

FOCUS

ON GEORGIA'S
DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

The Council of Europe
Congress adopts a
resolution on Georgia with
101 votes in favor

PAGE 2



The Council of Europe this week. Source: CoE

Lt. Col. Vano Nadiradze: "No-one in their right mind would accept Russia's ceasefire conditions"

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Lieutenant Colonel Vano Nadiradze, a Georgian commander in Ukraine's armed forces and a veteran of multiple campaigns, speaks with the bluntness of a man who has seen too much war to sugarcoat reality. As Ukraine withdraws from Kursk after seven months of bitter fighting, he makes it clear that this was no panicked rout but an organized retreat, dictated by cold strategic calculus. Yet beneath the pragmatism, there is no disguising the frustration. "We could have held on for longer," he says, "if not for the cutoff of real-time intelligence sharing from the US."

That, in his view, was the decisive factor. When Donald Trump publicly clashed with Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office, it may have played well to a segment of the American electorate, but on the ground in Kursk, the consequences were immediate and devastating. "The very day Trump announced his decision, the Russians took Zhuravlika and Novenko, giving them access to Sudzha, the largest town in Ukrainian-controlled Kursk. The writing was on the wall after that."

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Ukrainian forces travel towards the Kursk region on a supply route in Sumy last August. By March of this year, their retreat was in full swing. Source: EPA

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GALT & TAGGART CREATING OPPORTUNITIES											
Prepared for Georgia Today Business by											
As of 26-Mar-2025											
Markets					Markets						
BONDS	Price	w/w	m/m	STOCKS	Price	w/w	m/m				
GEORG 04/26	95.66 (YTM 7.205%)	+0.0%	+0.2%	Lion Finance Group (BGEO LN)	GBP 57.20	-0.2%	+2.3%				
GBAIL 06/28	98.54 (YTM 8.11%)	+0.2%	+0.4%	Georgia Capital (GCEO LN)	GBP 15.48	-0.1%	+7.2%				
GEBOG 9/12 PERP	98.84 (YTM 9.54%)	+0.0%	+0.5%	TBC Bank Group (TBGG LN)	GBP 44.50	+0.2%	+0.9%				
SILNET 01/27	101.57 (YTM 7.44%)	+0.1%	+0.5%								
TBC 8.894 PERP	97.19 (YTM 11.56%)	-0.0%	+0.3%	COMMODITIES					Price	w/w	m/m
TBC 10 1/4 PERP	100.99 (YTM 9.81%)	-0.0%	+0.5%	Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	73.79	+4.3%	+1.7%				
					Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	3 019.38	-0.9%	+3.5%			
INDICES			Price	w/w	m/m	CURRENCIES			Price	w/w	m/m
SP 500	5 712.20	+0.7%	-4.1%	USD / GEL	2,7720	-0.0%	-1.6%				
FTSE 250	20 039.20	-0.4%	-2.7%	EUR / GEL	2,0811	-1.4%	+1.0%				
DOW JONES 30	42 454.79	+1.2%	-2.3%	GBP / GEL	3,5768	-0.8%	+0.2%				
Russell 2000	2 073.83	-0.4%	-6.6%	EUR / USD	1,0754	-1.4%	+0.2%				
FTSE 100	8 689.59	-0.2%	-0.5%	GBP / USD	1,2888	-0.9%	+1.7%				



Tbilisi protesters in 2024. Source: belganeagency

Council of Europe Congress Adopts Resolution on Georgia's Democratic Backsliding

BY TEAM GT

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has adopted a resolution addressing the state of local and regional democracy in Georgia, highlighting concerns over significant democratic backsliding in the country.

The resolution was passed with strong support, receiving 101 votes in favor, 10 against, and 3 abstentions. The Congress expressed grave concern about the accelerating erosion of democratic standards in Georgia, particularly after the 2024 parliamentary elections, which were widely rejected by opposition parties, domestic observers, and some international monitors due to integrity concerns. This was further compounded by the government's decision to halt Georgia's EU accession on November 28, 2024.

The resolution highlights several key issues affecting Georgia's democratic landscape. It underscores the deepening polarization in the country, which has led to a situation where the opposition is increasingly marginalized. The lack of dialogue between the ruling authorities and opposition parties has resulted in a de facto absence of political pluralism, even within municipal councils. This has allowed the ruling party to concentrate power excessively, forcing the opposition to boycott decision-making bodies and shrinking the space for negotiation and mediation.

The Congress also addressed the troubling rise of government measures, such as the controversial Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which have stifled dissenting voices and created an atmosphere of intimidation for NGOs and media outlets. This has undermined the freedoms of association and expression, essential pillars of any democratic society. The resolution asserts that, "in a democratic society, freedom of expression must be protected, supported and promoted irrespective of whether it is critical of the government, and even if it is influenced by international discourse."

Another major concern raised was the violent repression of peaceful protests, particularly in Tbilisi, where law enforcement authorities violated the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The resolution highlights that recent legal amendments have worsened the situation, introducing vague provisions that grant authorities excessive discretion in dealing with public demonstrations. This has led to decisions at the local level that are incompatible with democratic standards.

Furthermore, the Congress pointed out

the instrumentalization of public institutions, including at the local level, resulting in reports of civil servants being dismissed or pressured, facilitated by amendments to the Law on Public Service. The politicization of public administration has also led to the misuse of administrative resources and undue pressure on voters during election campaigns, tilting the playing field and distorting voter preferences.

The resolution also criticizes the frequent amendments to Georgia's legal framework for local elections, with over 20 changes since the last elections. These amendments have undermined the stability of electoral law, reinforced the ruling party's control over the Central Election Commission, and weakened key provisions, such as gender quotas and the establishment of electoral districts.

As a result, the resolution warns that the decline in public confidence in democratic institutions, particularly among the youth, risks undermining the credibility of the upcoming 2025 local elections. This, in turn, could exacerbate the political crisis in the country.

In response, the Congress has instructed the Monitoring Committee to continue its work to secure guarantees for free and fair local and regional elections and to postpone the monitoring visit on the European Charter of Local Self-Government until after the upcoming elections. Additionally, the Congress stands ready to conduct a fact-finding or high-level visit if necessary, depending on progress made in addressing the issues raised in Recommendation 526 (2025). The Bureau and Monitoring Committee have also been tasked with ensuring that the situation in Georgia remains on the agenda of their future meetings until the resolution's recommendations are fully implemented.

The Congress has reiterated its commitment to supporting the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Georgia (2024-2027) and reinforcing the capacity of local authorities and their representative associations to address challenges at the local level. The Congress also called on the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia to ensure it represents all local authorities, not just those dominated by the ruling party, and to encourage participation from all political actors.

Finally, the Congress reaffirmed its readiness to continue political dialogue with Georgia's delegation to the Congress to assist in implementing the resolution and the recommendations outlined in Recommendation 526 (2025).

"The Congress stands ready to pursue its political dialogue with the delegation of Georgia to the Congress, in its full composition, to cooperate on the implementation of Recommendation 526 (2025) and the present Resolution," reads the resolution.

Turkey's Opposition Elects Interim Istanbul Mayor After Imamoglu's Jailing



BY TEAM GT

In a dramatic political shake-up, Turkey's opposition has appointed an interim mayor for Istanbul following the shocking detention of Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a key rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Imamoglu, who has been a central figure in the opposition's challenge to Erdogan's rule, was sentenced and detained earlier this week, triggering outrage among his supporters and raising concerns over political freedoms in Turkey. The move is widely seen as an effort to sideline him ahead of the 2028 presidential elections.

In an emergency session, the Istanbul City Council selected Nuri Aslan to temporarily lead Turkey's largest city. The appointment aims to ensure continuity in governance while the opposition fights Imamoglu's legal battle.

Opposition leaders have condemned Imamoglu's detention as politically motivated. "This is an open attack on democracy," said a spokesperson for the Republican People's Party (CHP). "The people of Istanbul will not accept this injustice."

Istanbul's 314-member council, where the CHP holds a majority, elected the party's Nuri Aslan to run the city with 177 votes, according to NTV. The interim mayor will run the city for the remainder of Imamoglu's term, as he awaits trial.

The election of an interim mayor prevents the government from appointing a trustee to run the municipality, as it has done in several other cities, particularly in the mainly Kurdish southeast, amid a months-long legal crackdown on the opposition.

Speaking at the Istanbul Municipality building in Sarachane, CHP chairman Ozgur Ozel, who visited Imamoglu in jail a day ago, said the interim mayor had blocked Erdogan's desire to appoint a trustee at the municipality.

"The struggle will expand to all of Turkey from now on, but one leg will always be in Istanbul and one hand will always be on Sarachane," Ozel said, adding the public's resistance had thwarted what the opposition calls a "coup attempt" against it.

Interim Mayor Aslan, speaking alongside Ozel, said the position was entrusted to him temporarily.

"Our mayor, elected with the votes of Istanbul, will come back as soon as possible. We, along with our chairman, will take care of what he entrusted us with and give it back to him," he said.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Since Imamoglu's detention, Turkish financial assets have plunged, prompting the central bank to use reserves to support the lira. The government has said the impact of the fluctuations would be limited and temporary.

Central Bank Governor Fatih Karahan said on Wednesday the bank had taken proactive steps to ensure markets functioned effectively and that the measures were supportive of its tight monetary policy stance. He said the turmoil did not disrupt the core dynamics of the economy.

The decision to remove Imamoglu has sparked protests across the country, with thousands taking to the streets in Istanbul, Ankara, and other major cities. International leaders have also voiced concern, with the EU and the US calling for respect for democratic institutions.

As Turkey braces for further political turmoil, the fate of Istanbul's leadership remains uncertain, with opposition forces vowing to resist what they call Erdogan's latest attempt to consolidate power.

Russian Forces Detain Two Georgian Citizens Near Occupied Tskhinvali

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

Two citizens of Georgia have been illegally detained by Russian occupying forces near the village of Ergneti in Gori Municipality and the village of Sveri in the occupied Tskhinvali region.

The State Security Service confirmed the detentions and declared that the European Union Monitoring Mission's (EUMM) hotline was activated immediately as the information was received. "All available mechanisms have been put in motion to secure the release of the detained Georgian citizens as quickly as possible," the agency reported.

The situation has also been brought to the attention of international partners and the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions.



Photo: Tabula.

GCCA Reveals Wolt Georgia Executed Unfair Commercial Practices



Photo: Wolt.

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

The Georgian Competition and Consumer Agency (GCCA) has revealed that Wolt Georgia has executed unfair commercial practices by not properly providing concise and accurate information about its 'Premium Package' service. The investigation has determined that while Wolt+ subscribers benefit from a 0 gel delivery fee, they are still subjected

to additional charges, like a Service Fee. The agency decided that the company's method of presenting this information was misleading or had the potential to mislead consumers. The GCCA has given the instructions to Wolt Georgia to accurately and certainly disclose all expenses related to its Premium Package in any way before consumers subscribe, a step which the agency believes will ensure transparency. Wolt Georgia is subject to updating its Terms and Conditions to define the Service Fee properly. The company has been given one month to restore consumer rights and provide compensation to affected individuals.




Protest in Chiatura. March 2025. Source: Facebook

Miners in Chiatura Protest Bankruptcy, Demand State Control of Mining Operations

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE


Since February 28, thousands of miners in Chiatura, Georgia, have been protesting and demanding the state to take over the management of underground mineral extraction after the Chiatura Management Company filed for bankruptcy, with 3,500 workers left laid off. The company, a Georgian Manganese contractor, has struggled to pay full salaries because of global price drops and reduced profitability. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze touched upon the issues, rejecting the idea of state interference, saying it is 'fundamentally wrong' and pointing to the global challenges that mining com-




panies face nowadays. He expressed hope that they would find a solution despite the difficulties. Speaking on behalf of the protesters, miner Tariel Mikatsadze called for negotiations rather than public statements, arguing that the only solution was for Georgian Manganese to leave Chiatura. A meeting of the 'Tripartite Commission for Social Partnership' was held earlier this month, where government officials, trade unions, and employers discussed the crisis and agreed to form a working group to find a solution. In a separate but relevant issue, residents of Shuktuti village have long been accusing Georgian Manganese of damaging their homes and agricultural land without any financial compensation. The situation remains tense, with ongoing protests and no clear resolution in sight.




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The name of the restaurant Xeme speaks for itself, as it means the arctic fork-tailed gull.



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Lt. Col. Vano Nadiradze: "No-one in their right mind would accept Russia's ceasefire conditions"

Continued from page 1

The Russians, he believes, had an inkling of what was coming. "I could not shake the feeling that they knew beforehand that Trump would cut off military aid and intelligence sharing."

Yet he insists the operation was not in vain. "Without Kursk, we would have faced a massive Russian assault on Zaporizhia. Without Kursk, they would have taken Pokrovsk. Instead, we have made gains elsewhere—small but steady advances east and south. Toretsk, which they had all but taken, is now contested again. More importantly, we forced Russia to fight on its own soil. They turned their own cities into rubble this time, not ours. One of my men, a Georgian, was the first to enter Kursk as a soldier and the first to raise Ukrainian and Georgian flags on Russian soil. For the first time this century, foreign flags were flown there."

The cost, however, has been steep. "Over seven months, the casualty ratio was in our favor—70 to 30. But the last ten days have been brutal. We had losses during the retreat. Some were taken prisoner. The Russians are executing captives now. That tells you all you need to know about the kind of war they are fighting. Among those taken are foreign volunteers, including Europeans."

Morale, however, remains high. If Trump's move was meant to undermine



The Ukrainian side withdraws from Kursk. Source: responsiblestatecraft

Zelensky, it had the opposite effect among the rank and file. "After that famous spat in the Oval Office, his popularity in the army skyrocketed. Soldiers saw him as someone unafraid to defend their interests, someone unwilling to be bullied. It won him more hearts than anything else could have. The belief is firm: Ukraine will fight on, with or without US aid. And we hope for European support, especially from Britain. They understand what's at stake."

When it comes to the other American billionaire with an outside influence on the war, Nadiradze is unsparing. "Musk is widely hated, not only in the Ukrainian army, but in all of Ukraine. He has only himself to blame. Let's not forget, it's not the first time something like that has happened - he cut off Starlink right before we were to carry out a major operation in Crimea. We couldn't do it because of him. He is not a stable man. I would be surprised if he stays in

Trump's orbit for long. Starlink is the best option right now, but it can be replaced. We managed for a week without US intelligence thanks to support from Britain and France. There are alternatives."

As for the latest talk of a ceasefire, Nadiradze is skeptical. "Russia's conditions amount to capitulation. No one in their right mind would accept them. Ukrainians will reject them, and Americans should too. Every ceasefire Rus-

sia has ever agreed to has been a prelude to renewed hostilities. They use them to regroup, to come back stronger. It's a trap. If there is to be a real peace-keeping force, a mix of Turkish, British, and French troops, perhaps with Canadian and Australian support, would be ideal. But Russia would never accept it unless forced to. And they will not be forced unless we shift the battlefield dynamics. We need help to make that happen."

Ukraine Latest: Escalating Attacks, Diplomatic Talks, and Humanitarian Concerns

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

This week saw significant military engagements between Russian and Ukrainian forces.

Here is the roundup of key events as of Thursday, March 27.

Russian forces launched a mass drone attack on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, injuring nine people and causing considerable damage, reported emergency services and Ukrainian officials.

A Russian drone attack also triggered fires in the central city of Dnipro, announced regional governor Serhiy Lysak. No casualties were immediately reported.

The mayor of Ukraine's southern port of Mykolaiv said there were emergency power outages early on Wednesday in the city, following an attack by Russian drones.

The Ukrainian military said its air defense units shot down 56 of 117 drones launched by Russia.

Russian state TV journalist Anna Prokofieva was killed and her cameraman Dmitry Volkov was seriously injured by a landmine allegedly laid by the Ukrainian military in Russia's Belgorod region.

Russian forces advanced in the Kursk-Sumy Oblast border area, with reports indicating movements near Toretsk and in western Zaporizhia Oblast. Ukrainian troops conducted operations in Kursk Oblast, achieving gains in areas such as southern Berdin and central Russkoye Porechnoye.

A Ukrainian military court handed long prison sentences to 12 members of Ukraine's Azov regiment, which led the



Rescuers work at the site of a Russian drone strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Photo by George Ivanchenko/Anadolu

defense of the city of Mariupol in the early months of the war. The defendants, charged with terrorist activity and with violently seizing or retaining power, were sentenced to between 13 and 23 years in prison.

Meanwhile, diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict continued.

Saudi Arabia hosted bilateral talks between Russian and US officials to discuss prospects for a partial ceasefire in Ukraine and the safety of shipping in the Black Sea.

Ukraine and Russia accused one another of flouting a truce on attacks against energy facilities brokered by the United

States after Washington announced separate agreements on Tuesday to pause strikes in the Black Sea and against energy targets.

Senior Ukrainian presidential official Ihor Zhovkva said Russia has attacked at least eight Ukrainian energy facilities since March 18, when Moscow says it halted such attacks. Russian President Vladimir Putin's order for a moratorium on attacking energy infrastructure in Ukraine is being fulfilled by Russia's armed forces, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed.

The Ukrainian military rejected as false Russian accusations that it carried out

strikes on energy facilities in Russia's Kursk and Bryansk regions, as well as in Russia-occupied Crimea.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the US told Kyiv that the truce deals with Russia were effective as soon as they were announced. But the Kremlin said the Black Sea ceasefire agreement would not enter force until a sanctioned Russian state bank was reconnected to the international payment system, Swift. European leaders said this would not happen until Russia withdraws from Ukraine.

THE PARIS SUMMIT

More than 30 nations convened in Paris to deliberate on security guarantees for Ukraine post-conflict. Notable attendees included Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and French President Emmanuel Macron. Discussions focused on establishing a robust security framework to deter future aggression.

Speaking alongside French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in advance of a European summit to discuss Ukraine, President Zelensky said he hopes Washington has enough power to press Russia into an unconditional ceasefire after Moscow put forward its conditions for the Black Sea truce.

"I want to highlight France's efforts in helping us defend against Russian strikes. In particular, your Mirages, combat aircraft made in France, have performed very well," Zelensky noted. "I am particularly grateful for them. They have already become a part of our air shield and are helping us defend primarily against Shaheds and other attack drones. We have spoken about increasing the number of Mirage fighter jets. I also appreciate all other forms of defense support for Ukraine. Today, we have

already started discussing, and will continue later, the situation on the front, concrete defense needs, and the prospects for how we can bring this war to an end. I am grateful for France's new defense package for Ukraine, agreed upon today. The package amounts to 2 billion euros, a strong one. All details will be communicated separately by our defense ministers. Thank you!"

The Kremlin stated that Moscow remains in intensive contact with the United States and is pleased with the progress of discussions with Washington. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov remarked, "We are satisfied with the pragmatic and constructive nature of our dialogue and the tangible results it is producing."

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed that the US will assess Russia's demands following its agreement "in principle" to a US-brokered ceasefire in the Black Sea, aimed at ensuring safe navigation.

Rubio said US officials would work to "more fully understand what the Russian position is, or what they're asking in exchange", and then "present that" to US President Donald Trump to make a decision.

Trump said in an interview that he thought Russia wanted to end its war with Ukraine, but acknowledged that Moscow could be "dragging its feet."

HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

Ukraine has demanded the return of thousands of children allegedly abducted by Russia, stating that their repatriation is a non-negotiable condition for any peace deal. The Ukrainian government asserts that these children were forcibly transferred and are being subjected to forced assimilation.

Council of Europe Congress Urges Georgia to Resume Political Dialogue at All Levels of Government



Cecilia Dalman Eek. Source: COE



Bernd Voehringer. Source: COE

BY TEAM GT

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe this week called on Georgian authorities to resume an inclusive political dialogue at all levels of government and with all relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, opposition parties, and civil society. Such dialogue is crucial to reduce political polarization, restore the necessary checks and balances in a pluralist democracy, and regulate the participation rights of the opposition. These steps are essential for creating the conditions for a democratic environment ahead of the 2025 local elections.

In a resolution and recommendation based on a report presented by Cecilia Dalman Eek (Sweden, SOC/G/PD) and Bernd Voehringer (Germany,

SOC/G/PD) on 26 March 2025 during its 48th session, the Congress expressed concern over the rapid democratic backsliding observed in Georgia over the past two years, which has increasingly affected local democracy.

The Congress highlighted that the marginalization of the opposition and the absence of dialogue with the ruling authorities have resulted in the de facto absence of political pluralism, even within municipal councils. This situation has led to an excessive concentration of power by the ruling party, prompting the opposition to boycott decision-making bodies.

As a result, the erosion of democratic principles, the rule of law, and human rights has led to a significant loss of public trust in democratic institutions, particularly among the youth. This situation has further damaged local democracy, which is not conducive to holding the 2025 local elections in an environment based on trust.

The Congress called on Georgian authorities to

take the following actions: repeal legislation that violates human rights, particularly the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence; avoid any actions that hinder the essential work of civil society; investigate arbitrary arrests and violent actions against non-violent protesters and journalists at the local level; release those who have been detained; and ensure that sanctions related to public demonstrations are lawful and proportional. Additionally, the Congress called for the repeal of the controversial amendments to the Law on Public Service and the reintegration of local public service employees dismissed based on these provisions.

The Congress also urged Georgian authorities to repeal the amendments to the Electoral Code adopted in December 2024, carry out necessary legislative reforms to address identified shortcomings, and prevent cases of voter intimidation, pressure on public employees, vote buying, and electoral violence.

Furthermore, the Congress called on the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia to ensure that it serves as the representative body for all local authorities, not just those where the ruling party holds a majority of seats.

The Congress reaffirmed that local and regional authorities play a crucial role in upholding and defending democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, not only within their communities but also as part of the system of checks and balances that forms the foundation of a genuine pluralistic democracy.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 46 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 612 elected officials representing more than 130,000 local and regional authorities.

GD's FM Bochorishvili Visits Hungary, Discusses Bilateral Relations



BY TEAM GT

On Monday, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó welcomed his Georgian counterpart, Maka Bochorishvili, to Budapest for an official visit.

Following their meeting, the Georgian Foreign Ministry cited Bochorishvili expressing gratitude for Hungary's steadfast support, stating, "I would like to once again express my gratitude for Hungary's unwavering support for Georgia and for your principled positions. We particularly appreciate Hungary's assistance both within the framework of the European Union and in our bilateral relations."

The ministry announced that the discussions covered key aspects of bilateral relations, explored ways to deepen cooperation, and underscored the importance of maximizing the potential of trade,

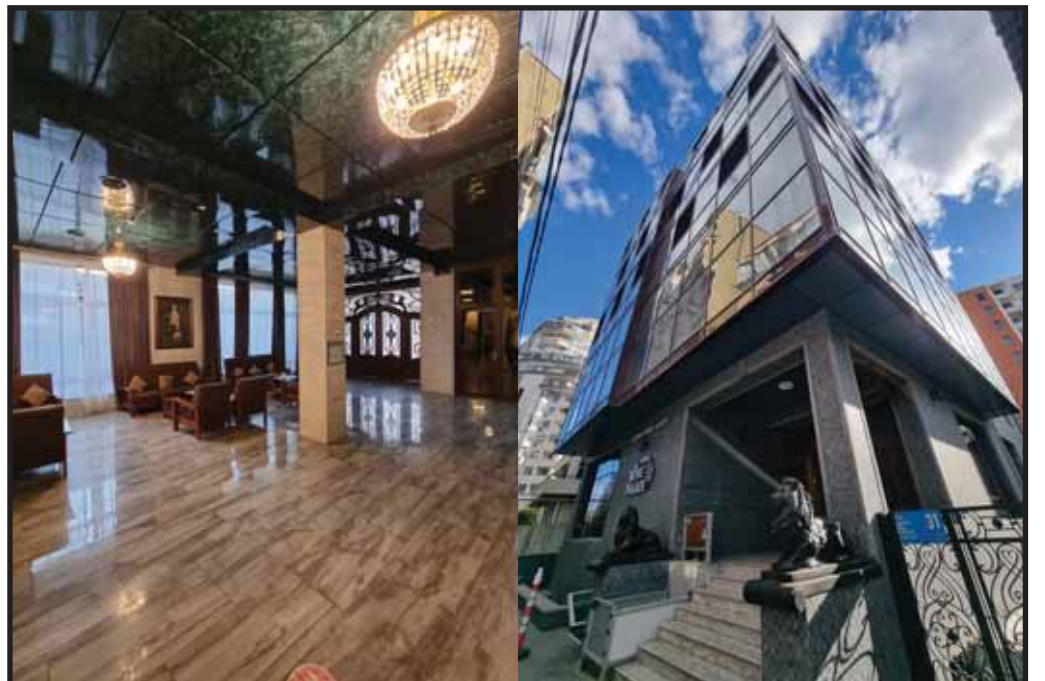
economic ties, connectivity, and other areas of mutual interest.

While the statement highlighted that "particular attention was given to the strategic potential of the Black Sea," no further details were disclosed.

Hungary has been one of the most vocal supporters of Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party within the EU, frequently obstructing measures aimed at addressing the country's ongoing political crisis.

Moreover, Hungarian officials, including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, have actively engaged in Georgia's internal politics. This was most evident when Orbán congratulated Georgian Dream on its victory in the October 2024 parliamentary elections—before the official results had even been announced.

On the same day, Szijjártó also met with his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan. Their discussions focused on the opening of embassies in their respective capitals and the recent announcement that Armenia and Azerbaijan had reached an agreement on the text of a historic peace treaty.



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The Current Global Rebus: Notes for the Post-January 20 Period. Part 2

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
CHAIRMAN, GEOCASE

Trump's proclaimed course, intentionally or unintentionally, may be a harbinger of one of the pillars of classical geopolitics: the division of the world into spheres of influence. Obviously, such a division, whether by soft or other power, already existed in the 'non-Trump' modern world. But the fact is that under the US foreign policy framework, the new administration's unwitting supporters would primarily be authoritarian Russia and China. And this, in fact, creates a special challenge for compact countries (such as Georgia) that authoritarian regimes perceive to fall within their sphere of influence.

In time, this challenge will become even more acute if the decline of international law continues and the political and legal instruments that ensured order after the Second World War are replaced by commercialization and mercantilism in relations between countries. As a result, the importance of diplomacy and law will be overshadowed by motives driven by 'value' and 'monetary compensation,' and interstate contacts will effectively be governed by the same laws as the stock exchange. When discussing this issue, it is enough to recall that when announcing a possible deal on Ukraine's mineral resources, Russia - on the principle of 'who has more?' - offered its mineral resources to the USA.

The next step in the 'net' commercialization of international relations could be the 'trade' in territories, which would not only destroy the rule-based order, but also lead to the establishment of total disorder. And as a result, one of the most important pillars of any system that even pretends to be civilized - inviolability of borders - will become the new practice of 'resolving' conflicts.

Again, judging by its declared course, the Trump administration's objective is to give primacy to the interests of the United States and to take into account the interests of the average American in positioning the country in the world. In both cases, the necessary method of achieving these goals is to get the other side or opponent to agree to the best terms.

However, introducing a policy of 'deal-making' with spheres of influence and territories as 'business as usual' would mean a return to the times when powerful countries imposed their will on weaker countries unconditionally and without asking them. It goes without saying that



President Donald Trump. Photo by Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images

such a 'disorderly order' in international relations will significantly increase risks and at the same time significantly reduce the necessary capabilities to repel them.

'THE RUSSIAN TRAIL': FOR FANS OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

One of the hallmarks of our time is the fascination with conspiracy theories. It is one thing for ordinary citizens to be obsessed with conspiracy theories, and another, almost tantamount to a national threat, for government circles to make such theories the basis for policy decisions. Unfortunately, the Georgian reality also offers us an extremely counterproductive experience of being fascinated by or manipulating with conspiracy theories. However, back to Trump and his administration...

In this regard, one of the manifestations of conspiracy theories is considered to be Trump's purposeful defence of Russia's interests. This is such a serious accusation that one should not allow oneself to talk about it so openly, nor should one allow one's audience to listen to it lightly.

At the same time, some of Trump's promises and declared desires naturally cause the Western political community and its partners to be naturally surprised and, in some places, even protest.

The reader is well aware of such promises or statements, and I see no point in describing them in detail. However, the main point is that the Trump Doctrine turns upside down one of the most

important achievements of the post-war world and a critical component of security: Western military, political and economic unity based on alliances. And this is the greatest gift you can inadvertently give to those who want to rewrite the order based on the rules already mentioned.

What is also suggestive here is not only Trump's personal 'geo-taste' but also the way he is forming his team, where the main principle, at this stage, is the complete sharing of such 'taste' and personal loyalty. And this creates great prospects for the development of the above approach.

If such a 'doctrinal' line becomes an everyday reality, not to mention freedom and democracy, an additional threat will arise, first of all, for those countries that have not yet completely left the geography of authoritarian regimes' spheres of influence. As a result, the content of American policy has never been more critical for geopolitically 'frontier' countries; Nor has the 'step from the great to the ridiculous' in American foreign policy ever seemed so short.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION MORE 'PREDICTABLE' AND 'STABLE'?

We've already talked about the premature conclusions and I think the reader will share that observation. The fact is that the Trump administration's handwriting so far also has a so-called 'in progress' status. At the same time, I will

briefly and subjectively focus on a few issues that are most relevant to us, namely a return to the usual, 'normal,' beginnings of American geopolitics.

Leaders like Trump often create their own reality and thus attempt to continue their activities. Any criticism or 'attack' on this so-called 'detached' reality from the outside is a futile and, most importantly, counterproductive effort. Thus, by properly 'authenticating' their reality, one or another delicate attempt to find points of contact between 'his' and 'our' realities is of particular value. In general, such points contribute to the convergence of evaluations and the gradual creation of a common reality.

The post-20 January period shows that in pursuing the 'America First' line, Trump is largely acting with a Machiavellian approach: the end justifies the means. For a world tired of excessive sentimentality and unresolved problems, this will probably not be completely unacceptable or incomprehensible. However, even in such a case, the United States, as one of the key systemically important actors in world relations, is obliged to observe certain 'red lines'.

For example, the call to 'Make America Great Again' requires a clear understanding of what 'greatness' means. To better understand this specific content, a number of fundamental questions need to be addressed, such as: what should the 'greatness' of the United States be in terms of hard and soft power? What does an effective transformation

of the so-called Pax Americana look like and, more generally, what constitutes US leadership in the context of the existing or emerging 'order'? These and many other questions require conceptualization: not only for the good of the United States itself, but also for the good of all its partners.

Europe has a special role to play in the process of returning the US to the 'normal' beginnings I have already mentioned. Here, Trump's European colleagues should remind him of several fundamental aspects, namely:

1) proper participation in European security is an optimal investment for the United States to reap significant geopolitical benefits;

2) such participation serves to deter unwanted rivalries against Western interests on the European continent;

3) the preservation and strengthening of the US role in European military and political affairs as a result of the world war favors the expansion of American business interests and capital on the European continent.

The interest in 'stability', 'predictability' and 'normalization' in the approach of the US administration is quite obvious. All of this, besides being of interest, is extremely important for the national and state affairs of our country. This is also relevant in this new world with 'disorderly order' so that the Georgian side can establish different relations - identifying mutual interests with our partners - for gaining practical benefits.

Armenia's Parliament Approves Bill on Country's EU Accession

BY TEAM GT

The Armenian parliament passed a bill "On starting the process of accession of the Republic of Armenia to the European Union" in its second and final reading on March 26, the News.am news agency reported.

The bill, introduced into the parliament as a civil initiative after collecting 60,000 signatures, was supported by 64 lawmakers, with seven voting against it.

Amid deteriorating relations with Russia, Armenia has been working to strengthen its ties with the European Union. However, the country has not yet formally submitted a membership application.

In January, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan emphasized that, even



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (l) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (r) talk to media in the Berlaymont, the EU Commission headquarters on April 5, 2024, in Brussels, Belgium. (Thierry Monasse/Getty Images)

with the bill's approval, the accession process can only begin if the Armenian

people endorse it through a referendum. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan cau-

tioned against "undue enthusiasm" regarding the bill, emphasizing that

Armenia should prioritize practical steps such as visa liberalization before considering full EU accession.

Addressing the European Parliament in October 2023, Pashinyan stated that Armenia was prepared to strengthen its alignment with the EU. However, he later expressed uncertainty about whether the country was truly ready for full membership.

His remarks came shortly after Armenia's longtime ally, Russia, failed to intervene against Azerbaijan's lightning offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh, leading to a sharp deterioration in Yerevan-Moscow relations.

In March 2024, the European Parliament passed a resolution urging EU institutions to deepen ties with Armenia. The resolution also stated that Armenia meets the Maastricht Treaty criteria, making it eligible to apply for EU membership.

International Women's Forum "Caring for Her" Shines Light on Women's Health at Museum Hotel

BY TEAM GT

On March 17, the Museum Hotel in Tbilisi hosted the Caring for Her International Women's Forum, a significant event aimed at addressing the challenges and advancements in women's healthcare. Organized by MLP Care, Turkey's largest medical holding, in partnership with the Medical Park clinic network, the forum brought together leading medical professionals, specialists, and healthcare advocates from Georgia and Turkey. The event was hosted by Dali Nesuashvili, Deputy Director of Business Development at MLP Care.

A GATHERING OF EXPERTS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

The forum's agenda included panel discussions, presentations, and expert sessions designed to address urgent issues in women's health. Key speakers included Nino Museridze, Melis Indirkash International Business development and marketing director at MLP CARE, Madona Jugeli, an oncologist and renowned medical researcher, Irma Kvachadze, a leading Georgian healthcare expert specializing in women's health, and Didem Trabulus, a distinguished mammologist. Additionally, Omer Ulugergerli, a prominent gynecologist from Turkey, also contributed his insights on women's reproductive health.

Each expert tackled a critical aspect of women's health. One of the central discussions focused on the prevention of oncological diseases, particularly breast cancer, a major health issue for women in the region. "Early detection and access to screening are key," said Didem Trab-

ulus. "When diagnosed early, treatment can be more effective, but many women still lack access to necessary screening and preventive care."

ADDRESSING REGIONAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

The forum also addressed the healthcare barriers faced by women in Georgia and the surrounding region. Irma Kvachadze, a leading figure in Georgian healthcare, highlighted the struggles within the country's medical system. "The healthcare infrastructure needs a significant overhaul. Women often face gaps in care, from insufficient screening to lack of accessible treatment options," Kvachadze stated, emphasizing that women's health services must be reimagined and improved.

Additionally, mental health was another focal point of the forum. Mental wellness is an essential yet often neglected part of women's health, and experts underscored how addressing mental health is crucial for holistic care. "We need to create an environment where women's mental health is given as much importance as their physical health," Kvachadze added.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE

The forum also underscored the importance of empowering women in the healthcare field, a topic that is especially relevant given the traditionally male-dominated nature of medicine. Dali Nesuashvili, Deputy Director of Business Development at MLP Care, stressed that the forum's broader goal was to foster gender equity within the medical profession.

"Women's health is a critical societal issue, not just a personal one," Nesuashvili said. "It affects families, communi-

ties, and entire nations. We believe empowering women to take charge of their own health, as well as empowering them to become leaders in healthcare, is essential for sustainable progress."

A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

The Caring for Her forum was not only about raising awareness but also about creating a collaborative platform for medical professionals to share best practices and explore solutions. Medical leaders from both Georgia and Turkey used the event as an opportunity to network and discuss how cross-border partnerships could address the growing health needs of women in the region.

"This forum isn't just about discussing medical issues. It's about bringing together the right people to create change," said Melis Indirkash, Business Development Director at MLP Care. "Together, we can improve healthcare standards, share vital knowledge, and ensure that women have access to the best possible care."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As the forum concluded, it was clear that Caring for Her was not just a one-time event but the beginning of a sustained effort to improve women's health. The discussions highlighted the need for more innovative treatments, better access to care, and the expansion of women's health services in both Georgia and Turkey.

With leading medical professionals like Nino Museridze, Madona Jugeli, and Irma Kvachadze taking part, the forum demonstrated a collective commitment to change. For MLP Care and the Medical Park network, the event marked an important step toward a future where



women's health is prioritized globally. Dali Nesuashvili summed up the event's significance with a powerful statement: "Today, we've laid the foundation for a

larger movement. This isn't the end—it's just the beginning of ongoing efforts to improve healthcare for women. We are committed to this mission."



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Our Endless Educational Reforms

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Following the raucous collapse of the USSR, Sakartvelo has lived under continuous reforms of its national system of education. By making this trivial but very benevolent statement, I'm not suggesting that something unusual is happening to this nation. No! I am simply posing a straightforward and naïve question: are the ongoing or intended reforms doing, or will they do, any good in general for the enlightenment of our people, especially the youth?

The first serious attempt at reform came about two decades ago when Georgia's educational system shifted from the Soviet model to the Bologna model of schooling. The Bologna Process, launched in 1999, is an intergovernmental higher education reform process involving 48 European countries and several European organizations. It is dedicated to enhancing the quality and recognition of European higher education systems and improving conditions for exchange and collaboration both within Europe and internationally. The Georgian administration at the time decided to join the process, but not all of the recognized goals have been achieved thus far.

Interestingly, one of the most talked-about changes that resulted from this transition was the replacement of the old evaluation system with the Bologna system. In other words, the five-point grading scale was replaced with a ten-point scale. Our students and teachers have easily adapted to this change, but the real question is whether it has led to better quality and a higher level of education, or whether it was simply a trivial formality. Moreover, it's worth consider-

ing how many people have taken advantage of the opportunity to equalize our local diplomas with Western ones, and whether this process has had any significant impact on Georgia's economy.

There have been several other attempts to introduce further reforms following the Bologna-Big-Bang, but I suspect that nothing terribly consequential has resulted from these efforts. In fact, every new minister of education (and there have been quite a few) has tried to implement their own version of reform, which is good because they're striving to make a difference, but their desire to be noticed and appreciated does not mean much. What truly matters is whether their intentions translate from words into action.



One of Georgia's many former PMs planned to introduce a new law stipulating that 6% of the country's GDP be allocated for educational purposes. Today it is 3.6%



Inside a Georgian classroom. source: FB

I recall that one of Georgia's many former prime ministers had an amazingly effective plan to introduce a new law stipulating that 6 percent of the country's

GDP be allocated for educational purposes. I'm not sure if that bill was ever signed into law, but I am certain that the noble intention of that young head of

government has fallen flat. The actual current figure is only 3.6 percent. Meanwhile, no serious change in how we educate generations can take place without a noticeable increase in spending. Without significant and substantial investment, we cannot expect extensive and meaningful educational progress in our schools and universities.

To achieve real educational progress, we need to learn how to teach our young men and women how to think, analyze, evaluate, make decisions, and take responsibility. The hope for effective education is almost non-existent because the national educational process is not in practical harmony with real life; it merely depends on some international educational processes. We must integrate education with our actual economic life, and to do this, high-level research must be conducted into the issue. Otherwise, our economy will suffer from, for instance, an overproduction of lawyers, journalists, political scientists, and diplomats, while we underproduce engineers, chemists, doctors, and geneticists. Who will fill these roles? Our people, of course. But for that to happen, the nation must take the bull by the horns and start using the sweat of its own brow instead of getting overly engaged in political discourse. While political debate is not inherently bad, it cannot be regarded as the best way to ensure one's livelihood.

On the other hand, one might question whether educational reform is even possible. The entire world is grappling with the same problem: education has always lagged behind the needs of actual life. Only the brilliance of sporadic geniuses has pushed the world forward. Progress, of course, lies in change, but the real question is whether this nation is capable of pulling itself together quickly and skillfully enough to turn the dream of that inevitable change into reality.

Concrete/Jungle



BY TONY HANMER

Yawn. Well, I'm not going to get much sleep yet, although it's 2:20 am. I'm overnighting in Singapore's Changi Airport waiting for a 10-something am flight to Tbilisi via Doha. But the lights are on, the elevator music is on loop, and various other noises are letting me know that this place, too, never really sleeps. I might try another crash after I write.

Fun Fact: in 1993, I flew through this same airport with a marijuana leaf pressed in a book in my luggage. I had picked it, bemused, from where the plant was growing through a sidewalk crack in the Russian Urals city of Ufa. Then I had clean forgotten that the blasted thing was still there when I flew to visit my parents in Indonesia: tucked inaccessibly away in my check-in luggage. I prayed my little heart out that it would remain undetected as we touched down in Singapore and then took off again. Unkilled, unbeaten by bamboo rods to scar for life as is done here for discovery of such infractions, I am here to tell the stupid tale.

I've been in Kuala Lumpur, in nearby Malaysia, for nearly a week of meetings on the theme of humanitarian aid. In a nice 5-star hotel, but with little chance to get out and explore this amazing city of (checks data) just over 2 million. (Huh, I thought it'd be much larger than that.) It's been close to 30 degrees C outside, nice and cool indoors with the AC on. Every meal I've eaten has been delicious local food: I'm much too adventurous and robust of stomach to stick with Western victuals when all sorts of regional delicacies tempt. I'm even drinking the



hotel's water, to no ill effect at all.

I do get out a bit when opportunity presents itself, determined to get SOME photos of the city. It's a forest of enormous skyscrapers in a verdant tropical jungle, the latter likely dominating once you get more rural. Opulence shines everywhere, along with the odd beggar. We are clearly at a crossroads of influences, from Chinese and Indian and purely local to those of the former colonizers, Britain. Not an old place, it began in about 1857.

Here can be found the tallest twin buildings in the world, the Petronas Towers; as well as three out of the world's 10 largest shopping malls. And in 2019, Mastercard ranked it as the 6th most visited city on the planet. Its name, however, is mud: more exactly, it means "muddy confluence", that of two rivers. Malaysia is home to about 34 million people, and 111 languages; it was ruled by the British from the 18th century until 1957. It has an elected monarch chosen once every five years, and a prime minister as head of state. Its dominant religion is Islam, although freedom of religion is guaranteed by its constitution. At one time it was the largest producer of rubber, tin and palm oil (the latter still accurate today). Tourism to and within it is also a major contributor to its economy.

I knew I was literally just scratching the surface of KL in my few hours' walk from and around my hotel before flying out. But that was enough to show me the contrasts between the city's endless high-rises and its lush vegetation, both

growing apace in the tropical climate. Glass reflected itself everywhere. On the ground, Rolex and Versace competed with foot massage parlors and street food outlets from half the countries of Asia. Yes, 7 Elevens, Starbucks and McDonald's also appeared; but they were minorities among far more interesting options.

I did have time to fulfill my wife's shopping request of as many mangoes as my check-in luggage would take (far better than their typical counterparts in Georgia), and a few nicely patterned local shirts for myself, including a batik one featuring the origami folded cranes I learned how to make at about age 10 in Canada.

Then, a shared taxi back to KL airport, nice and early as there are few things worse than late arrival stress. Hop to Singapore, and here we are, now at nearly 3am as I finish typing. A robo-vac has impressed me with its sheer size: you can get a Roomba or equivalent in Georgia, yes, but this thing's larger in volume than an adult human. Home beckons, as does wife, ever more tantalizingly as they get closer. Soon.

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 over 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etsner: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti



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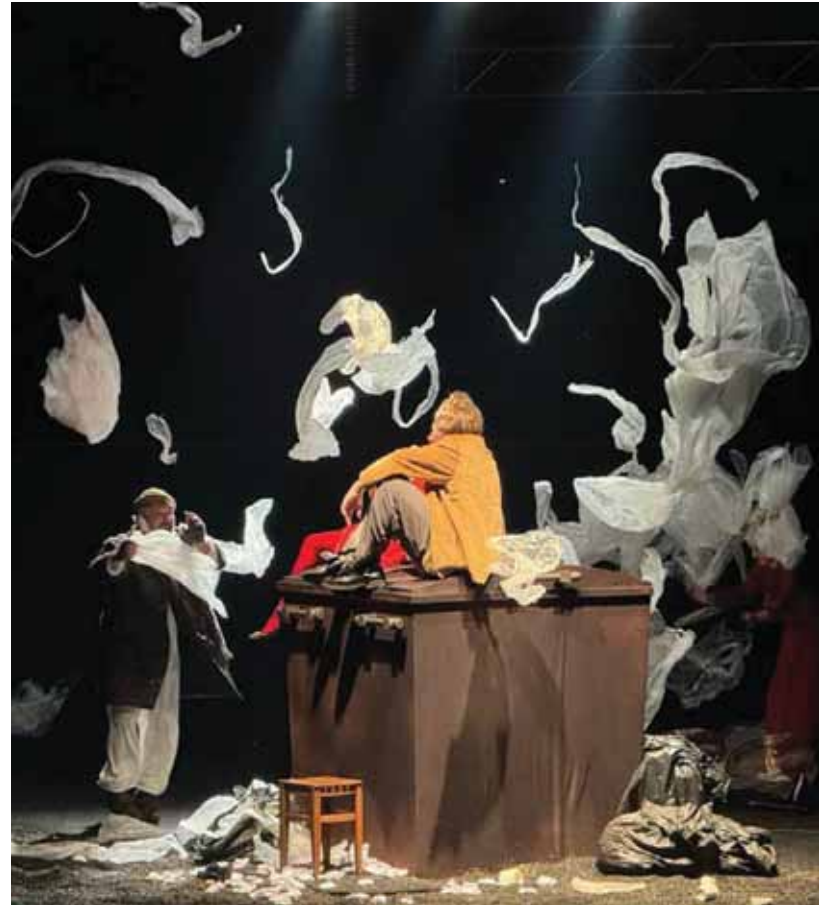


Photo by the author

Check Your Privileges: Levan Tsuladze's Interpretation of Gogol's Classic Satire Unmasks the Fragile Illusions of Identity

BY IVAN NECHAEV

A nose, once attached, is now detached. And in its detachment, it thrives. There is no tragedy in the loss of a nose. The real tragedy lies in the realization that, without it, you are nothing.

After a 100-day strike, Theater Factory 42's premiere of *The Nose*—a free interpretation of Nikolai Gogol's absurdist tale—turns the grotesque premise into a deeply unsettling meditation on power, selfhood, and the terrifying autonomy of status. Under the masterful direction and scenography of Levan Tsuladze, the performance strips away the comforts of traditional storytelling, plunging the audience into a surreal, fragmented world where identity is as slippery as the stage beneath the actors' feet.

At the center of the performance is Nika Kuchava's Kovalyov, a contemporary bureaucrat whose grip on his own existence slips away the moment he wakes up to find his nose missing, who never leaves the stage for the entire 100-minute duration. This ceaseless presence is crucial: the audience witnesses, without pause, the unraveling of a man who has lost his most superficial yet essential trait. Kovalyov's tragedy is no longer just the absurdity of his missing nose—it is the slow realization that his influence, authority, and social presence were never truly his own, but rather projections granted by an external world that no longer acknowledges him.

In a world where credibility is often dictated by perception rather than reality, Kovalyov's plight feels painfully contemporary. Who are you without your blue checkmark? Your title? Your network?

Nika Khrikuli's "Nose" is no passive missing appendage—it is an active force, a being of pure influence. Through extraordinary physicality the Nose moves with the eerie confidence of a person who has been granted instant authority. It strides through government offices, sits at desks, receives deferential treatment—all while Kovalyov flounders, invisible and powerless. Khrikuli's per-

formance transforms the Nose into the ultimate social construct: a symbol of power that is obeyed without question, despite its clear absurdity.

The Nose's ability to command respect without justification echoes modern-day phenomena such as corporate figureheads who ascend to power despite lacking qualifications, influencers who wield mass influence without expertise, and political figures who emerge from obscurity yet are instantly treated as legitimate. The Nose does not need Kovalyov to exist. On the contrary, it thrives in his absence.

One of the most striking aspects of Tsuladze's adaptation is its portrayal of bureaucracy as not just a system, but a living, breathing antagonist. Kovalyov does everything within his power to reclaim his identity—he visits doctors, attempts to place ads in newspapers, pleads with government officials—but he is met with indifference, mockery, and meaningless administrative roadblocks.

The world around him does not acknowledge the absurdity of the situa-

tion. Instead, it treats his suffering as a trivial inconvenience, a hiccup in an otherwise normal day. This aspect of the play resonates deeply in an era where systemic failures—from immigration limbo to social security nightmares—render individuals functionally nonexistent, with institutions refusing to recognize their plight.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of Tsuladze's *The Nose* is its direct relevance to contemporary society. Gogol originally intended his story as a critique of rigid social hierarchies in Tsarist Russia, but Tsuladze's adaptation expands its reach to the broader existential crises of the modern world.

We live in an era where identity theft is not just a crime but a business model, where deepfakes and AI-generated personas blur the lines of authenticity, where a person's online presence can be erased overnight—along with their credibility and livelihood. The Nose is no longer just a satirical tale; it is a horror story that has already come true.

Kovalyov's plight is not just that of an unlucky bureaucrat—it is the plight of

every individual who has been reduced to a set of credentials, every worker whose value is tied to their job title, every person whose worth is dictated by their digital presence. When reputation exists independently of the person behind it, what happens when that person loses control of their own narrative?

Tsuladze's scenography transforms the stage into a shifting, unstable terrain where characters struggle to keep their footing—an apt metaphor for the instability of identity. The central set piece—a garbage bin—looms over the action, serving as both a grotesque altar and a symbol of discarded privilege. It is here that scraps of influence, status, and recognition are unceremoniously tossed, a stark reminder that power is as disposable as the waste it leaves behind. And it is from this very trash heap that a vagrant, an almost mystical figure, emerges—ultimately becoming the agent of Kovalyov's downfall, severing him from his nose and setting the surreal nightmare in motion.

The ensemble—Manana Kozakova, Baia Dvalishvili, Duta Skhirtladze, Onise

Oniani, Anka Vasadze, Anuka Grigolia, and Teona Kokrashvili—do not merely act as supporting characters but as manifestations of a world that increasingly ignores Kovalyov, shifting allegiances to the new, faceless authority in the room. Zurab Gagloshvili's music adaptation underscores this nightmarish transition, weaving eerie, dissonant tones with sudden bursts of lyrical melodies, reinforcing the absurdity of the spectacle. Nino Surguladze's costume design further amplifies this visual chaos, dressing the Nose in attire that mirrors Kovalyov's own, hinting at the grotesque inflation of authority when separated from its human vessel.

A POSTMODERN NOSE FOR THE CONTEMPORARY SPECTATOR

Theater Factory 42's *The Nose* is not merely a retelling of Gogol's satire—it is an urgent reexamination of what it means to exist in a society where image eclipses substance. In an era dominated by digital avatars, social media personas, autocrats clinging to power and corporate hierarchies where titles outline the people who hold them, Tsuladze's production strikes a nerve. What remains of a person when their name, reputation, and influence are no longer attached to them?

This production also carries an unmistakable political charge: it marks Theater Factory 42's return to the stage after a 100-day strike—an act of resistance supported by numerous theaters across Georgia in protest against the recent elections and the country's stalled European integration. The choice of *The Nose*, a story about arbitrary power and the erasure of individual agency, is no coincidence. It is a sharp, theatrical statement about a system that rewards faceless conformity while discarding those who challenge it.

By the final, haunting scene, Kovalyov is left in a space that no longer recognizes him, his presence rendered obsolete. His tragedy is no longer just one of absurdity—it is one of irrelevance. And as the audience walks away from the performance, the uncomfortable question lingers: How much of me is truly mine? In a world where noses outrank their owners, who really holds the power?



Photo by the author

Rediscovering Ketevan Magalashvili: A Trailblazer of Georgian Modernism



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

The ATINATI Cultural Center is currently hosting a landmark exhibition dedicated to Ketevan Magalashvili (1894-1973), an artist whose work straddles the transition between late 19th-century realism and the modernist impulses of the 20th century. Featuring 19 works drawn from ATINATI's private collection, this exhibition offers a rare chance to immerse oneself in the diverse artistic world of a painter known primarily as a portraitist, but whose legacy extends far beyond a single genre. The exhibition, open until March 31, 2025, brings long-overdue attention to Magalashvili, a figure who shaped the cultural and aesthetic landscape of Georgian art, but whose contributions remain underexplored outside scholarly circles.

BEYOND THE FRAME: A VISIONARY IN PORTRAITURE

Magalashvili's foremost artistic preoccupation was portraiture—a genre that, in lesser hands, risks descending into static documentation. Instead, she imbued her subjects with a palpable sense of presence. Each of her portraits is a study in psychological depth, revealing a fascination with identity, emotion, and the unseen dimensions of personality.

What makes Magalashvili's portraits stand apart is her keen awareness of composition and gesture. The exhibition's curators emphasize her meticulous attention to bodily posture, gaze direction, and hand positioning—elements that animate her canvases with an almost cinematic dynamism. Unlike many of her contemporaries, who focused predominantly on facial expressions, Magalashvili orchestrated entire compositions to reflect the psychotypes of her sitters. She integrated their surroundings into her works with careful deliberation, ensuring that backgrounds,

objects, and even color schemes resonated with the character and essence of the individual.

MASTERY OF LIGHT AND COLOR: THE INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE OF EXPRESSION

A defining characteristic of Magalashvili's style is her masterful use of light and color. Much like the Impressionists she encountered during her studies in Paris, she understood that light is not merely a tool for illumination but a structural force that sculpts a painting's emotional core. Her controlled yet vibrant palette allows the interplay of light and shadow to infuse her portraits with life, elevating them from mere representations to dynamic psychological landscapes.

This nuanced use of color extends to her still lifes and landscapes, which, though less widely known, occupy an important place in her oeuvre. The exhibition reveals how Magalashvili experimented with color harmonies to elicit mood, employing bold yet sophisticated contrasts to create visual tension and depth.

THE 'NUDE' SERIES: A QUIET REVOLUTION

Among the highlights of the exhibition is a selection of Magalashvili's graphic works in the 'Nude' style. These pieces offer a fascinating counterpoint to her more structured portraiture, displaying an unrestrained, fluid approach to the human form. The curatorial notes draw attention to the interplay of line and shadow, reminiscent of both the academic rigor of classical figure drawing and the modernist impulse toward abstraction.

Magalashvili's engagement with the 'Nude' genre was groundbreaking within the Georgian context. In a society where representations of the unclothed body were often fraught with cultural conservatism, her work stands as a quiet act of defiance—an assertion that the human form, in all its vulnerability, deserves



Photo by the author

artistic contemplation free from moralistic constraints.

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE CANVAS: A LIFE SHAPED BY ARTISTIC AND POLITICAL CROSSCURRENTS

Born in 1894 in Kutaisi, Magalashvili's artistic journey was shaped by a series of geographical and intellectual migrations. Her family relocated to Tbilisi, where she received formal training at the Painting and Sculpture School of the Tbilisi Fine Arts Support Society under the mentorship of Oskar Shmerling, Iakob Nikoladze, Ludwig Longos, Mose Toidze, and Henryk Hryniewski. These formative years imbued her work with a foundation in academic drawing, a discipline that would later serve as a counterbalance to her more expressive tendencies.

Her artistic development continued in Moscow, Germany, and Paris—three cultural capitals where she absorbed diverse influences, from Russian realism to German expressionism and French post-impressionism. These experiences enriched her visual vocabulary, allowing her to synthesize various styles into a uniquely Georgian aesthetic.

Yet, Magalashvili's career was not insulated from the socio-political upheavals of her time. The Sovietization of Georgia in 1921 brought with it a regime that sought to control artistic expression, steering it towards the propagandistic dictates of Socialist Realism. While some of her peers capitulated or faded into obscurity, Magalashvili navigated these constraints with remarkable resilience, maintaining a personal artistic vision that subtly resisted dogma.

A LEGACY IN CONSERVATION: GUARDIAN OF GEORGIA'S ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Beyond her contributions as a painter,

Magalashvili played a crucial role in the conservation of Georgian art. As an art conservator at the National Gallery in Tbilisi, she worked tirelessly to preserve the country's visual heritage, ensuring that seminal works from previous generations remained intact for posterity. This aspect of her career underscores her dual legacy: not only as an innovator in her own right, but also as a custodian of tradition.

REEVALUATING MAGALASHVILI'S PLACE IN GEORGIAN ART HISTORY

The ATINATI exhibition arrives at a critical moment, as art historians increasingly seek to reappraise the contributions of women artists who were long overshadowed by their male counterparts. While Magalashvili was acknowledged within her lifetime, she was never fully

integrated into the dominant narratives of Georgian modernism. This exhibition serves as a corrective, asserting her rightful place within the canon of Georgian art, and, by extension, European art.

Her work stands as a testament to the power of portraiture—not as mere representation, but as a dialogue between artist and subject, tradition and innovation, personal identity and historical moment. Magalashvili's art resonates with contemporary audiences precisely because it addresses universal themes: the search for identity, the fluid boundaries between realism and abstraction, and the enduring power of the human gaze. Her insistence on capturing the psychological essence of her subjects rather than merely their likeness anticipates modern debates about portraiture's role in an age of digital self-representation.



Photo by the author



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