



# 5th Week of War: Ukraine-Russia Talks Offer Glimmer of Hope, Ukraine Still Dubious

BY ANA DUMBADZE

**W**eek five of Russia's war in Ukraine has seen some Ukrainian progress and success around Kyiv and a Russian reorientation to focus on "liberating" the eastern Donbas region, indicating that due to unimaginable resistance, Moscow is giving up on initial regime change plans and focusing on territorial gains instead.

The week also offered a spark of hope following another round of peace talks held in Istanbul, however, the Ukrainian and US officials remain skeptical towards the issue of trusting Russia when it comes to not violating agreements.

Ukraine put forward a detailed proposal of neutrality as negotiators met in Istanbul on March 29. It included pledges to not join military alliances or host foreign troops, and that it would remain a non-nuclear power.

That would mean Ukraine would give up its aspirations to join NATO, as Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded.

Ukraine suggested guarantors will be permanent members of the UN Security Council – the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and Russia – as well as Israel, Turkey, Germany, Canada and Poland.

The peace deal would be put to a referendum in Ukraine.

In parallel with diplomatic efforts, this week of devastating war has also brought Russian redeployments.

Russia said on Tuesday it would cut back operations around Chernihiv and the capital Kyiv in an effort to "boost mutual trust" in peace talks.

However, on Wednesday, Russia continued to shell parts of Kyiv and Chernihiv.

Ukraine also said there had been no mass removal of troops.

Russia's pledge to cut back military activity was met with skepticism. "Ukrainians are not naïve people," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an overnight video address.

Oleksandr Motuzyanyk, a spokesperson for Ukraine's armed forces, said that though there had been a partial movement of troops from the directions of Kyiv and Chernihiv, they had yet to fully abandon attempts to seize, or at least surround, these cities.

Late Wednesday, a US defense official said some Russian troops were leaving the Chernobyl area – home to a former nuclear plant that was the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster in 1986.

"Chernobyl is an area where they are beginning to reposition some of their troops – leaving, walking away from the Chernobyl facility and moving into Belarus," the official said.

"We think that they are leaving, I can't tell you that they're all gone," the official added.

The nuclear power station has been under Russian control since late-February, a move that has been subject to

widespread international condemnation.

The UN's Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet said Russia's allegedly indiscriminate attacks on populated areas of Ukraine "may amount to war crimes".

Addressing the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday, she said there were credible allegations that Russia had used cluster munitions in populated areas on multiple occasions. Such weapons are widely banned by an international treaty, but neither Russia nor Ukraine are signed up to it.

Bachelet's office has also verified 77 incidents in which medical facilities had been damaged – including 50 hospitals.

Earlier in the week, Russia said it would focus its military activity in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in the east, which it already largely controls.

Russia has made little progress against Kyiv's defenses, and US defense sources have said Russian forces are stalled 15-20km (9-12 miles) from the city center, arranging and digging shelters.

Russia has also been unable to capture Chernihiv, Kharkiv or Mariupol, the cities most devastated by Russian shelling. Ukrainian officials say thousands of civilians have been killed in besieged Mariupol, where an estimated 160,000 people remain trapped with little food, water or medicine, desperately trying to survive.

The siege of Mariupol may be remembered as the bloodiest battle in this war between Russia and Ukraine. Thousands are reported dead and Ukrainian officials say 90% of the city is destroyed.



There are US reports that Ukrainian forces are contesting Kherson, the only big city to have fallen into Russian hands.

Ukrainian forces have also made advances in recent days, retaking areas from Russian forces.

In Irpin, near Kyiv, the mayor said Ukrainian forces had retaken control of the town on Monday, and around 200 to 300 civilians had died in the town before it was retaken.

NATO has estimated that Russia has lost 7,000-15,000 troops during this month of war.

Ukraine has released little information about its own military losses, and the West has not given an estimate, but President Volodymyr Zelensky said nearly two weeks ago that about 1,300 Ukrainian servicemen had been killed.

The fact that, currently, Russian troops are prioritizing the fight in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in Donbas, could be an effort to cut off Ukrainian troops and prevent them from moving to the west to defend other cities.

The US also has seen activity from Russian ships in the Sea of Azov, including what appear to be efforts to send

landing ships ashore with supplies.

Still, major Russian objectives remain unfulfilled, including in Kyiv, where constant shelling and gunfire shook the city Wednesday as the two sides battled for control of multiple suburbs.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at least 264 civilians have been killed in the capital since the war started.

Meanwhile, the number of people who have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded on February 24 has surpassed four million, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

US President Joe Biden visited Europe last week to demonstrate the transatlantic unity brought about by the Ukraine war. The most important message from his speech in Poland was that Putin "cannot remain in power," which US officials had to later explain was not a call for regime change in Moscow.

At the same time, Biden has at various times called Putin a "war criminal," a "brute" and a "butcher."

The level of destruction wrought on Ukrainian cities by Russian forces underlines Putin's determination not to appear to lose, war experts explain.

## The World Standing by Ukraine: "Peace" Talks Continue as the War Rages On

BY KETEVA SKHIRTADZE

**U**krainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said this week that Ukraine is prepared to discuss adopting a neutral status as part of a peace deal with Russia, but the move would have to be guaranteed by third parties and put to a referendum.

He said Russia's invasion had caused the destruction of Russian-speaking cities in Ukraine, and the damage was worse than the Russian wars in Chechnya. Ukraine is discussing the use of the Russian language in Ukraine in talks with Russia, but refuses to discuss other Russian demands, such as the demilitarization of Ukraine.

"We will not sit at the table to talk about demilitarization and denationalization. These are completely incomprehensible issues for me," Zelensky said of an ultimatum presented by the Russian side at the first meeting in Belarus.

"Regarding the protection of the Russian language, I have instructed the delegation that every subsequent day of the war will raise the question of understanding what the Russian language is in general. People themselves do not want to speak Russian. That is why we said that only mirror respect can be given to all neighbors about culture, language, and common values. All this will be decided by a public poll," Zelensky said.

"Security guarantees and neutrality, our state no longer having nuclear status – this we are ready to go for. This is the most important point. This was the first matter of principle for the Russian Federation, and as far as I can remember, they started a war for it. Then they started adding ultimatum points," Zelensky said in an interview with Russian opposition journalists.

However, he pointed out that this should be a serious agreement and not just "on paper," like the Budapest Memorandum.

"I will discuss security guarantees for Ukraine and for them [Russia]. It is a deep process. But I wonder if this will not be another paper similar to the Budapest Memorandum. We are interested in turning this sheet into a serious agreement that will be signed by all guarantors. The guarantor must be ratified in the parliaments of the states and there



Photo source: netgazeti.ge

must be a referendum in Ukraine," Zelensky said.

He said an agreement on neutrality and security guarantees needed constitutional changes which would require two sessions of parliament and a year of deliberations, and a referendum would be a faster way.

Zelensky demanded that an agreement must be reached with President Putin, and the guarantors will not sign anything if Russian troops are stationed in Ukraine. Zelensky said Ukraine's goal now is to have Russia withdraw to the compromise areas where they stood until February 24.

"I understand that we cannot force Russia to completely liberate the territories. This will lead to World War III. So I say this as a compromise – go back to where it all started and there we will try to resolve the difficult issue of Donbas," Zelensky added.

He noted that the issue of Donbas and Crimea must be discussed and resolved, and that he never planned to attack Donbas and Crimea.

In 1994, Ukraine acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with the Budapest Memorandum of Understanding. The parties to the memorandum – the United States, Russia and Great Britain – pledged to "respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and existing borders" and to "refrain from threatening or using force against the country." These guarantees played a crucial role in convincing the Ukrainian government to give up on the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, consisting of approximately 1,900 strategic nuclear warheads. However, Russia violated this memorandum in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea.

For reference, in 2010, under President Yanukovich, Ukraine was defined by law as a country with neutral "non-bloc" status. Nevertheless, Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, before which it opposed Ukraine's signing of an association agreement with the European Union. After the change of government as a result of the Maidan events, in December 2014, Ukraine refused "non-bloc" status.

### THE PEACE TALKS

A meeting between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations took place in Istanbul, Turkey, hosted at the Dolmabahçe Palace, with the aim of agreeing to a ceasefire.

President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stressed the need to end hostilities, and expressed his sorrow that the conflict has been going on for five weeks, noting that Turkey is ready to host a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"Moscow has offered Kyiv a meeting between President Putin and Zelensky, which should be accompanied by the signing of a peace agreement by the foreign ministers," the head of the Russian delegation Vladimir Medinsky said after the talks in Istanbul.

He noted that the meeting was "constructive." The head of the delegation said they will provide information on the proposals of the Ukrainian side to President Putin.

"Moscow is taking two counter-steps to de-escalate the situation in Kyiv. We also received a proposal from Ukraine. Their position is clearly worded. This proposal will be discussed in the near future. We will inform the president

about these proposals and return the appropriate response to the Ukrainian side," Medinsky said.

Russia then announced its plan to "drastically reduce combat operations" around the capital Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv.

"Due to the fact that negotiations over an agreement on Ukraine's neutrality and non-nuclear status and security guarantees (for Ukraine) are moving to a practical stage, and taking into consideration the principles discussed during today's meeting, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation has taken the decision to drastically reduce combat operations in the Kyiv and Chernihiv areas in order to boost mutual trust and create the necessary conditions for further negotiations and for the signing of the aforementioned agreement," Alexander Fomin stated.

The withdrawal of units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation from the territory of Kyiv and Chernihiv regions is happening, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said, yet Ukraine claims that the Russian pledge to scale back military operations in two key areas is "probably a rotation of individual units and aims to mislead," the BBC reported Wednesday.

The announcement from Russia that they will "drastically reduce combat operations" around Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv has been met with skepticism from Western leaders," the BBC wrote, reporting that US President Joe Biden said "let's see" what happens on the ground, while the UK stated that Russia would be judged by deeds, not words.

The BBC noted that the US and Ukrainian officials say Russia is continuing to reposition forces away from Kyiv, likely as part of an effort to refocus on the country's eastern regions.

"No-one should be deceived into believing that Russian forces are leaving the Kyiv area," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said, noting that "there was a withdrawal of small Russian forces, which is actually a rotation and not a retreat."

The Pentagon spokesman said large-scale attacks were expected in other parts of Ukraine in the coming days. At the same time, the threat remains for Kyiv.

On Tuesday night, one of the biggest rocket attacks felt so far in Ukraine was carried out, most of the ballistic and

cruise missiles being launched from the territory of Belarus.

Russia had claimed it would reduce its attacks on Ukraine as delegates from the two countries met for their latest face-to-face peace talks in Istanbul.

"Russia is trying to buy more time through negotiations with Ukraine," Melinda Haring of the Atlantic Council warned.

### NATO & GEORGIA

On March 24, in Brussels, the Extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government took place. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated that they are facing the most serious security crisis in a generation. He also mentioned Georgia, noting the brutal invasion of Ukraine highlights the need to provide support to Georgia too.

"I expect that Allies today in the meeting will express their support to partners which are under pressure from Russia, and that includes Georgia. Georgia has the right to choose its own path. NATO Allies have provided support for Georgia over many years to help them to implement reforms, to modernize the defense and security institutions. And the brutal invasion of Ukraine underscores the need to provide support to Georgia," he said.

"For the past two weeks, the Georgian armed forces and the armed forces of Allied and partner countries have trained side by side to advance interoperability, enhance mutual awareness, and build trust," Stoltenberg noted. "This exercise, which we conducted for the third time, shows NATO's commitment to strengthening Georgia's defense capabilities. By training and educating its armed forces, it is demonstrating NATO's close cooperation with Georgia."

The Secretary-General noted that the brutal and senseless invasion of Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe, adding that in this new era, NATO Allies stand together with like-minded partners and countries around the world.

"We will stand up to defend our core principles, including every country's right to choose its own path. This is also Georgia's right and it must be respected. Strong and capable armed forces are key to upholding Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and NATO will continue to support it in its efforts," Stoltenberg said.

# 'South Ossetia' to Take 'Legal Steps' to Unite with Russia, Abkhazia Not to Follow

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Anatoly Bibilov, so-called president of occupied South Ossetia, says the "republic" will become part of its historical homeland, Russia.

Bibilov's statement was posted on the official website of Russia's ruling party.

The de facto president of the occupied region says "legal steps will be taken" to unite "South Ossetia" with Russia in the near future.

"The Russian world today defends the interests of those who are loyal to it, those who oppose Nazism, respect universal human values, and the fundamental rights and norms accepted throughout the international community.

"The first revival of the Russian world in recent history means that there is a line that cannot be crossed, which happened right here in South Ossetia in 2008, when Russia decided to defend the Ossetian people and recognize the independence of the republic of South Ossetia, for which we will always be grateful to the leadership of the Russian Federation and Russian people," Bibilov wrote.

"Thank you, brothers and sisters. It was a historic decision that guaranteed peace and development of the people of

South Ossetia.

"However, the main historical, strategic goal of the Ossetian people – the divided people – is to unite within the borders of one state.

"This state is the Russian Federation. Our people have repeatedly set this goal, we had the opportunity to fulfill our centuries-old dream in 2014, we missed the chance then, but we will not allow it to happen again.

"I think unification with Russia is our strategic goal, our path and the expectation of our people. We will take appropriate legal steps in the near future. The Republic of South Ossetia will be part of its historical homeland – Russia," Bibilov noted.

The Russian-occupied Abkhazia said it supports the above decision, however, it is not going to follow the example of 'South Ossetia' (Tskhinvali).

"Abkhazia supports the desire of South Ossetia to join Russia, but does not intend to join Russia itself," said Sergei Shamba, secretary of the so-called Security Council of occupied Abkhazia.

"First of all, our constitution, our legislation, prohibits it and there are no such attitudes in our society.

"We have paid a heavy price for independence. It is the result of a long struggle of several generations of our people, so this issue is not being considered," Shamba said.



Anatoly Bibilov, so-called president of occupied South Ossetia

# Russia's Move in Ukraine Will Hurt Other Separatist Entities

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not solved Russia's strategic aims. Pressure on Ukraine will build up further. Moscow's decision to recognize two separatist entities in eastern Ukraine, however, will further limit other similar separatist territories' claim for independence.

Russia has never been especially creative in its approach to the neighboring countries. A simple, standard, but ruthless position on dominating the neighborhood has driven Moscow for decades since the end of the Soviet Union.

With Ukraine, it hits a new level. The "Putin Doctrine", if we might assume such a thing exists, is not about a cleverly-thought out strategy which could gradually bring geopolitical benefits to build upon and present Russia as a reliable and responsible power in Eurasia or globally; rather, the "doctrine" is a deeply idiosyncratic approach to the history of Russia and that of its neighbors. More dangerously, this idiosyncrasy is deeply rooted in the Russian nationalism that what the Soviet Union covered territorially is actually Russia, whether it is the Caucasus, Central Asia or Ukraine – regions which have never been historic Russia. This understanding of history serves as a cover for an offensive foreign policy. If not imposition of direct political control, then Moscow considers the neighborhood as a sphere of its exclusive influence – other powers' interests and involvement will be tolerated, but only with significant limits (primarily on military and deeper economic cooperation).

On February 21, Russia recognized the independence of separatist the Luhansk and Donetsk "Peoples' Republics." Similarities with what Moscow did in Georgia are palpable. Back in 2008, Russia invaded its southern neighbor and recognized the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali



The 2008 War. By Andrei Nacu / Wikipedia

regions (the latter often incorrectly called South Ossetia) as independent. But similarities with Ukraine end here. While in Georgia, Russia managed to shrug off the threat of Western sanctions, and the collective West overall was highly hesitant to rupture ties with Russia, Moscow claimed victory both on the military front and diplomatically. Moreover, with Tbilisi remaining antagonistic toward Moscow, strategically, Georgia did not pose any serious threat to Russia. The country's small size, poor economy and limited military capabilities, plus the occupation of two separatist regions, essentially stripped Tbilisi of ambitions to regain the territories and successfully complete its pro-Western drive. The

hesitancy and in many cases dangerous complacency of the West also undermined Georgia's chances.

With Ukraine, it is strikingly different. Russia essentially re-invaded the country. But with this, Moscow's strategic dilemmas are not solved, but rather even exacerbated. First, with Georgia serving as an example, the West now is in no doubt as to what Russian military moves in Ukraine amount to. Second, the Russian threat helps solidify the Trans-Atlantic community, which in the past experienced troubles. The Biden administration has so far managed to build a resilient foreign policy by closely cooperating with its European and Asian partners – the lack of which was so tan-

gibly visible in the Trump presidency. We might be witnessing a reversal of systemic troubles in the liberal order, with the decline in cooperation between the Western partners replaced by a re-invigorated push from Brussels, London and Washington to confront Russia in unison. Russian actions also bolster the idea of NATO. Voices questioning the alliance will be heard less often, while the need to strengthen the eastern flank will be more evident.

Furthermore, Putin is also seeing that his military incursion does not guarantee Kyiv will stop acquiring necessary arms for effective defense, or abstaining from cooperation with foreign militaries. Russian leaders thus face a different level of

challenge from what they have seen in Georgia. Greater geographic space and a bigger, much better equipped and organized military allow Ukraine to withstand Russian aggression more resolutely.

With its troops now in Donbas, Moscow still sees Ukraine as unfinished business. It has to either push forward with this initial success regardless of what grave sanctions the collective West might impose, or decrease pressure to solidify its position. The latter will have to be only temporary, as in the longer term Ukraine will be drifting more forcefully to the West. This does not necessarily mean NATO/EU granting membership; a range of different cooperation modes could be introduced between Kyiv and the West to complement NATO's inability to extend eastward.

What Moscow's recognition of two separatist entities means more broadly for Russia's sprawling "separatist empire" is a further decline of Abkhazia's and Tskhinvali's hopes to garner wider international recognition. With only several states (among them Syria and Nauru) recognizing Georgia's sovereign territories as independent, Russia's decision on eastern Ukraine further undermines any remnants of legitimacy it or its dependent separatist entities could argue for. Recognition of separatist lands is now firmly viewed by the world as a geopolitical tool for Moscow rather than a decision based on morality and sincere sentiments (such as towards Ossetians and Abkhazians). It is hardly likely that any state beyond perhaps Syria and possibly Belarus will be willing to recognize four separatist entities simultaneously, and the decision to do so will likely incur sanctions from the US and EU.

Thus, in the longer run, Moscow has buried the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions' chances for recognition, making Russia's "separatist empire" extremely purposeless.

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# Putin's Ex-Advisor Glebovsky: Putin Stepped into a Trap with Ukraine

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Today, Putin is a completely different man. Even his manner of speech is not recognizable anymore.

## ANY REGRETS? ABOUT WORKING WITH AND FOR PUTIN?

I don't regret the time spent as such. What I regret is that I switched off my brain as an analyst during that time and, in a way, donated my brain to "Kremlin and Putin franchising." Now I realize that I should have had a wider perspective of things, that I should have recognized the features of the system that we were building. Putin is a child of this system. Putin will be gone, one way or another, but the system will stay.

## SO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES CREATED A FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER AT A STATE LEVEL. DO YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT IT?

I don't think that would be an interesting topic to explore. At my age, you have so many reasons to feel guilty that if you don't feel it, then you're simply an idiot. The thing is that at some stage, we started building a system that was fundamentally wrong. Even if we had built an authoritarian system, like in Singapore or Malaysia, it would have been more right than what we did. Because what we built is building on the clouds, instead of firm foundations, which lets the state escape any rules and norms, to avoid any "traps." It's the first time now that this system, thanks to Putin, ended up in a trap that it is finding difficult to escape from. It's an unfinished state and this allowed for incredible flexibility that, for example, the Soviet Union didn't possess. While the Soviets had ideology, we have just propaganda, which brainwashes people to an extent that they are turned into thralls. Our country doesn't have an ideology.

## MANY PARALLELS ARE DRAWN BETWEEN 2008 AND NOW. ARE THEY JUSTIFIED? YOU WERE STILL ADVISING THE KREMLIN AT THE TIME. WHAT WAS THE MINDSET BACK THEN?

It's not a precedent that should explain what is happening today. The situation was different back then. Back then, we expected war, and the start of this war was expected to come from the then Georgian President Saakashvili. We first thought, in the spring, that it would happen in Abkhazia, but there was a readiness from our side to catch him in a trap, as soon as he started it. Unfortunately, he fell for that trap in [South] Ossetia. The situation was different, because it implied the inevitability of the Russian response, because everyone in Russian society was demanding it, including the liberal public. In contrast to the mythical [Ukrainian] attack on Donbas, which didn't happen, there [in Georgia] such an attack did take place. This kind of attack gives you a casus belli. It is also important to keep in mind that it happened at the absolute height of Putinism and Putin's system, because 2008, before the crisis, was actually his best year – Putin left the Kremlin, as he was supposed to, and in came a new president, whose approval rating was even higher than Putin's. Those were the good times!



Putin will be gone, one way or another, but the system will stay

## WHY PREPARE A TRAP FOR GEORGIA AND SAAKASHVILI IN THE FIRST PLACE? WHAT DANGER DID HE POSE TO RUSSIA?

Because Saakashvili, to put it bluntly, wasn't exactly a diplomacy genius. He was a strange man – he first wanted to make a deal with Putin. He wanted to get these territories from Putin, but he didn't have anything worthwhile to offer for such a deal, or he didn't know how to do it. Fast-forward to 2008 and the Russia-Georgia relationship was just awful, there were trade wars, energy wars. He wasn't much helped by President Bush, whose help amounted to a pat on the shoulder regarding the color revolution and saying: this is how things should be done. This obviously didn't sit well with Putin at all.

## AND NOW, YOU CLAIM IT'S PUTIN WHO STEPPED INTO A TRAP – BUT WHO PUT IT THERE FOR HIM?

Hard to say, but when a man has it written on his forehead that he wants to be deceived, others will usually oblige. One thing I keep pondering is that the US is very keen on waging information warfare against Russia, but isn't trying to stop the real, conventional one. My hypothesis would be that it's an acceptable sacrifice. Just like the one in Afghanistan that Brzezinski later owned up to, after 20 years. The goal was to use another country as a bait. Just like in the 80s, Afghanistan wasn't of much value to Americans, and they tried to prolong that war instead of ending it, I think today Ukraine might be a similarly acceptable sacrificial lamb. This is just a hypothesis, but it's a fact that Russia got caught on rather childish bait. But this does little to make things better for Ukraine, as Putin won't stop what he started – he will continue turning the country into ruin. If he does have any red lines left, he does a very good job covering them from us.

## YOU ARGUED ON FOX NEWS THAT HE WAS DELUSIONAL AND NO LONGER CONNECTED WITH REALITY – COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE ASPECTS OF THAT DELUSION? WHERE DOES IT STEM FROM AND WHAT SHOULD BE EXPECTED?

We can say that we've arrived at some sort of final stage where Putin has started acting irrationally, but I don't think the reason for that is some sort of mental disorder, or as some have put it, that he has gone crazy. This would be an all too easy, primitive explanation – oh, he's gone cuckoo, that's why he's doing these things. I think we can say that he stepped into a trap with Ukraine, that the decision makes no political sense, it's insane. This is all Putin's personal decision. Nobody other than Putin would have made it, not even Ramzan Kadyrov, had he had a say on it. Nobody, including myself, realized just how maniacally obsessed Putin must have been with Ukraine. We underestimated the extent of degradation of the Russian government. We don't have a political stage anymore – instead we deal in biblical themes: Death, war, tyranny. Ukraine was meant to be a lever for pressuring the West into discussion over security issues. It's a game of strategy. But I was flabbergasted to see him throw away all negotiation opportunities over the genuine security of Russia and instead opt for this strange pogrom that he calls a "special military operation".

## WHAT CAN HE DO NOW, WITH THE WAR NOT GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN? HOW FAR WILL HE GO?

Wars don't always go according to the initial designs, but now we have a situation where no-one can work out what

actually would constitute victory or defeat for each side. Signing a ceasefire immediately would be the smartest thing Russia could do right now. It could get a neutrality status out of Ukraine, but that would amount to next to nothing. As for "demilitarization", which has been turned into a propaganda slogan, the extent of damage to Ukraine's military infrastructure is large enough to claim that "demilitarization" has been achieved. Russia will try to keep the territories it has seized so far, especially the ones bordering the Sea of Azov, but this will depend on the willingness of Ukrainians to negotiate and stop the fighting. At this moment, they have this adrenaline rush of resistance, and this also doesn't help rational thinking. Many of them want to continue fighting because they think they can win the war. But I don't understand how a Ukrainian victory would look, what it would entail in conventional terms. The same goes for the Russians: Their initial plan failed and even a successful capture of Kyiv would put an insurmountable strain on the Russian military. This would mean colossal ruin and casualties, and it would take the war to a new level, making the prospects of any ceasefire even dimmer than before.



Russia doesn't have a political stage anymore – instead we deal in biblical themes: Death, war, tyranny

I live in Russia, and more than most, I am concerned about Russia's interests – Russia's interests dictate that this idiotic war should be wrapped up as soon as possible and, instead, focus should be shifted to the sanctions, which pose a far greater danger for Russia [than the war]. If a ceasefire is reached before May 9, so Russia can celebrate and "sell" this as a victory, then that's a good outcome, if not – we won't have peace, the negotiations will drag on, and Russia will encounter even greater problems with sanctions. And if Russia doesn't get peace, if it opts to continue the war, then it might do things in Ukraine that will see this conflict escalate to an unforeseen level. And this next level will take place beyond Ukraine's borders. This might spill into a conventional warfare between Russia and the West, with NATO. How exactly this would look is hard to say, but I no longer think this to be unthinkable and impossible.

## CAN THE WEST OFFER HIM SOME KIND OF OFF-RAMP THAT HE CAN SELL TO A DOMESTIC AUDIENCE? IS HE EVEN WORRIED ABOUT SELLING THE STORY TO PEOPLE BACK HOME?

He is concerned, otherwise he'd not bother with such a show, one like we recently saw on Luzhnyki. It is important for him, but this doesn't mean that he is in any way dependent on it. In his own mind, he has soared high above all and everyone, and looks down on everyone he talks to. I can imagine how he is mocking Macron who talks to him almost every day. He has this belief in his own good fortune, and probably thinks he'll have yet another divine streak of luck. He believes in his great mission – I am absolutely sure he thinks himself as greater than all the heroes of Russian

history taken together. So he can afford not to heed anyone and to go further to accomplish his mission. I don't think he has a rational grasp of this situation.

## THE IMPACT OF THE SANCTIONS, PAINFUL AS THEY ARE: MANY THINK IT WILL JUST REINFORCE RUSSIA'S FORTRESS MENTALITY.

This is a correct assumption. I don't think the population realizes the impact of the sanctions yet, but they will start feeling it come summer. And as soon as they realize that the sanctions are designed to destroy both the Russian economy and the Russian federation, everyone will unite to resist. Will they blame Putin or themselves for it? Was any Russian, seeing German tanks rolling in in 1941, blaming Stalin and Molotov? It was too late for that, the tanks were already here and about to mow him down. The question of guilt is a very important one, but nobody in Russia is going to commit suicide for it. Sanctions have become a means to destroy Russia, so they will be resisted by everyone. Maybe a couple of hundred people will come out in defense of the West, but that won't mean anything.

## DO YOU SEE THE WEST LIFTING THE SANCTIONS IF A CEASEFIRE IS REACHED?

No, not at all. What a ceasefire will do is stop new, additional sanctions that are bound to come if the war continues. If Moscow sets lifting the sanctions as a pre-condition for the ceasefire, this won't happen, because it's not up to Kyiv.

## ONE OF THE UNDERLYING EXPECTATIONS OF SANCTIONING THE OLIGARCHS, THE KREMLIN ELITE, IS THAT IT IS GOING TO HAVE AN IMPACT, AND IDEALLY, TURN THEM AGAINST PUTIN. COULD THIS HAPPEN?

Out of the question. That "theory" assumes that the oligarchs rule Russia. Oligarchs have never ruled Russia, even during the times of weak Yeltsin. They always lost against the ruling power. We are talking about a shortlist, where people are monitored and under control 24/7.

## PUTIN'S ADVISOR CHUBAIS QUIT BECAUSE OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE, AND LEFT RUSSIA. WILL OTHERS FOLLOW?

There is a false and even weird assumption that Putin's inner circle will start distancing itself from him. This won't happen. And Chubais himself was not a member of this inner circle anyway. He won't be missed, because he is no longer relevant, hasn't been for years – he is a political relict of long bygone era. Had he been of any value to the Kremlin, he would not have been allowed to "escape".

## WHO IN PUTIN'S CIRCLE MIGHT BE EYEING THE THRONE?

His entire inner circle. They aren't idealists, they have their own designs on that throne. They are all waiting for the transition. And it's actually making Putin quite nervous, being surrounded by people who crave his throne. Especially considering that the majority of the day-to-day running of the country is done by them and not by him. If anyone thinks Putin is sitting and running the country's economy, or public life, then that's just laughable. Putin actually isn't much of a hardworking type. And he found himself the only dimension where he can be completely independent from anyone – war. And he is rushing headlong towards it and is dragging others along with him.

## DOES THE WEST HAVE ANY REASONS TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PUTIN'S SUCCESSOR?

It is a foolish idea to think that a new



While the Soviets had ideology, we have just propaganda, which brainwashes people to an extent that they are turned into thralls

Gorbachov will emerge and everything will change magically. Whenever Putin leaves, he will be succeeded by some form of collective management, because each of them will be afraid and reluctant to give way to the other. I'm expecting a period of collective management, but who will be the members of such a coalition I cannot predict, quite likely at least some members of Putin's current inner circle will be present there.

## WILL PUTIN EVER BE ACCEPTED BACK BY THE WEST, ONCE ALL THIS IS OVER? WE HEAR HE WANTS TO ATTEND THE G20 SUMMIT IN INDONESIA.

It's impossible to return to February 23. Not only for Putin, but for Russia too. On the other hand, the G20 can't boycott him, because certain members have the power to veto such a decision. But if he really tries to attend, it will produce a scandal and some of the Western governments might decide not to attend themselves. I think Moscow realized this – so it will be either Putin who finds an excuse not to go, or he will dive deep into yet another scandal. But this visit, even if it happens, doesn't mean Putin will have been allowed to "return".

## WILL HE HAVE TO ANSWER FOR THINGS HE HAS DONE? WHO CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN?

I think he will – even Stalin had to answer for what he had done, albeit posthumously. Will he have to answer during his lifetime? Hard to say. It's possible only in a scenario where a radical change of power happens in Russia, which I don't see happening at this moment. I don't see the support for it.

## COULD NAVALNY BE THE MAN TO BRING ABOUT SUCH A CHANGE?

If such a radical change happens, Navalny will be released the next day, that is obvious. But will he be in power? I don't think so. I think there will be a wide coalition that will try its best to ensure Navalny doesn't come to power in the Kremlin. They will be afraid of him. Navalny is growing in stature, he matters more, and he doesn't need to do anything other than sit in prison. But you also need to keep in mind that for many in our [liberal] establishment it's very comfortable that Navalny is sitting in prison.

## CAN HE GROW INTO A FULLY-FLEDGED ALTERNATIVE TO PUTIN?

Yes, he can, and I think he does have what it takes. In my eyes, he already exceeded my expectations of what would have been his maximum on several occasions. He's a long-run player and I hope he'll manage to accomplish this.

# Globalization, Being Crushed by the New Iron Curtain

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

There has always been a big controversy about the pros and cons of globalization and the degree of vulnerability of smaller nations to the process, the dominant argument being that bigger countries would take it easier and with much higher chance of consequential development than the minor ones. The predominant thought to this end is that the countries with a lesser population, as well as a less influential culture and language, might be assimilated under the clout of globalization faster and more simply.

Effectively, Georgia happens to be one of those most apparent candidates for this kind of almost guaranteed destiny because it is small in size and also has a rapidly dwindling populace. So, could it fairly be deduced that the process of globalization, hampered by the Russian-Ukrainian war, might be grist to the mill of Georgia's patriots, who organically despise anything that is close to the hot contemporary phenomenon called globalization? Understandably, this kind of approach might be taken something like a provincially sounding nationalist prevarication, or just a shaggy dog story, but you know, there is always a grain of truth in every joke.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine flipped the world order that was in place from the end of the Cold War. A lot of political researchers would argue that the ongoing war happening in the middle of Europe is putting an end to the globalization that has been experienced by humankind over the last three or four decades; pushing numerous communities and ethnic groups into bereavement and isolation, forcing them into deeper contemplation and doubts about the good and bad sides of globalization in general.

While such thoughts mature, it becomes clearly noticeable that people are becoming massively divided over the issue, the schism between them



CNN's John King lays out how potential Russia control of Ukraine could remove a buffer between NATO member nations and Russia, creating a new Iron Curtain 32 years after the Berlin Wall collapsed.

growing by the day; their radicalism and revolutionary moods observable across global society. The reasons are more than ample to explain this change. For instance, the United States and its allies have imposed unparalleled sanctions on Russia and have granted profuse financial and military assistance to Ukraine, which makes one of the greatest nations in history as isolated as it could be, even to the point of total exhaustion of its existential variables. Numerous countries and their administrations have united as never before with the unprecedented desire and readiness to launch an economic war

against Russia, which might someday involve other peoples in further division and isolationism. The West began seizing the assets of the wealthiest Russian individuals, instigating scary thoughts the human attitude towards individual opulence is becoming precariously irrelevant. Russian flights are being prohibited in western airspace, and the Russian economy's access to imported technology is being abruptly restricted. The reserve assets of Russia's central bank have been frozen, and Russia was kicked out of the famously convenient SWIFT financial payments system, as well as from other basic

international financial institutions. When the world managed to escape the rigid limitations of the Cold War at the end of the 20th century, the global financial community was full of the desire to cooperate with Russia, giving it access to international markets, hence accelerating globalization. The broadening of globalization in the recent past very successfully promoted worldwide trade and augmented the money markets all over the place, triggering omnipresent economic growth. But this is all now going down the drain at this frightening moment of war. The technology-driven businesses have proliferated globally, uniting the

world even more, but as we speak, human hearts and minds are being chewed at by doubts as to whether this makes any sense anymore. People are becoming more and more aggravated over the growing uncertainty of their prospective success in doing business on an international level and gaining financial well-being.

To cut a long story short, the amazing and almost supernatural process of globalization is at this time being severely crippled by the chilling sound of the once loathed iron curtain, falling deafeningly, the unexpected noise heard all over the globe.

## Is it Safe to Call Putin a 'War Criminal'?

OP-ED BY ANA GAVASHELI

On March 17, US President Joe Biden declared at a briefing that Vladimir Putin is a 'war criminal' due to his machiavellian hand in the pandemonium of Ukraine. According to numerous media sources, 45 countries, including the US, are currently investigating the acts of the Russian president, however, as yet, there is no sign that he will be standing trial.

Many factors prove that the United Nations should try Vladimir Putin in court. Some of the actions he provoked within the last few weeks that fall under the category of 'war crimes' are willful killing, deliberately targeting civilians, using disproportionate force, and committing crimes against humanity. Only God knows what else he has taken part in since his days as a secret agent in the KGB. Nevertheless, the indictment of Vladimir Putin is not yet estimable, at least within the next year.

And while Putin is on the loose, the fear of being attacked at any second is becoming unmanageable, especially with the chaos and disorder that reigns over the world today. A year is more



Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin. Photos by Alex Brandon/AP Photo and Sergei Karpukhin/TASS via Getty Images

than enough time for Russia to invade Georgia, Moldova, or other countries of Europe. And that is why everyone is being extra careful not to irritate the bear. How else could the White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki's comment that the president was "speaking from his heart" be justified? In the end, it all comes to one issue: Everyone is looking out for themselves, and there is no alliance against the 'war criminal.'

Biden may well have made his statement from a heart beating in anger, but one way or another, he has to play the political game and look to the matter of pacifying the world without harming his nation or others. We are not in the presidential debate of 2019, and, unfortunately, Biden can't win against a 'war criminal' with meaningless reprimanding phrases. So, unless the President of the US reconsiders his battle tactics, countries neighboring Russia will be forced to pay the price.

Between coming up with sanctions for Russia and providing sufficient help for Ukraine, the subject of a trial for Putin is still under consideration. The existential difficulty of the president's questioning only serves to prologue the process of putting an end to the heinous war suffered by the Ukrainian people.

# Invasion Episode 5: The Next Phase



Ukrainians beside a building hit by Russian shelling in a residential area of Kyiv. By Vladyslav Musiienko/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL GODWIN

For over a month now, the Russian invasion forces have pressed into the Ukrainian nation from the north, east, and south with hopes of crushing the resistance. With the failure of this broad objective, the Russian leadership has shifted its focus to what was largely seen as the core reason for the conflict; the Donbas region. In a recent statement, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that the “first phase” of the conflict had been completed and the next phase would focus on “liberating” the region contested since 2014. Despite this supposedly planned adjustment, many of the Ukrainian leadership have placed a significant amount of doubt in this statement. With trust already removed from Russo-Ukrainian relations, it is unlikely the defense forces will play into the Kremlin’s hand. Additionally, the United States has commented that the movement of invasion forces constitutes a “redeployment, not a withdrawal,” possibly into the embattled Kharkiv

region in the northeast.

While this will not be the end of hostilities, it does show that through the staunch defense by Ukraine, Russia has likely been forced to reassess and redefine operational success. This in turn reshapes what victory could look like for Ukraine as well. If the bulk of Russian forces reassemble in the east, it provides a victory for Ukraine in the north and south, something Kyiv will surely spread across media and propaganda channels. However, it also creates a bastion in the contested regions that may be insurmountable for Ukrainian forces.

Conversely, keeping a limited number of forces deployed in the west could help to pin down Ukraine. This allows for the redeployed Russians to focus on finally taking Mariupol and Kharkiv, something that has been the bane of the Russian operations in the east. With the Kremlin searching at breakneck speed for a public relations triumph, the chance to claim victory in this “liberation” is lucrative.

This option is far more plausible and possible for Russia and their separatist forces. The likelihood of a successful combined Ukrainian counter assault in the occupied regions is not high. Ukraine has been firm in its defense, and with recent limited counterattacks around Kyiv and Kherson, they have proven that they have some capacity at the tactical level. Russia is likely betting that they cannot translate this to the operational or strategic levels.

Combined arms offensives are immensely taxing on both manpower and logistics. Ukraine has sustained their defense by both fighting in well supplied areas and receiving a massive influx of Western support. It is not as likely that they will be able to concentrate their force and supply lines to the east in a way that can dislodge deeply entrenched forces. This is particularly true as the occupation line in Ukraine’s east has been heavily fortified since 2014.

The Russian Duma, by deciding to rec-

ognize the Donetsk (DNR) and Luhansk (LNR) regions as independent, and whether planned or not, laid a foundation for Moscow to have a proverbial safe space. In addition to the Crimean territory, the LNR and DNR “republics” provide something that Russia has not had in the war on other fronts; a safe rear guard.

While facing stern resistance from the front, much of the advancing Russian columns in other parts of Ukraine have suffered from rural and suburban partisanships. Ambushes, rearguard actions, and flanking movements have made the situation worse for commanders on the ground. While many of the maps showing Russian movements have reflected large swaths of territory as captured, these guerrilla units have continued to defy these claims.

Russian-backed separatists in the east offer this rear security for a renewed advance. However, it is highly unlikely this will achieve any sort of stability in the region, setting it up for another luke-

warm conflict and a potential re-invasion in years or decades. This tension only pushes Ukraine closer to the West and demonstrates a need to continually arm and develop the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The prospect of a continuing regional conflict, sadly, is very high. With neither side willing to admit faults and compromise, it is likely the LNR and DNR areas will continue to be heavily militarized and devoid of normal human habitation for decades. NATO, likely with no other real option, will need to continue its involvement in this proxy conflict. Simply put, just because rockets are not falling on European Union and NATO cities does not mean Europe as a whole can rest so easily.

While it’s true that an attack on a NATO country is unlikely, it is imperative to keep that at a low level of probability. To do this, it’s essential to learn from the faults and victories of Russian units in Ukraine. Logistics frameworks need to be watertight. Pan-European dual-purpose military and civilian transportation routes should be able to facilitate defense oriented cargo. As is commonly said in military communities: speed is a weapon unto itself.

The use of drones and electronic warfare present challenges NATO has yet to face, certainly on the scale that Ukraine has encountered. Loitering munitions and the use of drones for targeting purposes, such as Russia’s Orlan-10, have to be reckoned with in Brussels. Additionally, the advanced encryption of communications and electronic signatures has to be addressed.

Several Ukrainian command and supply centers have been struck by Russian strategic missiles due to geolocation using their massive electronic signature on the battlefield. NATO units, with even more advanced technology used in their battalion and brigade commands, only present an even larger target for enemy long- and mid- range strike capabilities.

Europe, Georgia particularly, must focus on its deterrence efforts. Tbilisi, while admirable in the modernization efforts of its military and infrastructure, has to know that it is a pen-stroke in Moscow away from suffering the same fate as Kyiv. Ukraine has now already laid out this template for semi-victory against a Russian force. Removing dependence on Russian trade, expansion of national defense material and resources, and a cyber-defense that can stand on its own should be on top of the Georgian Parliament’s agenda. They have the example, now they need to meet the mark.



Removing dependence on Russian trade, expansion of national defense material and resources, and a cyber-defense that can stand on its own should be on top of the Georgian Parliament’s agenda



A woman cooks for Ukrainian volunteer soldiers at a frontline, northeast of Kyiv. By Aris Messinis / AFP Via Getty Images

# ISET ECONOMIC INDICATORS



International School of Economics at TSU

AGRI REVIEW

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## ISET Agri Review | March 2022: the Sector at a Glance

On 17 December 2021, the Parliament of Georgia approved the state budget for 2022, with allocations of around 19.2 billion GEL. From this, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) will receive 593.1 million (3.1% of the total budget allocation). MEPA will direct 14.5 mln. GEL towards the Environmental Protection and Agriculture Development Program (2.4% of MEPA's total budget), with around 507.7 mln. (85.6% of their budget) to be allocated to agricultural development, and approximately 85.4 mln. GEL (12.0%) to be spent on environmental protection.

Compared to 2021, the budget for agricultural development will decrease by around 5.6%. Although additional state funds will be allocated to the National Food Agency (NFA) and the Agency for Sustainable Land Management and Land Use Monitoring (the so-called Land Agency), by 103.5% and 47.4%, respectively. The budget for Georgian Amelioration (GA) will also slightly increase, by 1.5%. While MEPA will direct further spending to the joint Environmental Protection and Agriculture Development Program (43.8% more than in 2021), the budget for the National Wine Agency (NWA) and the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture (SRCA) will decline by 44.5% and 8.1%, respectively. The Rural Development Agency (RDA) will lose 6.8% of its budget from the previous year (Figure 1).

Although the redistribution of funds has changed slightly, as in previous years, the greatest share of MEPA's funds will support the RDA (51.5%), GA (18.1%), and the NWA (16.7%). The RDA will continue financing around 20 programs; including "Concessional Agri Credit", with the highest budget of 121 mln. GEL (46% of their total budget). Moreover 40 mln. (15%) and 27 mln. (10%) will be directed towards "Co-financing Agricultural Mechanization" and "Plant the Future", respectively.

The State Budget for 2022 identifies the following core priorities for Georgian agricultural development:

- Supporting domestic production and improving the quality of locally produced agricultural goods;
- Improving access to financial resources for farmers and agricultural enterprises;
- Supporting land market development via the privatization of state lands and systematic land registration.

### PRICE HIGHLIGHTS DOMESTIC PRICES

On a monthly basis, the country's price levels rose between December 2021 and February 2022. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased marginally in December 2021 (by 0.3%) compared to November. While in January 2022, prices increased by 1.1% from the previous month. The corresponding month-over-month price increase was 0.9% in February.

Between December 2021 and February 2022, the price for food and non-alcoholic beverages, measured by the Food Price Index (FPI), also exhibited an upward trend. In December 2021, food prices rose slightly – by 0.8% – from the previous month. While in January and February the corresponding month-over-month

price changes were 2.5% and 2.1%, respectively.

From an annual perspective, the CPI continued to increase from December 2021 to February 2022. In December 2021, the CPI grew by 13.9% compared to December 2020; the corresponding YoY changes were 13.9% and 13.7% for January and February of 2022.

In February 2022, the year-over-year prices for food and non-alcoholic beverages also rose significantly, by 17.3%, contributing 5.61 percentage points to the change in total CPI. The main drivers were price increases in the following sub-groups: vegetables (+34%), Mineral waters, soft drinks, fruit and vegetable juices (+23.4%), and bread and cereals (+20.4%).

### SPOTLIGHT

Over the last two years, food prices have been increasing; mainly due to international market trends that reflect concerns over decreased production, increased crude oil prices, as well as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In February 2022, the escalating tensions in the Black Sea region, followed by Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, increased pressure on international food markets already struggling with soaring prices. As Ukraine and Russia are both important trade partners for Georgia, such ongoing trends have quickly been transmitting into local prices, which increased most notably within the following categories:

Vegetables – In this category, the largest price rises were observed for cab-

bages (238%) and eggplants (81%). According to trade statistics, from December 2021-February 2022, the value of imported vegetables increased by 21% – from 8.7 mln. to 10.5 mln. USD. An increase in the value of imported vegetables may indicate that imports have become more expensive and, therefore, prices rose. As statistics on the corresponding quantity of imported vegetables as well as domestic production are unavailable, it is difficult to discern the exact reason for heightened vegetable prices.

Mineral waters, soft drinks, fruit and vegetable juices – In February 2022, prices rose for all products within this sub-category. The most notable increases were observed for still (29%) and sparkling (25%) mineral water. Trade statistics highlight that the export of mineral waters (both still and sparkling) increased in quantity as well as value between December 2021 and February 2022. This may be a sign of firmed external demand pushing prices upwards.

Bread and cereals – Within this category, the price of wheat bread and wheat flour increased the most in November 2021, by 22% and 21%, respectively. As Russia is the main wheat supplier for Georgia, the country's trade-restrictive measures have influenced swelling prices in the bread and cereal category (Figure 2).

### INTERNATIONAL PRICES

Between December 2021 and February 2022, international prices exhibited an upward trend on an annual basis. In February 2022, the Food Price Index, meas-



The RDA will continue financing around 20 programs; including "Concessional Agri Credit", with the highest budget of 121 mln. GEL (46% of their total budget). Moreover 40 mln. (15%) and 27 mln. (10%) will be directed towards "Co-financing Agricultural Mechanization" and "Plant the Future", respectively. Image source: undp.cz

ured by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), rose sharply (by 20.7%) compared to February 2021, and marked its all-time high. The largest price increase was observed within the vegetable oil (36.8%) sub-index. Such a sharp leap in the cost of vegetable oil was driven by rising palm and sunflower oil prices. International palm oil prices grew due to sustained global import demands, accompanied by reduced availability from Indonesia, a major exporter. Meanwhile, concerns over disruptions in the Black Sea region drove international sunflower oil prices up.

### TRADE HIGHLIGHTS

Total Georgian exports increased significantly in January-February of 2022, amounting to 760 mln. USD – 55% higher than the same indicator in 2021 (492 mln. USD). Agricultural exports increased as well, however at a more moderate rate (14%) – from 140 mln. in 2021 to 159 mln. USD in 2022. Therefore, the share of agricultural exports in total export decreased from 29% in 2021 to 21% in 2022.

A notable increase of 47% is also observable in total import; from 1,210 mln. USD in January-February of 2021 to 1,781 mln. in the respective period of 2022. A similar growth trend is seen in agricultural imports – from 152 mln. in 2021 to 218 mln. USD in 2022 (43%). While the share of agricultural imports in total import stands at a similar level, maintaining just a small decrease from 13% in 2021 to 12% in 2022.

Depreciation of the Georgian lari in February might have contributed to, and will further affect, increased exports if this trend continues, while equally placing downward pressure on imports. Overall, the year has started with a positive trend for Georgian exports, and this will hopefully be sustained throughout the year.

It would be interesting to understand the driver behind the strong agricultural importation. Closely monitoring the commodity categories, the strongest growth can be seen in the following:

- Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten (HS code 11);
- Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included (HS code 14);
- Live animals (HS code 01);
- Lac; gums, resins, and other vegetable saps and extracts (HS code 13);
- Dairy produce; bird eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin

not elsewhere specified or included (HS code 04).

The highest growth is seen for milling industry products, which increased almost seven times – from 1,892 ths. to 14,780 ths. USD (681%). This can be explained by rising international wheat prices and the ongoing war in Ukraine, both hindering import from Georgia's main trade partners. A significant jump was also seen in vegetable plaiting materials, from 6 ths. to 30 ths. USD (369%), and followed by an increase in the import of live animals, by 85% from 2,018 ths. to 3,743 ths. USD. For vegetable saps and extracts, it stands at 82% growth, from 162 ths. to 295 ths. USD. Lastly, the respective changes in import values for edible products of animal origin showed an 80% rise, from 8,212 ths. to 14,753 ths. USD (Figure 3).

### POLICY WATCH

#### The Government of Georgia will subsidize loans for annual crop production

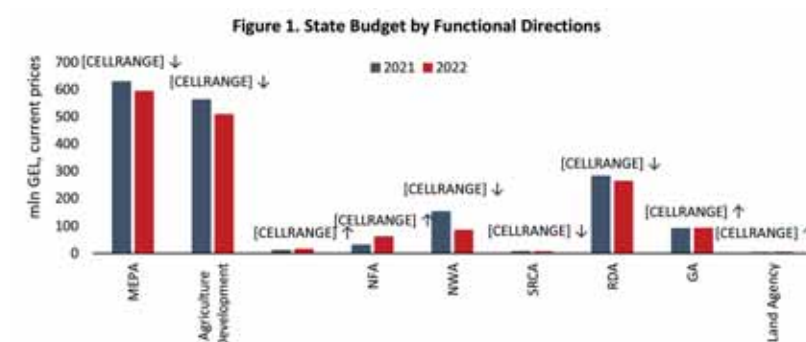
The Georgian government will subsidize the interest rate on bank loans issued to farmers with the purpose of cultivating annual crops. This sub-component will be added to the Concessional Agri Credit project, within which the Rural Development Agency will co-finance the 12-month interest rate on a sub-component loan at 9 percent per annum. The maximum annual interest rate of the loan is set at 18 percent. Farmers will be able to finance the cash resources needed for the cultivation of annual crops, such as seed and planting materials, labor, rental fees and fuel for agricultural machinery, and refining of existing equipment.

For more information follow this link: <https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/News/Details/20722>

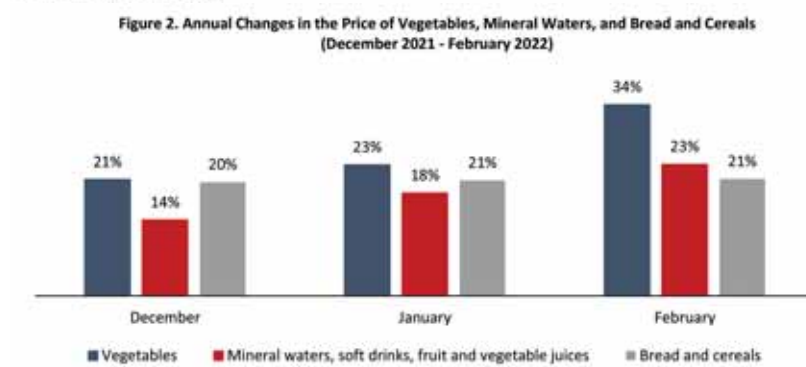
#### The Rural Development Agency will implement a new program supporting Agriculture Cooperatives

Within the scope of the Co-Financing of Warehouses for Agriculture Cooperatives initiative, the Rural Development Agency of Georgia will provide co-financing for crop storage and cooling infrastructure; designed solely for vegetables – predominantly potatoes. The volume of co-financing for a warehouse facility with a capacity of 500 tons will be in percentage terms – up to 80% of the total, and up to 450,000 GEL in absolute terms.

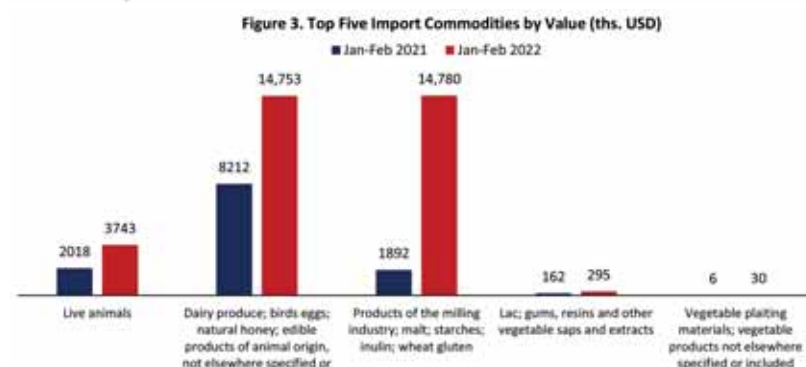
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Source: Ministry of Finance, 2022



Source: Geostat, 2022



Source: Geostat, 2022



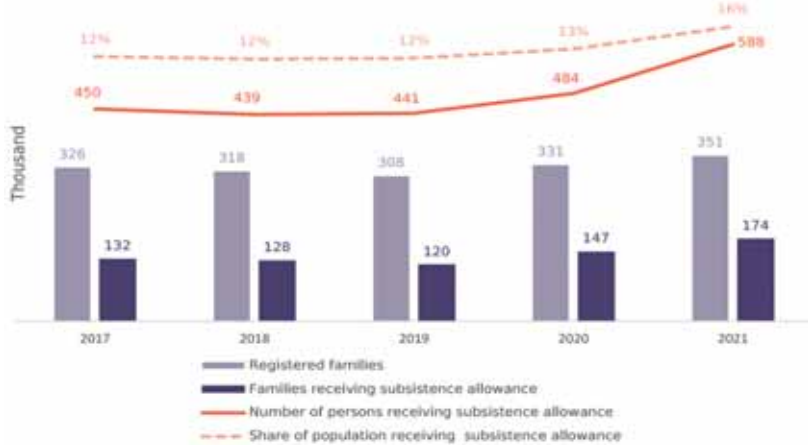
Research

# Subsistence allowance in Georgia (2017-2021)

Economic Outlook and Indicators

Issue #134 31.03.2022

**Beneficiaries of subsistence allowance**



Source: Geostat, Social Service Agency

Socio-economic problems remain significantly challenging for Georgia. Specifically, in 2020, 21.3% of the Georgian population fell under the absolute poverty line. To support the most vulnerable within society, states ordinarily provide diverse social assistance, sometimes including subsistence allowance. In Georgia, the subsistence allowance program provides financial aid to the country's poorest families, which is determined by the Social Service Agency rating system. The lower a family's rating, the poorer their financial position. Recent studies have, however, indicated that the program does not help beneficiaries to get out of poverty and instead encourages them to maintain a low income in order to receive the allowance. Moreover, the Georgian government plans to significantly reform the program in the near future. According to the planned reform, instead of providing money directly, families will be given job opportunities to improve their financial positions. Before changes are made within the program, we take a closer look at the dynamics and structure of the population to have been receiving the subsistence allowance over the last five years.

## BENEFICIARIES OF SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

Every family in Georgia can register on the Social Service Agency's platform and request the subsistence allowance. Overall, the number of registered families and families receiving subsistence allowance decreased between 2017 and 2019 (registered families dropped from 326 thousand to 308 thousand, and families receiving subsistence allowance went from 132 thousand to 120 thousand). However, from 2019 to 2021, the number of registered families increased by 14% and reached 351 thousand, and the number of families receiving the subsistence allowance increased by 46%, amounting to 174 thousand. It should be noted that over the analyzed period, on average, among registered families, 42% of them received the subsistence allowance.

Subsequently, the number of persons receiving the subsistence allowance decreased between 2017 and 2019, from

450 thousand to 441 thousand, and from 2019 to 2021 it increased by 33% and amounted to 588 thousand. Over the analyzed period, the share of the population receiving the subsistence allowance rose from 12% to 16%.

The increase in the number of beneficiaries receiving the subsistence allowance in 2020 and 2021 was driven by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent decrease in income for many families. Moreover, from June 2021, a new score category - 100001-120000 was added to the Agency's rating system, which impacted the 2021 increased statistics.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION RECEIVING SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE BY RATING SCORES

As mentioned above, the amount of subsistence allowance is determined by the aforementioned ratings. The lower the score, the more vulnerable the family is, and the higher the allowance for every family member. The dynamics of subsistence allowance recipients reveals that the majority of people fell into the two lowest groups over the analyzed period.

However, the shares of these two groups have been shrinking gradually. For instance, in 2017, the share of those with a lower rating than 57000 was 70%, while in 2021 this figure had shrunk by 11 percentage points and amounted to 59%.

Meanwhile, the shares of other categories have increased modestly. Most noticeably, the share of those in the 70001-100000 category rose by four percentage points and amounted to 20% over the analyzed period.

## SHARE OF FAMILIES RECEIVING SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE BY REGION

To gain a broader picture of the subsistence allowance beneficiaries, it is important to break down the dynamics of families receiving the allowance at the regional level. From 2017 to 2019, in exception of the regions of Adjara, Guria, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, and Kvemo Kartli, the shares of families receiving subsistence allowance decreased. However, from 2019 to 2021, the share of families receiving the subsist-

ence allowance increased in every region. The most noticeable increase was recorded in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (8.1 percentage points), and the least in Tbilisi (3.6 percentage points).

Overall, in the analyzed period, on average the highest shares of families receiving the subsistence allowance were recorded in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (43.4%), Mtskheta-Mtianeti (16.7%), and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (16.6%), while the lowest were recorded in Samtskhe-Javakheti (8.3%), Tbilisi (9.2%), and Imereti (11.2%).

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION RECEIVING SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE BY AGE GROUPS

As the Georgian government decided to change the structure of the subsistence allowance program and to offer job opportunities instead of directly providing financial assistance, it is essential to analyze subsistence allowance recipients by age group to identify the number of labor-capable people among beneficiaries.

From 2017 to 2021, the breakdown of the population receiving subsistence allowance by age did not change significantly. However, over the analyzed period, the share of the 0-18 age group increased by 3.5 percentage points and amounted to 36%, while the shares of other age groups slightly decreased.

On average, over the analyzed period, among people receiving a subsistence allowance, the share of persons of working age (i.e. the 19-40 and 41-65 age groups) amounted to 52%, equating to approximately 250 thousand people. Hence, if the Georgian government is going to reform the program and provide these people with job opportunities, it would have to create approximately 250 thousand new vacancies.

## SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE EXPENDITURES

Over the last five years, expenditure on social security programs has gradually increased (from GEL 3.3 billion to GEL 6 billion). As a result, the share of social security program expenditure in total budget expenditure also increased from 35% to 42% over the analyzed period.

Correlating with the increase in social security program expenditure, subsistence allowance expenditure also increased. During the analyzed period, subsistence allowance expenditure rose markedly from GEL 258 million to GEL 441 million, indicating an average annual growth rate of 15%. It is worth noting that over the analyzed period, the lowest number of subsistence allowance beneficiaries were recorded in 2019. However, compared to 2018, expenditure increased by 27% in 2019. This increase was determined by the overall growth of the social allowance financial package.

Over the analyzed period, the share of subsistence allowance in social security programs fluctuated from 6.3% to 8.1%.

## AVERAGE AMOUNT OF MONTHLY SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE PER FAMILY AND AVERAGE AMOUNT OF SUBSISTENCE MINIMUM FOR AVERAGE FAMILY

As mentioned above, the subsistence allowance aims to protect the most vulnerable in society and provide essential financial assistance to satisfy basic social needs.

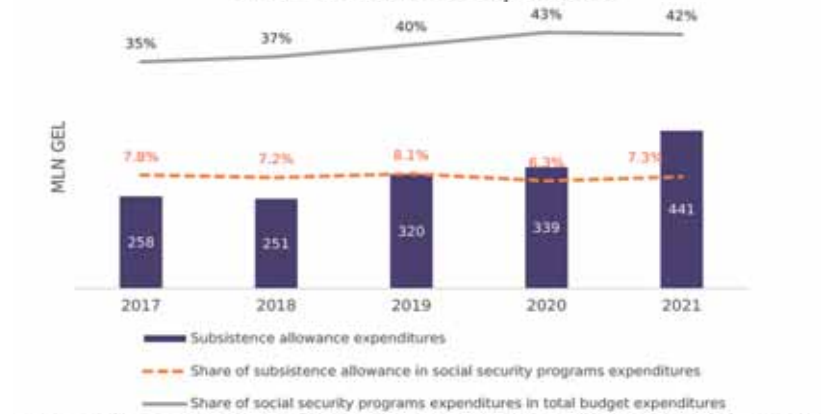
Here, it is interesting to compare the average subsistence allowance amount per family to the average subsistence minimum for a family. The latter repre-

**Distribution of the population receiving subsistence allowance by age groups**



Source: Social Service Agency

**Subsistence allowance expenditures**



Source: Social Service Agency, Ministry of Finances of Georgia

**Average amount of monthly subsistence allowance per family and average amount of subsistence minimum for average family**



Source: Social Service Agency, Geostat

sents the amount of money that a family needs to meet basic needs in Georgia.

From 2017 to 2021, the average monthly subsistence allowance per family increased from GEL 163 to GEL 211, and the subsistence minimum for a family increased from GEL 286 to GEL 334.

A comparison of these indicators reveals that over the analyzed period, the average monthly subsistence minimum was on average 62% higher than the average monthly subsistence allowance.

Overall, from 2017 to 2021, the number

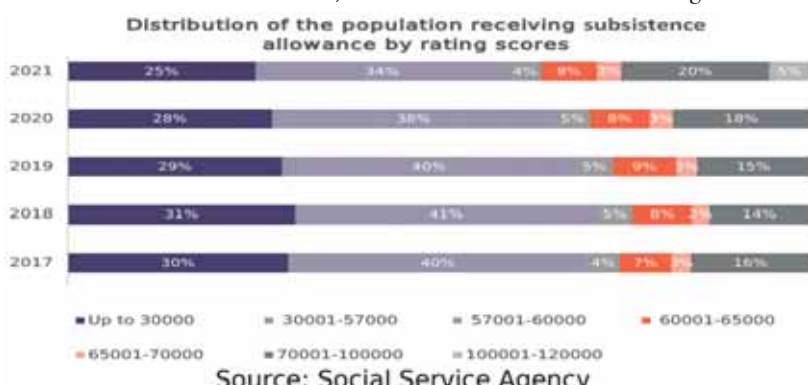
of persons receiving the subsistence allowance increased. The main reason for this is the COVID-19 crisis, the subsequent income decrease for many families, and the change to the rating system in June 2021. The increase in the population receiving subsistence allowance and overall social package in 2019 led to a gradual increase in the program's expenditures. However, in 2021 subsistence allowance for one family remained 59% lower than the average subsistence minimum for the average family over the analyzed period.

**Share of families receiving subsistence allowance by regions**

Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Tbilisi	9.0%	8.7%	7.6%	9.6%	11.2%
Adjara Ar	10.4%	10.1%	11.3%	14.0%	18.6%
Guria	13.4%	13.0%	13.6%	16.0%	19.5%
Racha-lechkhumi and kvemo Svaneti	43.3%	43.7%	39.2%	45.4%	47.3%
Kakheti	15.0%	13.6%	11.7%	14.6%	17.2%
Imereti	11.3%	10.7%	9.2%	11.2%	13.4%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	17.7%	16.6%	13.0%	16.0%	18.7%
Samgrelo-Zemo Svaneti	13.6%	14.4%	15.8%	18.3%	21.0%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	7.6%	7.3%	7.1%	8.4%	11.1%
Kvemo Kartli	10.9%	11.1%	11.3%	14.6%	18.3%
Shida Kartli	16.7%	15.8%	13.0%	16.5%	19.3%

Source: Geostat, PMC RC calculation

Key Economic Indicators	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2021 Q3
Nominal GDP (mln USD)	15 886.1*	1 462.3*	4 863.4*	5 126.4*	5 513.2*
GDP per Capita (USD)	4 274.6*	812.5*	1 282.2*	1 373.6*	1 478.6*
GDP Real Growth (%)	4.2%	-4.3%	28.3*	9.1*	8.8*
Inflation	3.2%	4.3%	8.3%	11.3%	13.0%
FDI (mln USD)	172.0	132.2*	297.7 0*	269.0*	411.3*
Unemployment Rate (%)	18.5%	21.9%	22.1%	18.5%	20.8%
External Debt (mln USD)	7 535	7 721	8 017	7 728	-
Poverty Rate (national)	18.7%	-	-	-	-



Source: Social Service Agency



# Successful Partnership with Ford & Jaguar Land Rover - GT Motors Annual Summary



Ford deal in European history.

It was as a result of such fruitful cooperation that Ford offered to deepen its cooperation with GT Motors, which ended with the agreement on regional representation.

2021 was also a successful year in terms of cooperation with Jaguar Land Rover. This brand has been recognized by GT Motors several times as one of the best representations in the region. The region includes countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Morocco, Jordan and Oman. There are strong dealer companies operating in these countries and that is why the recognition of GT Motors as one of the best representatives is of special importance.

The company has hit the top five overall in the last two years, and in the top three in terms of customer service. The result of this successful and fruitful collaboration is that Jaguar Land Rover has chosen the name of a Georgian seaside town for one of the most expensive colors of the all-new Range Rover. Georgian consumers will be among the first to see Range Rover Batumi Gold.

GT Motors is always working to be one of the first to introduce news of the automotive industry to customers. This is the company that was one of the first in the region to introduce the all-electric Jaguar I-Pace, which also testifies to the fruitful and successful cooperation with world brands.

In order to get the right to present this model, GT Motors went through several stages of preparation. The showroom

and service center were upgraded, special chargers were installed and, most importantly, the entire staff underwent training.

GT Motors also made sure that Georgian consumers were among the first to see the new Land Rover Defender. GT Motors continues to work on development, which is confirmed by the annual growth of the company's turnover. During the most difficult period, 2020, when the country was shut down due to the global pandemic, progress was still observed in the company. It is with this motivation that GT Motors plans to develop in the regions of Georgia. Where, before, the company was represented in Batumi with only one brand showroom,

now it is planned to open a showroom of all brands, with full services.

GT Motors intends to arrange a car service space in Batumi to create maximum comfort for customers. This year, in addition to the pandemic, the world is facing another challenge. The Russia-Ukraine war is a great tragedy for the whole world, especially for this region. GT Motors emphasizes that they support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and try their best to help. In addition to material support, Ukrainians staying in Georgia are accommodated free of charge in the hotel "Ameri Plaza" under the holding. There, they are provided with maximum comfort and all the necessary items.



**G**T Motors has been actively cooperating with world brands for 15 years already. At this stage, the company represents the leading brands in the automotive industry, among them Ford, Jaguar, Land Rover and Suzuki, in Georgia, exclusively.

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, 2021 was a successful year for GT Motors. As a result of the intensive work of the team, the company signed an important agreement with Ford Motor Company. According to the agreement,

from 2022 "GT Motors" became an authorized importer of Ford not only in Georgia, but also in Azerbaijan. From this year, the company is a regional representative of the world brand and will open a new showroom in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

GT Motors and Ford Motor Company have a 14-year successful partnership. However, the agreement on regional representation is not the first success of GT Motors. Over 14 years, the company awarded Ford eight international awards, most notably for the largest commercial

## Vasil Khodeli: 50% of Liberty employees on managerial positions and 30% of top-management are Women

Within Framework of UN Women's Annual Global Initiative, in Direction of Women's Empowerment, Liberty Bank Participates in Event 'Call for Gender Equality'



and triumph for many women. "We are proud that 50% of the employees in Liberty managerial positions and 30% of the management are women," Khodeli noted. "But this is not enough,

and we have plans in this direction as well. As part of our long-term strategy, we will continue to support projects that will enable even more women to be educated, strong, and independent."



**W**ithin the framework of UN Women's Annual Global Initiative, in the direction of women's empowerment, Liberty Bank participated in the event "Call for Gender Equality." Chief Executive Officer at Liberty Bank Vasil Khodeli briefed the public on the steps and initiatives Liberty has taken that will further contribute to the economic empowerment and development of women.

"In 2019, Liberty was one of the first signatories of the UN Principles for the Empowerment of Women in Georgia," he said. "The cornerstone of our new strategy is the human being, improving the lives of people, and their families. As part of caring for people, for ourselves, it is important to promote education and raise awareness in general. With the initiative of Liberty and in collaboration with UN Women Georgia and other partner organizations, to date, about 300 women entrepreneurs have

already benefited from the special training program. In the coming years, we plan to train and support up to 2,000 women.

"We are actively involved in awareness-raising campaigns. In addition to empowering women economically, we want to change public attitudes towards specific issues and break down stereotypes. These past two years, Liberty has been a loyal supporter of the women's football team WFC Lanchkhuti, and each of their victories is a symbol of strength

# Intersections

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

I will get back to writing about the War; something is brewing, but it will take some time. Until then...

This winter has been a devastating one for my wife and I, what with the garage fire mid-January, which cost us an estimated \$35,000 in losses, including our 4x4 vehicle and lots of tools. As I have already written, though, the greatest loss to me, which can never be replaced, was my last box of original 35mm negatives and slides from about 25 years of shooting, along with quite a few prints from previously stolen frames. Yes, most of them were scanned and the scans are safe, but the originals are now gone. I had to move on, or let it flatten me.

This winter also seems to have been the one which really inspired me in new

ways as a photographer, though. Since that fire, I have spent many days out in the snow, mostly with a long zoom lens, seeing new things.

My recent work is almost all in black and white, to pare back landscapes to the basics with no distractions from color. Just tones and forms. Having lived in the same house for 10 years, though, what new things could winter really hold?

The Ice Dragon tale of the last two articles I wrote has been a kind of catalyst, its human protagonist really me in disguise. I was writing about what I was seeing, the initial Ice Dragons themselves and then their larger snow forms, in whole or in part, everywhere. I don't even know if those original curved icicles will ever reappear as dragons. The conditions which formed them—snow, temperature, wind, humidity—may have been unique. I have seen curved icicles before, but never like these in my life



(which has been mostly in climates with proper winters). I am just glad I saw them and was in a position to photograph their short lives, as by day's end they were indeed shattered on the ground.

The snow forms I was seeing even before the icicles, though, bring in the idea of a fractal, for which my best personal definition is "made of itself". Polish-French mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot coined the term "fractal" in the 1970s, from the Latin for "broken". Fractals are both in mathematics (you can zoom into them literally forever and find more detail) and nature (structures which repeat themselves on many scales, possibly down to the atomic). Trees and other branching forms like the venous systems in us. Clouds. Water running from the largest rivers down to tiny deltas at your feet. Cracks, rust, land or snow textures. Often, when seeing a photograph of a fractal form in nature with nothing in the frame to give away its scale, you may have no idea: is it planet-sized or microscopic? Also, fractals are the most efficient way of packing the most information or detail into the smallest space. I have been a fractal programmer since the early 1990s, and a photographer of natural fractals for longer than that.

I am also a sculptor, a founding mem-

ber of the Sculptors' Association of Alberta in Canada in 1986. True, I have not been active in this art for many years now. But much of what I have seen in this winter's snow and ice forms has been sculptural, not just textures on flat surfaces but wind-blown forms fully in the round.

So, many of the art forms in which I am or have been active have converged this last winter for me. Photography, fractals, sculpture, writing. Despite the losses, it feels like in this process I am finding some completion as an artist, a unified direction from these fragments joining into a whole. I could not have planned this, so to see it happening is a joy. I am grateful for the art of seeing, really seeing, and for it all pulling together in my head and heart. In this imperfect, currently very messed up world, beauty still exists, and always will. See it!

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/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/). He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri:

[www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti](https://www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti)



# The Solomon Arts Gallery Presents Georgian Non-Conformist Artist, Givi Vashakidze



Church and Love. Oil on canvas. 110 x 110 cm. 2014.

**G**ivi Vashakidze was born on August 7, 1937, in Tbilisi. He studied the basics of art at Tbilisi Students' Palace, where he studied painting from Grigol Meskhi and Shalva Kapnadze from 1951-1954. There, he studied Still Life painting, and later created his first artistic work "Wounded Rider in Svaneti".

Vashakidze continued his studies at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, where he was taught painting by Khita Kutateladze and Robert Sturua (father of a well-known theater producer), and graphics by the famous artist Sergo Qobuladze.

In the late 1950s, certain changes took place in Georgian and, in general, the artistic space of the Soviet Union, seeing young artists standing aside from so-called "socialist realism" and beginning to study Western European art of

the late 19th and early 20th centuries on a deeper level. These young Georgian artists had the basis for this through the works of earlier generation artists: Mose Toidze, Valerian Sidamon-Eristavi, Dimitri Shevardnadze, Davit Kakabadze, and Lado Gudiashvili, which, to some extent complemented the discontinuity of creative methods between generations. Many of them later chose the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting style. Some, including Givi Vashakidze, became followers of the avant-garde artistic direction of the early 20th century: abstractionism, expressionism, metaphysical painting and surrealism.

Of course, the formal art leaders opposed such painting, at the behest of the elite of Communist Party and the State Security Committee. The young artists were often summoned to and interrogated by party and law enforcement agencies, but the creative youth did not give up and

followed the path of artistic innovation of their choice.

Givi Vashakidze was among them, devoting a large part of his work to surrealistic compositions. In addition to such compositions, his work also includes symbolic, metaphorical, imaginative compositions that represent world through philosophical perception. Vashakidze can literally be considered as one of the first followers of surrealist, symbolic imaginative art of late 20th century Georgian painting. Of course, due to this, the Soviet officials did not allow the artist to organize exhibitions, and only in 1977, on the personal decision of the prominent Georgian dissident, director of Rustaveli National Theater of that time, writer Akaki Baqradze, was Vashakidze's first personal exhibition held in the foyer of the theater. After that, in 1979, the artist had a personal exhibition in Riga, the capital of Latvia.

In the USSR, during the so-called "Perestroika" period, party censorship was reduced to some extent and Vashakidze was able to organize a personal exhibition in his hometown at Tbilisi Artist's House thanks to the efforts of the artist Temo Gotsadze, director of Tbilisi Artist's House. Unfortunately, this magnificent House of Artists was burned down and destroyed during the civil war in Tbilisi in December-January 1991-92, and important works of contemporary Georgian art which were kept and exhibited there were destroyed.

In 1989, Givi Vashakidze's personal exhibition was organized in the Cultural Center of Georgian representation in Moscow "Mziuri," at the Old Arbat. In 1989 and 1990, he participated in a group exhibition of Georgian artists in the Bavarian city of Munich, Germany. A similar group exhibition was organized in 1991 in Tyrol. In 1996, Vashakidze's works were exhibited in Munich again, and in the 2003, he had a personal exhibition in the city of Baku.

After the personal exhibition organized at the Artist's House in 1987, Vashakidze's personal exhibition was organized for the second time in Tbilisi only in 2010.

Givi Vashakidze passed away in 2017. In 2019, a personal exhibition of the



The Wind Was Blowing Since Morning. Paper, gouache. 35 x 73 cm. 1967.



A Girl in the Bathroom with a Towel. Oil on canvas. 112 x 90 cm. 2014.



Autoportrait. Oil on cardboard. 48 x 34 sm. 1964.

artist was organized in the exhibition hall of the Acad. G. Chubinashvili State Center of Study of Georgian Art, under the leadership of Mariam Gachechiladze, Doctor of Art, Head of the Department of Contemporary Georgian Art.

Givi Vashakidze worked on illustrations of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" and created nearly 50 illustrations.

As mentioned above, surrealist compositions held a certain place in Vashakidze's work from the 1960s. Such is the artist's painting - "Wind has been blowing since morning" (1967), a gouache painting depicting abstract shapes and figures presented in dynamics and deformed by the wind on a background of greenish-blue tones. The artist's "Self-Portrait" (1964) belongs to the same period, painted in green and yellow tones in the manner of neoclassical realism of the 1920s and 1930s.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the artist created compositions with minimalist-abstract, grotesque figures of a more metaphorical nature, against the backdrop of sharp, vivid tones that echo somewhat David Kakabadze's abstract figurative compositions and collages. However, Givi Vashakidze gives a symbolic-allegorical backdrop to his compositions and creates large paintings.

The artist's works of 2010 appear as a background for symbolic-metaphorical compositions of medieval Georgian architecture, and thus Vashakidze achieves a synthesis of conveying the problems of cultural heritage and modernity in metaphorical forms, such are the big panels: "Shatili-Fire Alarm" (2014) and "Love and the Church" (2014).

Givi Vashakidze's art convincingly stands out by its distinctive style in late 20th century Georgian painting. He and other prominent non-conformist artists of his generation, Avto Varazi, Otar

Chkhartishvili, Temo Japaridze, Albert Dilbariani, and Simon Girkelidze, undoubtedly advanced Georgian contemporary painting, enriching it with new metaphorical faces and artistic expressions.

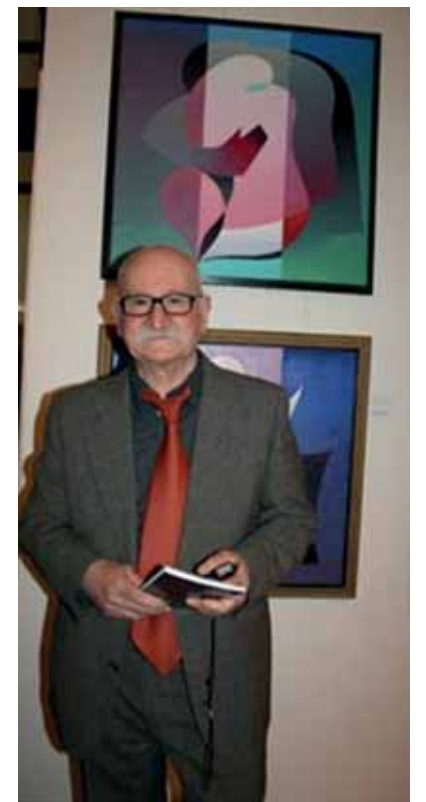
True artists are always given their credit in due time. Givi Vashakidze's art has also been appreciated in the 21st century and established in modern Georgian painting.

Givi Vashakidze's art exhibition is currently running at "Solomon Arts Gallery" in Tbilisi.



Alarm Fire in Shatili, Georgia. Oil on canvas. 80 x 140 cm. 2014.

Shatili is a famous Georgian village in the high Caucasus Mountains, it is famous for its Towers and is listed in the World Cultural Heritage list of UNESCO. Unfortunately, Georgian people abandoned these towers and the painter Givi Vashakidze expressed his pain at the problem of Georgian Mountainous people, coming down to the big cities and leaving the old traditional villages empty.



Givi Vashakidze.



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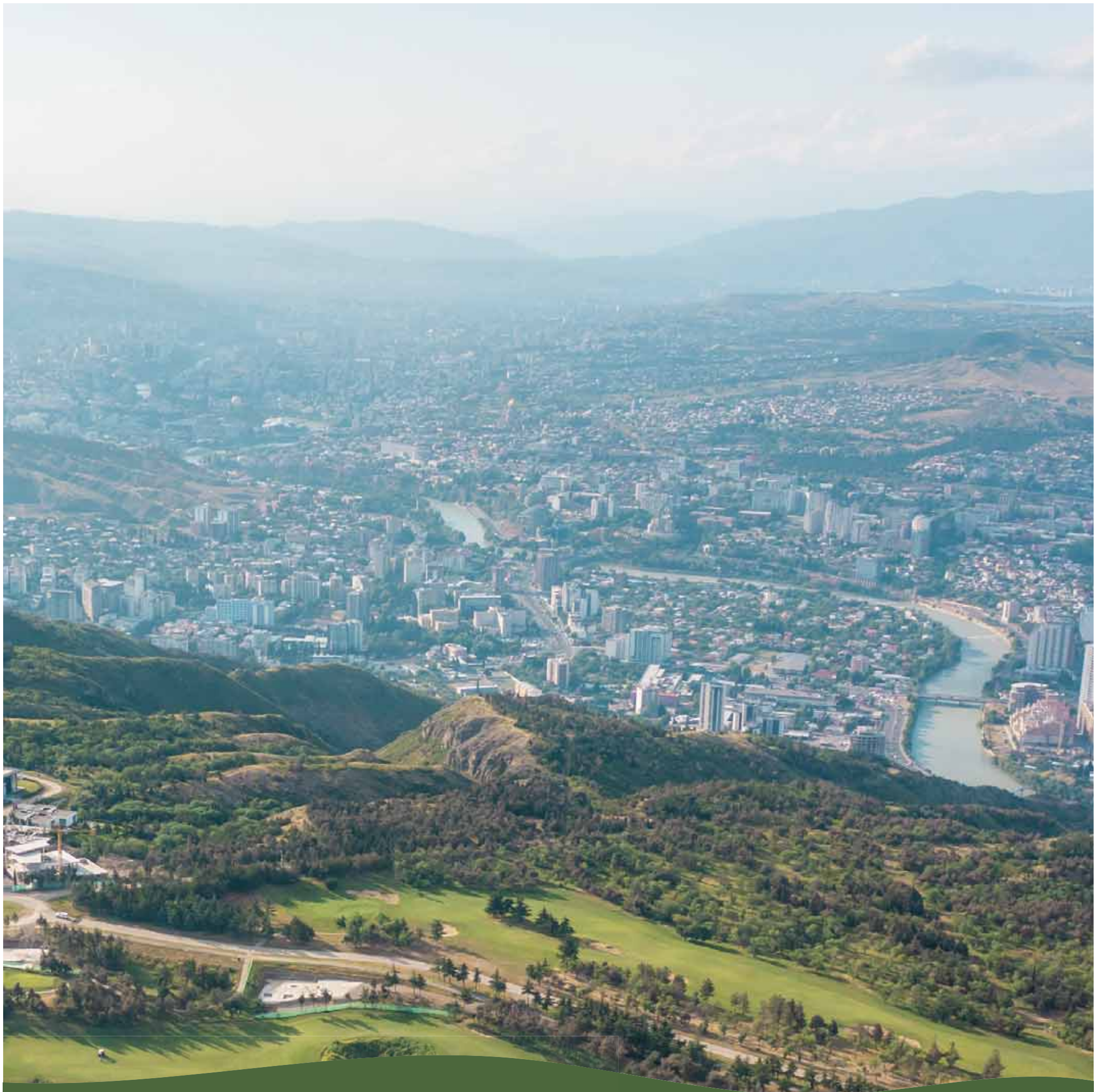
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