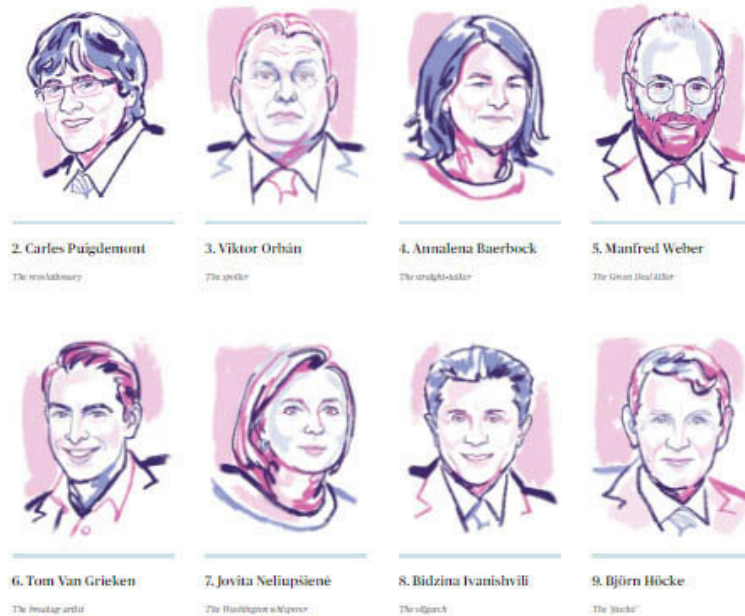
1. Elvira Nabiullina

Putin's banker

Elvira Nabiullina is the top technocrat keeping Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine running. During the decade she's up at the helm of Russia's central bank, Nabiullina's hawkish monetary policies have repeatedly served the ruble and kept the country's economy afloat. In the process, Putin's banker even considered a moderating influence and now she's often credited for managing to stave off the effects of unprecedented Western sanctions designed to shake the Kremlin's system, prolonging the war in Ukraine.

Nabiullina's rise was an unlikely one — she is the daughter of Nikolai Nikolov, a Bulgarian who fled to the U.S. to escape the Communist regime. She then moved to Russia, where she became the first woman to run a central bank of a G7 country.

OUTRAGE ONLINE

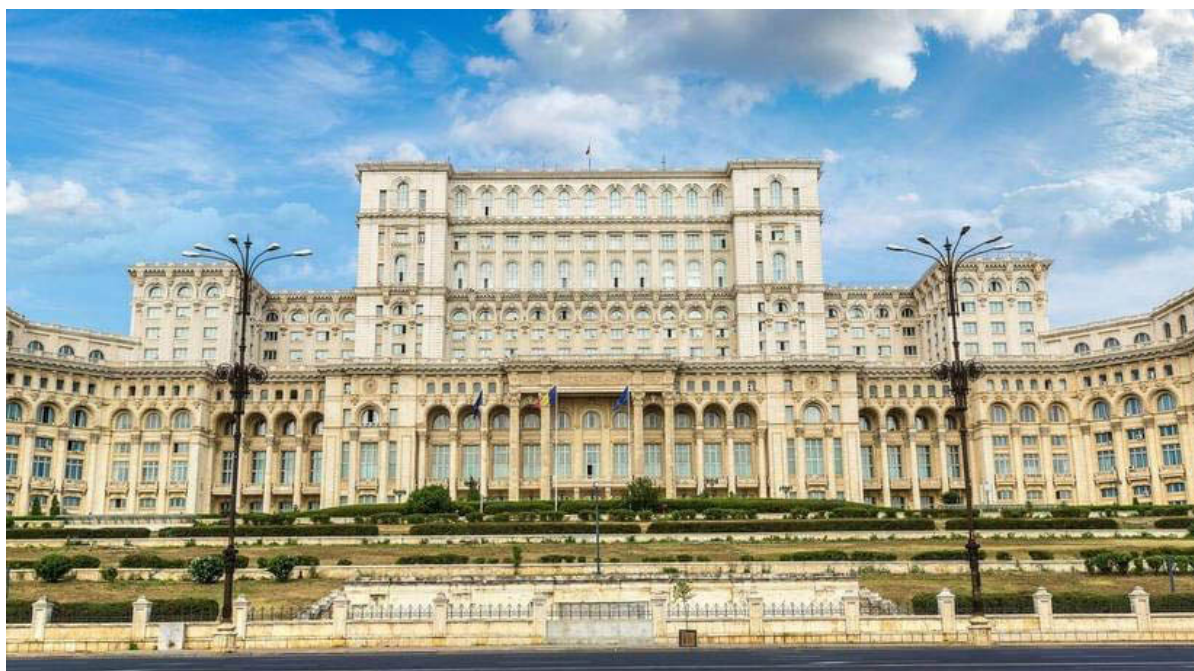


refused to impose sanctions on Russia, with Moscow dropping a ban on direct flights ferrying Russian holidaymakers to the South Caucasus country. Tbilisi even launched an ill-fated impeachment of its own president for her friendly trips to EU capitals.

According to analysts, Ivanishvili is largely responsible for Georgia's pro-Moscow pivot since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine. Despite a fifth of Georgian territory being occupied by the Kremlin's forces and their proxies in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the country has become a key hub for sanctions-busting parallel exports to Russia. At the same time, observers warn Tbilisi is backsliding on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy — at the very moment Brussels is considering its long-standing membership application.

Still, a large majority of Georgians back EU membership and want to see their country turn Westward. After Brussels set out the 12 recommendations the country needs to take in order to gain entry to the bloc back in June 2022, Tbilisi has a clear path to follow in 2024 if it wants to make headway in entry negotiations. The question is whether Ivanishvili will let it," the article reads.

Romanian Parliament Approves European Perspective Resolution for Moldova, Georgia, and Western Balkans



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has announced that during the joint session of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate on November 29, the Romanian Parliament approved the "Resolution on the European perspective of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Western Balkans."

As per the agency, the resolution emphasizes that Romania, as a strategic partner of Georgia, firmly supports the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia. This commitment takes into account the importance of the principles and goals outlined in the declaration of strategic partnership signed in 2022 for both countries.

Additionally, the document highlights the role of connectivity in consolidating stability, security, and prosperity in the Black Sea, underscoring its significance for integration into the European space. The EU's enlargement policy is acknowledged as the most successful tool for fostering democratic transformation in the Eastern Neighborhood and the Western Balkans.

Nevertheless, the resolution underscores that any extension

will depend on the individual efforts of the candidates and their merit in fulfilling commitments in accordance with European values.

"The Parliament of Romania firmly supports the progress of European integration of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia and also calls for continued European support so that Georgia takes further steps on the path of European integration, including receiving the status of a candidate for EU membership.

This spirit is founded on the clear pro-European orientation of Georgian citizens and the anticipation that Georgia will persist in its endeavors for the comprehensive and sustainable implementation of the European Commission's recommendations.

The resolution emphasizes the necessity for heightened EU efforts to ensure peace, stability, and security in the Eastern neighborhood. It also underscores the importance of developing all dimensions of EU connectivity for the countries in the region.

The Romanian Parliament expresses its full readiness to cooperate with and support the parliaments of the candidate countries to promote their progress toward accession to the European Union," the statement reads.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7129; Euro - 2.9769; GBP - 3.4408; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.0503; Swiss Franc - 3.0920

Georgian Dream's Confidence Clashes with Opposition Unity Calls: A Prelude to the 2024 Parliamentary Elections

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Along with the recommendation of the EU candidate status from the European Commission, Georgia received 9 enforceable reservations, among which special importance is attached to the fair holding of the 2024 parliamentary elections.

There is about a year left before the elections. The Georgian Dream and the pro-Western opposition have named their desired and probable results of the elections.

The Georgian Dream announces in advance that after the elections it will remain alone at the head of the government, while the opposition hopes to change the government and declares that a coalition of pro-Western parties will come to the head of the government.

The issue of the likely result of the 2024 elections became relevant after the results of the study by Edison Research commissioned by Formula TV station were published. As a result of this research, the first place was taken by the Georgian Dream with a rating of 37%, followed by The United National Movement / Strategy Aghashenebeli with 21%, Gakharia's For Georgia with 9%, then Lelo with 5% and four with 4% - Party Girchi/Droa,

Labor Party, For the people and Girchi (Iago Khvichia).

Next came three 3% parties (Alt-Info, People's Power, Citizens), and at the end of the list were Patriots Alliance with 2% and European Georgia with 1%.

It is still far from the elections, but such a rating shows that the Georgian Dream does not have the support of the majority and the coalition of pro-Western parties looks much more promising.

The opposition political parties in the next places, including those with a 4% result, are Western-oriented parties, which, if they find themselves at the head of the government, we must assume that they will easily agree on the fulfillment of EU reservations. But here comes in the question of the current election law, which is becoming the main barrier for the opposition.

The parliamentary elections of 2024 will be held proportionally, under the conditions of a 5% threshold. If the next parliamentary elections end with the results mentioned above, only three political forces will enter the parliament, and a large part of the votes will be 'lost', in particular, they will be distributed to the parties that passed the parliament, and the most seats will again go to Georgian Dream.

In this case, the Georgian

Dream will have a majority of 78 members in the 150-member parliament.

The publication of the mentioned results of the study again led to calls for the opposition to unite, but so far this has not resulted, because a large part of the opposition spectrum agrees on the Western orientation, but they also have some disagreements among themselves, of a political and personal nature, and the 4% parties hope that 5% support will be ensured before the elections.

They are well aware that the more opposition parties enter the parliament, the fewer seats Georgian Dream will have.

The opposition also remembered the earlier promise of the Georgian Dream - if we get the status of a candidate for EU membership, we will reduce the electoral threshold to 3%. The parliament has already adopted the corresponding constitutional amendment in the first reading. However, representatives of the Georgian Dream categorically rejected the possibility of reducing the barrier.

They named several arguments, some said that the opposition is irresponsible and small radical parties cannot be allowed into the parliament, others think that if the party cannot collect 5%, it looks frivolous and it is

not worth their entry into the parliament.

The Chairman of the Parliament even called the request to lower the electoral threshold 'begging'. The named arguments are not of great importance, the main point being that the Georgian Dream will not reduce the electoral threshold. The governing political power has considered the issue of reducing the barrier, and according to studies, it is not getting the desired results.

The reaction of the leaders of the Georgian Dream to the results of the Edison Research study was also interesting. They categorically rejected and ridiculed the prospect of creating a coalition government, which the opposition was actively discussing. The leaders of the Georgian Dream considered Edison Research's study to be falsified and unanimously declared that they would win again in the 2024 parliamentary elections, and with a big advantage - they also spoke about having a constitutional majority in the next parliament.

In other words, they say that nothing will change as a result of the elections and they will do whatever they want in the next parliament as well. In order to give more credibility to such statements, the TV company 'Imedi' published the results of

the research conducted by Gorbi, where the number of supporters of Georgian Dream was named as 55%. The results of the "Gorbi" research have already turned out to be doubtful for the opposition.

In the meantime, the results of the International Republican Institute (IRI) research were published, according to which the support of the Georgian Dream is represented by 25%, the National Movement by 13%, and the rest of the parties are not able to overcome the 5% barrier. These research results pour cold water on both the current government and the opposition.

Let's leave the specific percentages, especially since the results of many different studies will be published before the elections, with kaleidoscopic changes in the percentages. Research has highlighted another interesting trend - the unpromising nature of the open pro-Russian spectrum. According to a study by Edison Research, Alt-Info and People's Power have shown a 3% support rate, with Patriot Alliance showing 2%. They cannot replace the Georgian Dream separately, however, in case of unification, they may overcome the 5% barrier and play the role of a junior partner of the Georgian Dream in the next parliament.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Russian Duma Approves Tbilisi's Stance on Sanctions Against Russia



The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Duma has approved the decisions of the Georgian authorities regarding sanctions against Russia. In the released statement, the Duma Committee emphasized that "Georgia has accurately assessed

the policy of anti-Russian sanctions as self-deception and madness".

"Applause. Despite the challenges in Moscow-Tbilisi relations, the current government of Georgia has shown the courage to resist anti-Russian hysteria and lead with a position primarily focused on national interests and the well-being of its own citizens. With these priorities, Georgia's economy has been growing rapidly, showing double-digit growth for two consecutive years. By the way, Russian tourists contribute significantly to the country's income," the statement from the Foreign Relations Committee reads.

According to the Duma, the EU's intention to approve the 12th package of sanctions against Russia indicates that "Europe is increasingly resembling Clinic N6".

Public Defender Levan Ioseliani to Deliver Comprehensive Report on Tamaz Ginturi's Murder Investigation

According to the Public De-

fender of Georgia, Levan Ioseliani, they are collecting information regarding the murder of Tamaz Ginturi by communicating with the family and agencies.

As Levan Ioseliani noted, after the work on the issue is com-



pleted, a report will be presented to the public.

"Of course, we continue to work on this issue. We think that by communicating with the family and agencies, we will collect information, which we will then present to the public in the form of a report. At this stage, I

can only tell you this," said Levan Ioseliani.

Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi was murdered on November 6 by the Russian occupation forces.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Meets President of Asian Development Bank, Masatsugu Asakawa

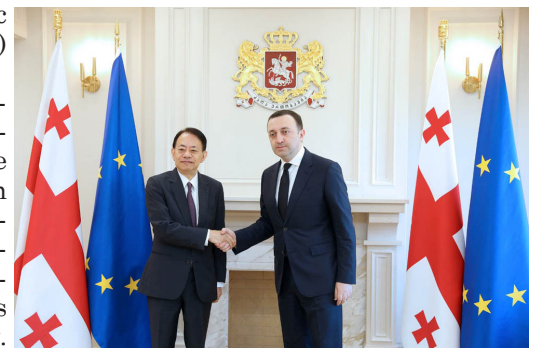
The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, held a meeting with Masatsugu Asakawa, the President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), during his visit to Tbilisi for the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Forum.

As per the press service of the Prime Minister of Georgia, the meeting centered on the current collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, particularly in various sectors of the economy.

Gharibashvili stated that Georgia values the bank's current portfolio, comprising 18 investments totaling USD 1.9 billion, within the context of ADB's overall portfolio of USD 4.5 billion.

The meeting also highlighted that the Georgian government is investing in reforms, aiming to simplify business processes and undertake infrastructural projects. These efforts contribute to the development of the country's potential as a transit, logistics, tourism, and business hub.

The Prime Minister emphasized the significance of Georgia hosting the annual meetings of the Asian Development Bank in 2024.



Weather

Thursday, November 30

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 14°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 6°C

Friday, December 1

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 16°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 4°C

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