



## FOCUS

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## "He's Already Losing Sleep": UK Parliamentarian Urges Action against Ivanishvili and his Inner Circle

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

**Y**ou have to freeze all of those assets. That means Ivanishvili, that means those around him, that means those making TV, - says British MP James MacCleary of the Liberal Democrats.

MacCleary is among a growing number of UK parliamentarians calling for targeted sanctions against Bidzina Ivanishvili and his close associates. He was also the MP who submitted an Early Day Motion, a parliamentary tool used to spotlight specific issues, to draw formal attention to the political situation unfolding in Georgia.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Georgian Service, MacCleary discusses the growing international isolation of Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party and the influence the UK holds over Ivanishvili and his network. The conversation took place in Strasbourg during the spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



Continued on page 4 British MP James MacCleary. Source: sussexexpress

GALT & TAGGART										
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES										
Prepared for Georgia Today Business by										
As of 09-Apr-2025										
Markets					Markets					
BONDS	Price	w/w	m/m	STOCKS	Price	w/w	m/m			
GEORG 04/26	95.23 (YTM 7.85%)	-0.6%	-0.3%	Lion Finance Group (BIGED LN)	GBP 48.88	-11.7%	-10.1%			
GBAIL 04/28	87.79 (YTM 8.45%)	-1.1%	-0.8%	Georgia Capital (GCEO LN)	GBP 12.36	-21.2%	-17.2%			
GEBOG 9/12 PERP	98.29 (YTM 9.43%)	-0.5%	-0.4%	TBC Bank Group (TBCCG LN)	GBP 37.15	-12.2%	-15.6%			
SILNET 01/27	100.91 (YTM 7.82%)	-0.6%	-0.4%							
TBC 8.894 PERP	95.88 (YTM 11.70%)	-1.6%	-1.6%							
TBC 10 1/4 PERP	97.19 (YTM 10.18%)	-3.5%	-3.8%							
					COMMODITIES	Price	w/w	m/m		
					Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	65.48	-12.6%	-6.9%		
					Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	3 082.70	-1.6%	+6.0%		
INDICES					CURRENCIES					
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m			
SP 500	5 456.90	-3.8%	-5.4%	USD / GEL	2,7600	-	-0.5%			
FTSE 250	17 890.64	-9.0%	-11.1%	EUR / GEL	3,0218	+0.9%	+0.5%			
DOW JONES 30	40 608.45	-3.8%	-5.1%	GBP / GEL	3,5240	-1.8%	-1.7%			
Russell 2000	1 913.16	-6.5%	-7.8%	EUR / USD	1,0949	+0.9%	+1.1%			
FTSE 100	7 679.48	-10.8%	-11.5%	GBP / USD	1,2820	-1.4%	-0.8%			



Stephen Doughty. Photo: House of Commons.

## UK Minister Praises Georgian NGO Amid Rising Democratic Concerns

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

**U**K Minister of State Stephen Doughty has commended Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) for its efforts to defend democracy and human rights in Georgia during growing international concerns over the country's democratic issues.

"I congratulate the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association on winning the prestigious Democracy Defender Award gifted by the UK and seven OSCE partners," Doughty said on April 8. "The GYLA is providing essential support to human rights activists and civil society organisations in Georgia who are com-

ing under increasing pressure from repressive legislation."

Doughty's statement amid such political tensions in Georgia came right on time as the ruling party is being heavily criticized over alleged political repression. "After months of democratic backsliding, arbitrary arrests, and the use of excessive force against protestors, politicians and journalists, Georgian Dream has shown no indication they will return to their European path and uphold the democratic wishes of its own electorate," he warned.

Calling for a change in course, the Minister urged Georgian authorities to "reverse this isolationist behaviour" and reaffirmed support for those defending civic freedoms. "I thank the GYLA for their important work protecting the fundamental rights of the Georgian people."

## Parliament Registers Bill to Ban "LGBT Marches and Related Symbols"



Georgian with a rainbow flag. Photo by Vano Shlamov/AFP via Getty Images

BY TEAM GT

**P**arliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili announced at a Bureau meeting that a legislative proposal titled "On the Ban of LGBT Marches and Relevant Colorful Items" has been submitted to Parliament. The proposal will be referred to the Human Rights Committee for further review.

"There is a legislative proposal on the ban of LGBT marches and relevant colorful items, which will be forwarded to the Human Rights Committee [for consideration]," Papuashvili stated.

While the full text of the bill has yet to be made public, its title and preliminary statements suggest an effort to restrict public expressions associated with the LGBT community, including marches, rallies, and symbolic displays such as rainbow flags.

The proposed amendment comes amid increasing tensions surrounding LGBT rights in Georgia. In recent years, attempts to hold Pride events have often been met with counter-protests and violent clashes. Notably, in July 2021, far-right groups attacked journalists and activists during Tbilisi Pride Week, prompting international condemnation and raising questions about the government's commitment to protecting minority rights.

## Georgian Qvevri Wine Showcased at Prestigious Italian Natural Wine Fair

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

**F**ive Georgian wine producers were showcased at Italy's prestigious natural wine exhibition, RAW WINE Verona, taking a center stage with the support from the National Wine Agency. The event, curated by acclaimed French wine expert Isabelle Legeron, brings together top-tier natural, organic, and biodynamic winemakers from around the world.

Georgian participation revolved around the promotion of Qvevri wine, an ancient

winemaking method using clay vessels buried underground. "Presenting Georgian Qvevri wine at RAW WINE is a strategic move to boost its visibility internationally, connect small and medium-sized wineries with potential importers, and drive export growth," the National Wine Agency stated.

RAW WINE is among the world's leading showcases for natural wines, offering unmatched exposure for global markets. As the agency said, the Georgian producers are set to continue this trend by participating in multiple RAW WINE exhibitions worldwide with their support in 2025.

# Papuashvili: Political Parties Will Be Barred from Receiving Foreign Funding



Papuashvili: Political parties will be barred from receiving foreign funding

BY TEAM GT

**A** politician must make decisions in the interests of the Georgian people, and when they receive money from abroad, there is a risk they may act in the interests of a foreign country, said Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the Parliament. He noted that the Law "On Political Unions of Citizens" will prohibit parties from receiving any foreign funding, including money for seminars.

"Before the elections, we saw the kind of interference that was taking place in our elections and democracy, in the formation of the people's will, from outside. Unfortunately, it has become a common practice that political parties and election campaigns are financed from outside the country. Therefore, this needs appropriate regulation.

"This legislative package addresses two issues. One concerns the financing of parties. Of course, foreign financing is prohibited, but one area remained where a foreign country, or a donor, could allocate money for free seminars or party development programs. We saw that there were schemes through which parties were financed. Let us remind you that the European Endowment for

Democracy financed the Droa party from the EU budget through bypass schemes. There are also many politicians who have admitted to receiving funds from various organizations.

"Of course, as we discuss the fact that a politician should make decisions in the interests of the Georgian people, there is a risk that they will act in the interests of a foreign country when they receive money from abroad. We see that there are political groups with harmful interests toward Georgia. Therefore, it will be regulated that parties will not be able to receive any foreign funding, including for seminars or other events," said Shalva Papuashvili.

The Speaker of the Parliament added that with the amendments to the Law on Grants, "there will be a system where the donor must obtain consent, not the NGO. This will be consent not to receive a grant, but to issue a grant."

He explained that it is important for the Georgian people to know what is being financed in Georgia and whether it aligns with their interests.

"Unfortunately, there are many irresponsible donors, with whom we have been in discussions for months and years about how they should behave responsibly. We see that they give money, and then with this money, they do things like advertise Molotov cocktails, carry out fascist campaigns, and commit violent

acts. When we ask donors about this, they act as if it is not their responsibility. They are spending the money of the people in their countries, and they should behave responsibly. They harm the interests of our society when they finance advertising for Molotov cocktails, etc. Therefore, it is important that the Georgian people know what is being financed in Georgia, and that what happens here is in their best interests. The system will be that the donor must obtain consent, not the NGO. This will be consent to issue a grant, not to receive one. If the donor wants to issue a grant, they must apply to the government or a designated government entity and obtain consent. This will ensure that the process is fully transparent for citizens, so everyone will know what money is circulating, what projects are being financed, and whether they are in the interests of the Georgian people or not. It also ensures that this is done in the interests of the Georgian people, and not in the interests of the Estonian government, or any other country. We are citizens of Georgia, and everything should be done in our interests, not in the interests of other nations and their political agendas, which, unfortunately, is the case in some instances," said Shalva Papuashvili.

Read more on this on page 6.

## UEFA Fines Georgian Football Federation €40,000 – National Team to Play One Match behind Closed Doors

BY TEAM GT

**T**he Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has imposed a €40,000 fine on the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) and mandated that Georgia's national football team play one official home match without spectators. This disciplinary action follows incidents during the UEFA Nations League match against Armenia on March 23.

### INCIDENT DETAILS AND SANCTIONS

The sanctions stem from violations of UEFA's disciplinary regulations during the Georgia-Armenia match. Specific infractions cited include:

Use of Pyrotechnics: Fans reportedly ignited fireworks during the match, posing safety risks and violating UEFA's strict policies against pyrotechnic use in stadiums.

Blocking of Public Passageways: Spectators obstructed aisles and exits, creating potential hazards and impeding emergency access.

Use of Laser Pointers: Instances of laser pointers being directed at players were reported, which can distract and potentially harm athletes.



Boris Paichadze Dinamo Arena. Source: X

As a result of these infractions, UEFA's Control, Ethics, and Disciplinary Body (CEDB) levied the following penalties:

A total fine of €40,000 imposed on the GFF.

### GFF'S RESPONSE AND CONTEXT

In response to the incidents, GFF President Levan Kobiasvili issued a statement condemning the unacceptable behavior that led to the sanctions. He emphasized that such conduct not only disrespects visiting teams and their supporters but also tarnishes Georgia's international reputation and could lead to further punitive measures from UEFA. Kobiasvili extended gratitude to the

Armenian Football Federation for their cooperation and highlighted the importance of maintaining strong sports relations between the two nations.

The enforcement of a closed-door match is a significant setback for the Georgian national team, depriving them of home support, which can be a crucial advantage in competitive fixtures. The GFF is expected to implement stricter measures to prevent future incidents, including enhanced security protocols and fan education initiatives, so as to align with UEFA's standards and avoid further disciplinary actions.

Which match will be played without spectators has yet to be announced. The GFF is likely coordinating with UEFA to determine the scheduling and will provide updates to fans and stakeholders accordingly.

# Ukraine Latest: Russia's Spring Offensive Underway as Chinese Fighters, Drone Strikes Escalate Ukraine War

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

**R**ussia's long-anticipated spring offensive in Ukraine has begun in earnest, according to top Ukrainian officials, amid a widening war effort that includes deep drone strikes, foreign nationals fighting in Russian ranks, and intensified appeals for Western military aid.

## CHINESE NATIONALS CONFIRMED FIGHTING FOR RUSSIA

Ukrainian intelligence has identified at least 163 Chinese nationals serving in the Russian Armed Forces, according to classified documents obtained by The Kyiv Independent. A separate file dated April 2 reportedly includes photographs and passport details of 13 Chinese citizens being screened for enlistment.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, addressing the reports during an April 9 press conference, said Ukrainian authorities have confirmed the presence of 155 Chinese citizens fighting against Ukrainian forces on Ukrainian soil. "We are gathering more data and believe the actual number is significantly higher," he said.

The leaked files are said to include names, personal details, deployment locations, and military assignments of Chinese individuals. Two of them—identified as Wang Guangjun, born in 1991, and Zhang Renbo, born in 1998—were captured by Ukrainian troops near Bilohorivka in Luhansk Oblast and Tarasivka in southern Ukraine, respectively.

According to Ukrainian military sources, one of the captured men said he had paid 300,000 rubles—around \$3,000—to a middleman in China to facilitate his enlistment in the Russian army, moti-



Ukrainian soldier exits the cabin of the DS3 artillery as the Russia-Ukraine war continues, in the direction of Niu York in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, on 5 March 2025. Photo by Diego Herrera Carcedo/Anadolu via Getty Images

vated by promises of Russian citizenship. Ukraine's Luhansk military unit confirmed the account to Ukrainska Pravda.

Zelensky said Russia was using Chinese social media platforms to circulate recruitment videos aimed at luring Chinese citizens to join its ranks. "Beijing is aware of this," he said. "We are documenting the involvement of Chinese citizens—using weapons, fighting against us on Ukrainian soil."

China's government responded that it is "verifying" the claims and reiterated its policy prohibiting nationals from participating in foreign armed conflicts. The U.S. State Department called the revelations "disturbing," with spokesperson Tammy Bruce saying on April 8, "We're aware of those reports and are closely monitoring developments."

## RUSSIA'S SPRING OFFENSIVE "ALREADY BEGUN"

Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi confirmed that Russia's spring offensive is already in motion, particularly in the northeast of the country. In an interview published by LB.ua on April 9, Syrskyi said intensified Rus-

sian activity on the front lines was a clear indicator.

"I can say that the president is absolutely right—this offensive has effectively already begun," he stated, referring to Zelensky's recent warnings about Russian force buildups near the Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts.

According to Syrskyi, Russian offensive operations have nearly doubled across major fronts over the past week, signaling a coordinated military push.

## UKRAINE PROPOSES \$50 BILLION U.S. DEFENSE DEAL

Speaking at a press briefing on April 9, President Zelensky revealed that Ukraine is ready to allocate up to \$50 billion toward a long-term defense package with the United States. He said Ukraine had already submitted a proposal to Washington outlining the types of weapons and systems it hopes to acquire.

"We handed over a large package to the American side that we want to purchase—in one form or another," Zelensky said. "We're open to various formats and financial mechanisms. We were ready to find \$30 billion, even \$50 billion,

for the right kind of package."

Kyiv views the proposed deal as a strategic guarantee of security, with Zelensky adding that the funding mechanism is flexible. "There is an agreement. We provide the funding—whether it goes to the Reconstruction Investment Fund or directly to the U.S., it makes no difference to us," he said.

While American military aid has slowed amid domestic political debates, Syrskyi said European partners have stepped in to deliver the majority of Ukraine's current defense support.

## RUSSIAN MILITARY AIRFIELD REPORTEDLY TARGETED IN MASS DRONE ATTACK

A massive overnight drone attack on April 9 targeted multiple locations across occupied Crimea and southern Russia, including a key military airfield, according to Russian sources.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed its air defenses intercepted 158 Ukrainian drones across several regions, with some reaching as far south as North Ossetia—nearly 1,000 kilometers from Ukraine's border.

Independent Russian outlet Astra reported that drones struck near the Mozdok military airfield in North Ossetia, a base known for deploying MiG-31K aircraft equipped with Kinzhal hypersonic missiles. Images circulated on social media appeared to show smoke rising near the area, with one photo geolocated approximately six kilometers from the airfield.

While Russian authorities have not confirmed a direct hit on the base, North Ossetia's regional head Sergey Menyaylo said air defenses successfully "repelled" the drone assault in the Mozdok district. He reported no casualties or visible damage, though a drone alert was issued in

the region.

Explosions were also reported in several other Russian cities, including Taganrog in Rostov Oblast, Tikhoretsk, Sloviansk-on-Kuban, Krymsk, Saratov, and Engels, according to local media and officials.

Airports in Vladikavkaz and Grozny—the capitals of North Ossetia and Chechnya—were reportedly shut down in response to the attacks.

The Ukrainian military has not publicly commented.

## RUSSIAN DRONE STRIKES ON KYIV AND MYKOLAIV INJURE AT LEAST 12

Russian drones targeted Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and the southern city of Mykolaiv overnight, leaving at least 12 people injured, Ukrainian authorities reported on April 10.

The attacks caused explosions and damage in multiple districts. Emergency services responded to several fire outbreaks in both cities, say local officials.

In Kyiv, falling debris from intercepted drones damaged residential buildings and vehicles. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that emergency teams were deployed across the capital, and at least eight people were injured in the city.

Meanwhile, in Mykolaiv, regional authorities confirmed four additional injuries and reported structural damage to civilian infrastructure, including a warehouse and private homes.

Air raid sirens were active for several hours overnight as Ukraine's air defenses worked to intercept the incoming drones. The Ukrainian Air Force is expected to release a full report on the number of drones launched and intercepted.

The attacks come amid a wider escalation in aerial assaults across Ukraine, as Russia continues its spring campaign.

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# "He's Already Losing Sleep": UK Parliamentarian Urges Action against Ivanishvili and his Inner Circle

Continued from page 1

## HOW TELLING IS THE ABSENCE OF THE GEORGIAN DELEGATION AT THE PACE SPRING SESSION, AND WHAT DOES GEORGIA'S FUTURE IN PACE, AND TO A LARGER EXTENT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, LOOK LIKE?

I think it is disappointing the way it's gone. It doesn't send a good message about the direction Georgia's going in and the way that the government party treats opposition parties. I was here for the last session, when their credentials were being questioned. I hope that they can take on board the comments that were made and address them. It's up to them to take the action- we've sent the message.

## TO QUOTE A CERTAIN VICE PRESIDENT, HOPE IS NOT A POLICY. SO WHAT'S ACTUALLY BEING DONE FROM A POLICY OR ACTIONABLE STANDPOINT?

From the UK's perspective, there have been some moves and sanctions. I'm not a member of the government, but I and other MPs have called for stronger sanctions against people, specifically Ivanishvili and his close associates. We know that the UK, London in particular, is a place that has been used to both keep assets, and to actually broadcast propaganda into Georgia from, which is something we should take quite seriously as a democratic country ourselves. It's not the sort of thing we want to see happening. So, stronger action, in particular, sanctioning the key individuals, is where we should be going. We're just going to keep pushing in that direction.

## HOW LONG IS THE PATH FROM BEING AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON, TO ACTUALLY TAKING ACTION?

We've taken some action already, but there's always more you can do. Until we are sanctioning the people that we know are at the very center of this, you can't say that we've done everything we can. So there's still some road to run. I think the government is edging in the



The Georgian people must know that the world hasn't forgotten them. We see them, we see the brutality and oppression they're facing. It is something that is being spoken about actively, not just in the UK Parliament, but across Europe



British MP James MacCleary. Source: sussexexpress

right direction, but I would like to see them go further.

## ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 10, HOW REALISTIC IS IT THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT WILL ACTUALLY SANCTION IVANISHVILI OR HIS INNER CIRCLE?

Our government has shown a lot more ambition in other countries. Both on Russia and Belarus, I think, the UK has been very strong with the sanction regime. Hopefully, they'll go in that direction regarding Georgia as well. At the moment, I'd probably give it a 6 or 7 out of 10.

## LET'S DELVE DEEPER INTO THE EARLY DAY MOTION THAT YOU TABLED. WHAT'S THE LATEST ON IT?

It was a procedural motion in the House of Commons to raise awareness on what is happening in Georgia - I think we succeeded in that, given that now a lot more MPs are asking about Georgia. Some were already aware, of course, but now their numbers have grown. I think we've managed to raise the profile of the issue more in the UK.

## AND NOW THAT YOU'VE RAISED AWARENESS, COULD IT BE SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE MOTION HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOR PARTY?

What I can say is that there are certainly Labor MPs who have spoken out on the issue. I think most Labor MPs would agree with the sentiment that no individual should be able to control a country in the way Ivanishvili does. And we, as the United Kingdom, have the power to sanction him—to show that we don't agree with what he is doing.

Obviously, I can't speak for every single member of Parliament, but I'm not aware of anyone who's explicitly against it.

All I can say at the moment is that there's definitely a strong push within the party to introduce sanctions on Ivanishvili and those close to him. The government is hearing that message, and I hope things are moving behind the scenes to make it happen—but nothing has happened yet.

I think sanctions should be done as a package. If the goal is to send a clear message about the subversion of democracy in Georgia—and the use of assets in the UK to support that—then you have to freeze all of those assets. That means Ivanishvili, that means those around him, that means those who run the media. I think it needs to be done together, comprehensively.

## WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP FOR YOU AND PEOPLE WHO ARE CHAMPIONING THIS CAUSE? SHOULD MR. IVANISHVILI BE LOSING SLEEP WITH THE PROSPECT OF BEING SANCTIONED BY THE UK?

I actually do think he's probably already losing sleep over this. The Early Day Motion you mentioned — it's not something that usually carries much weight in the British parliamentary system. So I was absolutely astonished to receive a response from the Georgian government. That's completely unprecedented. I didn't expect any reaction at all.

That suggests to me that they're very sensitive about it, and that he's very sensitive about it. It clearly worries him that we might move forward with sanctions. That's exactly why so many MPs, from across party lines, are pushing for this. And it's why I believe it's so important that our government acts quickly.

Unlike in Russia, where there are many oligarchs entangled in power, in Georgia we're dealing with one extremely wealthy individual who controls almost everything. And the UK has real leverage over that person. We need to use it.

## SO YOU THINK IF WE WERE TO SUCCESSFULLY NEUTRALIZE IVANISHVILI, THE ENTIRE SYSTEM HE CREATED WOULD COME CRUMBLING DOWN?

I think we have a chance of doing it. And I think the other thing we need to be prepared for is a scenario where the regime collapses quickly, and we have to support the re-establishment of the rule of law and democracy. This is something we've failed to do in the past, and the US failed to do it in Russia in the 90s. We need to be ready for that possibility, and we need to put maximum pressure on Ivanishvili and his close associates. I think that's the best place to start.

## HAVE YOU ACTUALLY SEEN THE RESPONSES FROM THE GEORGIAN DREAM, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE LATEST SANCTIONS?

Probably that we're part of the global war party. Pressure, blackmail, etc.

## THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. BUT THERE WAS AN INTERESTING LINE OF THOUGHT ONE GD OFFICIAL PUT TO ME RECENTLY: THAT IF IT WERE SO IMPORTANT FOR THE UK — THE ENTIRE SANCTIONS AND IVANISHVILI BUSINESS — A LIB DEM MP WOULDN'T BE THE ONE WAVING THE FLAG. WHAT WOULD YOUR COUNTER-ARGUMENT BE TO THAT?

I think whoever said that probably hasn't ever lived in a free and fair democracy where people are allowed to speak their minds. I'm a member of parliament, and therefore we take everybody's opinion seriously. I have a platform to raise an issue. It also suggests a fundamental misunderstanding about how British democracy works. We all have a voice. By putting that forward, it allows me to challenge the government, which is



We need to be prepared for a scenario where the regime collapses quickly, and we have to support the re-establishment of the rule of law and democracy

something the government should welcome. And they do welcome, I have to say. That's how a functioning democracy operates.

## THAT'S DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE GEORGIAN DREAM'S IDEA OF GOVERNMENT.

Yes, and that is what got us to where we are today. One thing I absolutely must say at the end is that the Georgian people must know that the world hasn't forgotten about them. We see them on the streets every day. We know what they're going through. We know about the brutality they're facing and the oppression they're facing. It is something that is being spoken about actively, not just in the UK Parliament, but across Europe, here at the Council of Europe, in the European Parliament. It is an important issue and we're not going to stop putting pressure on to try to get the democratic change that they all want, that we all need.

# MP Perran Moon: UK Knows Ivanishvili's Interests Are Tied to London — It's on the Agenda

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

**P**erran Moon, a British Labor MP, is among the growing number of parliamentarians vocally critical of Bidzina Ivanishvili's role in Georgia's political crisis. He has described Ivanishvili as a "Putin-backed oligarch" and insists that the UK has both the tools and the responsibility to hold him accountable. In a conversation with RFE/RL's Georgian Service, Moon underscores London's leverage over Ivanishvili's wealth and influence, the importance of fair elections, and why the idea of a "deep state" conspiracy is nothing more than deflection.

"The UK government really isn't in the business of shrugging our shoulders and saying, "oh, forget it, walk away." We never have. We have obligations to partners all over Europe to influence the establishment of democracy," Moon says. "We are very keen to ensure that as much pressure is applied on our government to make the decisions that I think we need to make to ensure that, for example, there are free and fair elections in Georgia, and that the people of Georgia are allowed to elect in a free and fair way whomever they wish to elect. We can apply whatever pressure we possibly can to ensure that the rule of law and democracy prevails."

Moon has described Bidzina Ivanishvili as "the Putin-backed oligarch and de facto ruler of Georgia," accusing him of suppressing peaceful protest using tactics reminiscent of Russia. But Ivanishvili isn't Putin—and the West, including the UK, arguably holds far more leverage over him than it does over the Kremlin. Much of his wealth is tied to the UK or British overseas territories. With early day motions, debates, and public condemnations having already been heard from the UK, we asked Moon whether the Georgian government should expect more.

"I think the British government is very much aware of the level of Mr. Ivanishvili's financial interest within London, and that the UK holds a particular place in his overall financial needs. We're very aware of the implications of that. We're also aware of the importance it is to him, and the government is looking very closely at that right now. It is on the agenda," Moon says.

### HOW FAR IS "BEING AWARE AND LOOKING INTO IT" TO ACTIONABLE STEPS?

It's a delicate situation, and we are looking at this process right now. It would be wrong for me to give you a timescale. If I were to speculate, I would say that there are likely all sorts of financial implications that go way beyond just London. I suspect it's more complex than perhaps meets the eye. But



MP Perran Moon. Source: members-api.parliament.uk

it doesn't mean that we stop keeping the pressure on, keep asking the questions. I want to reassure your readers that it is something that is very high on the agenda for the Foreign Office, and we in the British Parliament will not be letting this go. There is no split on this matter in parliament. We'll continue to ask questions, to understand what progress is being made, and how quickly. We would like it to move faster than it is. There's a group of us who are pushing hard and making sure that the Foreign Office knows that.

### GEORGIAN DREAM HAS RESPONDED TO THE RECENT UK SANCTIONS BY ACCUSING BRITAIN OF BEING "A PLAYTHING OF THE DEEP STATE" AND ALLEGING BLACKMAIL AND INTERFERENCE IN GEORGIA'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THESE CLAIMS?

It's nothing that we haven't heard before, deep state, conspiracy, blackmail and so on. There is no deep state conspiracy against Georgia.

## PACE Urges Georgia to Restore Democracy, Warns of Sanctions



Photo: Council of Europe.

BY MARIAM RAZMADZE

**T**he Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) held urgent debates Thursday on the deepening political crisis in Georgia, voting in a resolution that urges reforms and a return to democratic norms.

PACE is demanding that the Georgian government take "immediate and effective steps to enable Georgia to resume the European integration process, in line with the European aspirations of the people." This resolution is a decisive move and is concerned with Georgia's democratic weakening, exhibited by police brutality, arrests of civic activists, and controversial legislation targeting foreign-funded NGOs.

The Assembly warns that Georgia's current direction threatens its Council of Europe membership and the privileges that come with it. Consequently,

the organization is leaving the door open to suspending the Georgian delegation's mandate during its April 2025 session, should there be no "progress on the above-mentioned issues."

The Assembly's primary demand is for an inclusive process to be launched to prepare for "new, genuinely democratic, parliamentary elections to be announced during the coming months, with the resolution also urging "an immediate end to police brutality and human rights abuses," the release of all political prisoners, and "full respect for the right to freedom of expression and assembly."

PACE on Thursday adopted a resolution on Georgia by 89 votes to 3. 5 members of the Assembly abstained from voting (see the full resolution on georgiatoday.ge). PACE reinforced earlier recommendations to repeal the so-called 'foreign agents law', reform the Administrative Code, and work in accordance with the Venice Commission's opinions. Georgia is expected to respond to the resolution's demands before the upcoming April session of PACE.



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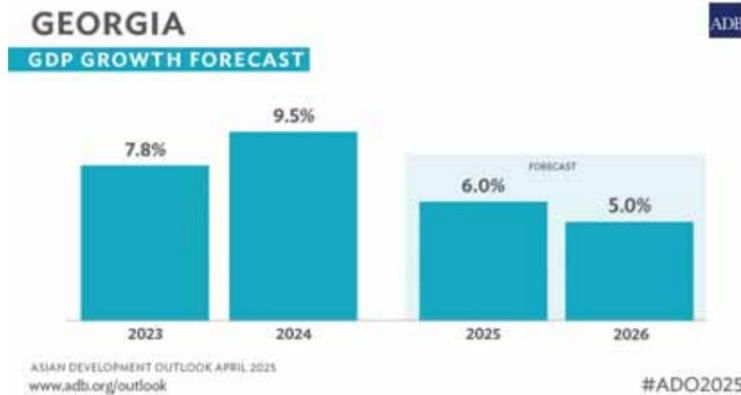
# ADB: Georgian Economy to Grow at 6% this Year, 5% in 2026

BY TEAM GT

The Georgian economy is expected to grow steadily in 2025 amid global uncertainties and geopolitical risks and can expand further through developing green connectivity and energy networks, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report.

The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2025, ADB's flagship annual economic publication, forecasts Georgia's gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 6.0% in 2025. Growth is expected to ease to 5.0% in 2026, as services and inward money transfers are expected to slow.

Strong domestic demand boosted growth nearly into double digits in 2024, with faster expansion in all main production sectors. Gains in consumption and net exports offset a small decline in investment. Relatively unchanged food prices and a decline in prices for



other goods brought inflation below 2%. Growth is expected to slow in 2025 and 2026 with slower expansion in services, while inflation is projected to accelerate modestly because of higher import prices. Harnessing green connectivity can spur inclusive growth.

## THE HIGHLIGHTS

Strong domestic demand boosted growth from 7.8% in 2023 to an estimated 9.5%

in 2024, with gains in all major production sectors.

On the demand side, consumption was the main growth driver. Expansion in private consumption accelerated from 4.5% in 2023 to 9.6%.

Inflation slowed from 2.5% in 2023 to 1.1% as food price inflation fell from 3.9% to virtually zero. This reflected an absence of significant supply shocks, which kept import price inflation low

despite higher transport costs and strong domestic economic growth.

The fiscal deficit narrowed slightly, from 2.4% in 2023 to 2.3%, as rapid economic expansion boosted revenue growth.

The banking system showed continued strength, with credit growth accelerating slightly. The ratio of dollarized deposits included in broad money increased slightly to 49.3% from 47.0% in 2023. Credit dollarization by contrast declined by 2.0 percentage points to 42.1%, reflecting central bank prudential measures to reduce unhedged borrowing in the economy.

A slowdown in import growth helped narrow the current account deficit from 5.6% of GDP in 2023 to 5.1% in 2024. Despite rapid economic expansion, growth in imports slowed from 15.2% in 2023 to 8.1% because of slower growth in vehicle imports.

Growth is projected to normalize to 6.0% in 2025 and 5.0% in 2026 with declines in Russian migrants and inward money transfers.

On the demand side, adjustments in

consumer spending are projected to slow growth in domestic demand. Growth in private consumption is projected to decelerate to 4.8% in 2025 and 3.5% in 2026 as a decrease in the number of Russian migrants curbs total spending.

Inflation is projected to increase to 4.0% in 2025 on higher import prices and then ease toward the central bank's 3% target as growth slows.

Fiscal policy is expected to remain broadly unchanged over the medium term. The fiscal deficit is projected to increase slightly to 2.5% of GDP in 2025 and 2.6% in 2026 but remain well under 3%.

The current account deficit is expected to widen in 2025 and 2026. Weakness in global markets and uncertainty affecting key trade partners are likely to slow growth in foreign finance inflows.

Looking ahead, Georgia can benefit further from deeper integration with advanced economies, particularly in the EU and Asia.

Check out the full report online and see the upcoming issue of GT Business.

# The Gift Must Be Approved: When Foreign Aid Becomes a Threat to Sovereignty — Or a Tool of Control

BY IVAN NECHAEV

When does a gift become a crime? Georgia's recent legislative initiative — requiring government approval for receiving foreign grants, with criminal penalties for unapproved acceptance — raises this question not just in legal terms, but in philosophical, cultural, and historical dimensions. Though framed as a matter of national security, the measure proposed by the ruling Georgian Dream party is, in fact, part of a long-standing global tension between sovereignty and civil society, between foreign aid and domestic autonomy, between trust and control.

This article explores what it means for a government to insert itself between donor and recipient — not just bureaucratically, but ideologically — and how the regulation of gifts reflects deeper anxieties about identity, power, and influence in modern nation-states.

## THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE GIFT: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GIVING IS REGULATED?

In 1925, French sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss wrote *The Gift*, a groundbreaking study that still underpins how we understand the act of giving. Mauss argued that no gift is ever truly free. Gifts create obligations; they bind people together in networks of reciprocity. A gift received may require a counter-gift, or at the very least, a form of recognition and allegiance.

Georgia's proposed law, seen through Mauss's theory, is not merely a financial regulation — it is an ideological firewall. By requiring government approval for any foreign grant, the law attempts to intercept this invisible social contract and reassert the state as the sole arbiter of legitimate relationships. In Maussian



Photo from njsba.org

terms, the government is attempting to control not just the flow of money, but the web of social obligations it creates.

But who, then, is the true recipient: the NGO, the scholar, the artist, or the state?

## "FOREIGN AGENTS," FAMILIAR RHETORIC: A GLOBAL PATTERN OF CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPRESSION

This isn't the first time a post-Soviet state has tried to criminalize or suppress independent actors funded from abroad. The precedent comes chillingly close from Russia's 2012 "foreign agents" law, which required organizations receiving foreign funding and engaging in "political activity" to register as foreign agents — a term deliberately invoking Cold War paranoia. Since then, the law has expanded, targeting individuals, journalists, even artists.

Hungary, under Viktor Orbán, enacted

a similar law in 2017 — later struck down by the European Court of Justice — that stigmatized NGOs funded from outside the EU. In both cases, the stated rationale was to protect national interests and prevent undue foreign influence. But the effects were systematic weakening of civil society, shrinking of public discourse, and entrenchment of authoritarian power structures. Georgia's proposed amendment follows this global script — cloaked in the language of sovereignty but aimed squarely at institutions that foster pluralism, accountability, and critique.

## DEMOCRACY AS SUSPICION: WHEN CIVIL SOCIETY BECOMES THE ENEMY WITHIN

Political theorist Hannah Arendt warned of the dangers when democratic governments begin to view their own citizens as potentially subversive. In *The Origins*

of Totalitarianism, she describes how regimes consolidate power not through brute force alone, but by dismantling the "intermediary institutions" — the associations, clubs, press, universities — that connect individuals to the political world.

In Georgia, many of these intermediaries are precisely the recipients of foreign grants: media organizations, watchdog NGOs, human rights defenders, cultural institutions. To treat such actors as security risks is to enact a culture of suspicion — one in which pluralism is recast as instability, and critique as foreign meddling.

## LAW AS SYMBOLIC GESTURE: WHAT KIND OF STATE IMAGINES THIS LAW?

Legal theorist Pierre Bourdieu often spoke of "symbolic violence" — the imposition of meaning by those in power, disguised as neutral law or policy. The Georgian grant regulation, whether heavily enforced or not, performs symbolic work: it declares that trust no longer exists between the state and independent civic actors.

Moreover, the law attempts to redefine the very concept of public good. Grants for social research, artistic experimentation, climate advocacy, or LGBTQ+ rights — often funded by European or American institutions — are reframed as suspicious, subversive, or destabilizing. This not only chills public engagement; it narrows the imagination of what kind of society is possible.

## SOVEREIGNTY OR SELF-SABOTAGE? A FALSE DICHOTOMY

Supporters of the bill may argue that no sovereign state can allow uncontrolled foreign influence, especially in a turbulent geopolitical context. But this argument often conflates two different things: transparency and obedience. Grant systems can be made transparent — through public registries, oversight mechanisms,

and impact evaluations — without criminalizing or centralizing them.

By inserting a 10-day approval process with no right of effective appeal, the proposed law creates a veto point not based on ethics or performance, but political convenience. It risks turning scientific cooperation, educational exchange, and cultural development into arenas of strategic paranoia.

And ironically, the very goal the government claims to protect, national sovereignty, may be undermined by its methods. Alienating the EU, silencing grassroots actors, and stigmatizing democratic infrastructure damages Georgia's credibility and diminishes its soft power globally.

## CULTURAL MEMORY AND POST-SOVIET TRAUMA: WHY THIS FEELS FAMILIAR

The post-Soviet landscape is haunted by the specter of centralized control. For many Georgians, memories of the Soviet kommissar who decided what was ideologically pure — what could be published, performed, or supported — are still vivid. The grant approval law echoes this past not only in its bureaucratic logic but in its epistemology: the state decides what counts as knowledge, what counts as help, and who counts as trustworthy. This is not a fight over money, it is a fight over legitimacy — over who gets to define the social good, and under what conditions.

The urgency of the moment calls for more than protest. It requires cultural theorists, legal scholars, historians, and civil society actors to connect the dots — to show how this law fits into a broader erosion of democratic norms. It requires the press to resist the framing of grants as merely financial instruments, and instead restore the discourse of intellectual freedom, moral courage, and civic imagination.

Above all, it requires a reassertion of trust — that civil society is not a threat to sovereignty, but its expression.

# Hobbiton – An Eco-Friendly Kindergarten Where Every Child’s Curiosity Shapes their Journey



Hobbiton founder Darejan Ezugbaia

BY TEAM GT

In today’s world, more and more parents are seeking educational spaces that nurture not only cognitive growth but also emotional, physical, and social development. Hobbiton, a kindergarten located near Tbilisi’s Lisi Lake, meets this need with a holistic approach that centers on the child’s individuality, play-based learning, and eco-conscious environment.



Hobbiton’s philosophy on education is based on the principles of constructivism, which emphasizes discovery, experience, and child-centered learning



Weekly activities often include ‘green lessons,’ agro-tours, and hands-on workshops where children visit greenhouses, pick strawberries, and learn about gardening and agriculture

Ezugbaia explains. “Often, the most meaningful learning happens through spontaneous interactions. We adapt our activities based on what the children are genuinely interested in.”

### ACCEPTING CHILDREN FROM 8 MONTHS OLD

One of the most important aspects that sets Hobbiton apart is its early enrollment age. The kindergarten accepts children as young as eight months, something many parents find especially valuable.

“We introduced this based on parent feedback and our own experience,” says Ezugbaia. “We saw that many families already had older children in our program and wanted the same nurturing environment for their younger ones. Our caregivers are trained specifically in early childhood development and continuously participate in professional development.”

### A GREEN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

The current location near Lisi Lake provides a safe, clean, and ecologically sustainable setting, but Hobbiton is preparing for its next chapter — the opening of a new campus. Construction is already underway, and the new facility will meet the highest safety and environmental standards, with dedicated spaces for outdoor learning.

“The new campus will allow children to engage with nature, soil, water, sand, in ways that are critical for motor development,” Ezugbaia says. “Children don’t melt in the rain. With the right clothing and footwear, outdoor exploration becomes a valuable developmental tool.”

Weekly activities often include ‘green lessons,’ agro-tours, and hands-on workshops where children visit greenhouses, pick strawberries, and learn about gardening and agriculture. These experiences not only develop gross motor skills but also encourage a sense of responsibility and respect for the environment within the children.

### PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Hobbiton also offers in-house psychological and behavioral therapy services when needed. Parents are involved in every decision regarding their child’s wellbeing, and the presence of specialists ensures that each child’s emotional



and behavioral development is met.

it’s something we take very seriously.”

### PREPARING CHILDREN FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

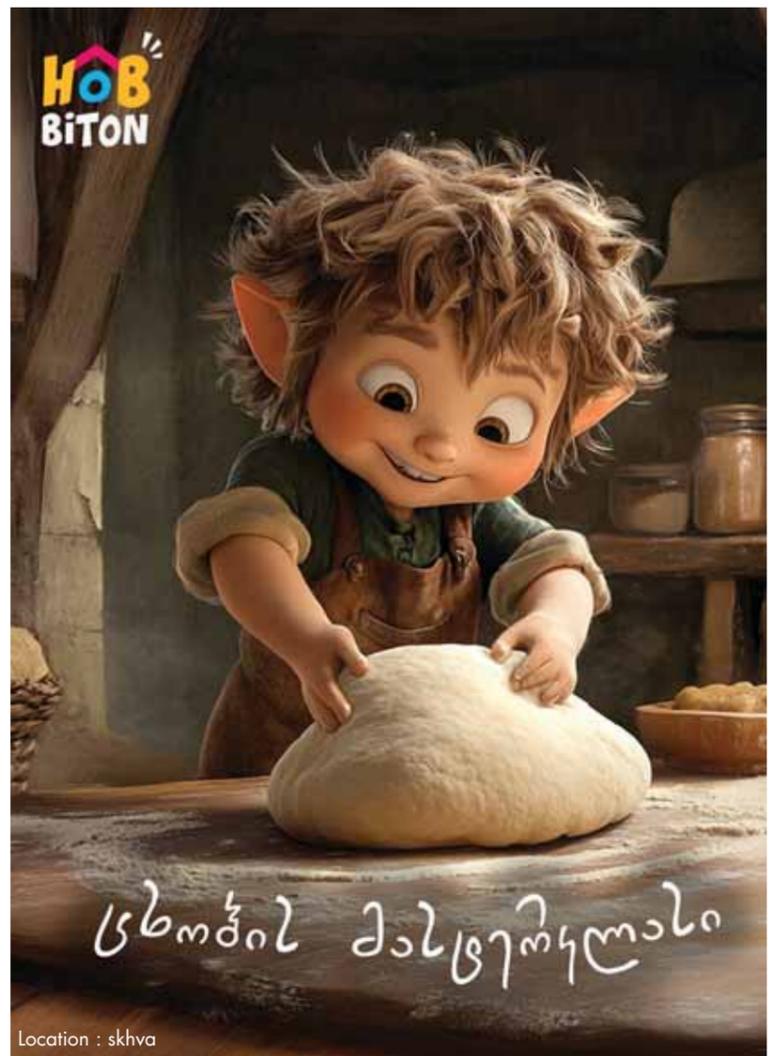
Beyond the classroom, Hobbiton organizes regular excursions, helping children learn social behavior, practice independence, and understand how to navigate the world around them. Whether it’s learning how to sit properly at a café or participating in community events, children are taught not just through instruction, but by doing.

“We constantly receive messages from parents saying, ‘This is what other kindergartens don’t offer,’” says Ezugbaia. “That trust means everything to us and

### HOBBITON’S DISTINCTIVENESS

Hobbiton is a developmental space where education, care, and curiosity merge. With a clearly defined mission, values focused on child-centered growth, and a commitment to eco-conscious education, it offers something that few other institutions can match — a nurturing and imagination-inspiring space for children to start preparing for life.

And soon, with its new eco-campus near Lisi Lake, Hobbiton will expand, giving more children the chance to grow, learn, and thrive in a setting designed just for them.



Location : skhva

# Tsavkisi Panorama - A Harmonious Blend of Nature, Security, and Modern Living



Gegi Vasadze, Managing Partner of Tsavkisi Panorama

BY TEAM GT

In a city where the rapid pace of urban development often threatens natural landscapes, Tsavkisi Panorama offers a rare opportunity to experience both modern living and the tranquility of nature. Located just a 7-minute drive from Tbilisi's Freedom Square, this ambitious residential project promises panoramic views of both the city and the surrounding lush forests. To gain deeper insight into the vision behind this distinctive development, we spoke with Gegi Vasadze, Managing Partner of Tsavkisi Panorama. In our conversation, Vasadze shared the project's commitment to ecological sustainability, its state-of-the-art infrastructure, and how it seeks to create a secure, balanced environment for its future residents.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY "TSAVKISI PANORAMA," AND HOW IS IT A GREAT CHOICE FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO LIVE CLOSE TO NATURE AND TRANQUILITY?

Tsavkisi Panorama offers an exceptional opportunity for people to escape the hustle and bustle of the city while still being close enough to enjoy its amenities. Located just a 7-minute drive from Freedom Square, this residential complex is nestled at an altitude of 920 meters above sea level, providing breathtaking panoramic views of Tbilisi and the surrounding lush forest cover. The project was designed to create a harmonious balance between ecological preservation and urban living. We've ensured that each resident has access to an ecologically clean environment, along with modern conveniences, creating a truly peaceful, natural setting for families and individuals who prioritize serenity and tranquility in their everyday lives.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PANORAMIC VIEWS OF THE PROJECT.

The views at Tsavkisi Panorama are one of the defining features of the project. The area has been carefully planned so that every one of the 95 plots enjoys

unobstructed views of Tbilisi from one side and a stunning forest massif from the other. This ensures that residents can enjoy nature's beauty while being just a short distance from the city. Through strict design standards, such as limiting the number of floors in homes and maintaining similar fences, we've preserved these panoramic vistas for everyone, which also enhances the sense of community within the project.

## WHAT MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF THE PROJECT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ENTER A PROTECTED AREA, AND WHAT SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE SECURITY?

Security is a top priority at Tsavkisi Panorama. The entire district is a protected space, with controlled access through a checkpoint at the entrance. We have a security service that operates around the clock, ensuring the safety of the residents. Additionally, video surveillance cameras

are strategically placed throughout the territory to monitor the area. We've also built paved roads, and all communication lines are installed and functional. Residents can rest assured knowing that we've invested in both physical and technological infrastructure to maintain a secure and peaceful environment.

## WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF INFRASTRUCTURE AT TSAVKISI PANORAMA? WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THIS PROJECT?

Tsavkisi Panorama offers a fully developed infrastructure, starting with the construction of asphalted roads and the installation of all necessary communications. This includes water, electricity, and telecommunications services, all of which are already provided to each individual plot of land. Additionally, we've planted over 1,000 trees throughout the area, and outdoor lighting is powered by solar panels. The recreational zone spans 1.5 hectares and includes biking and walking paths, sports fields, and children's play areas, all contributing to a comfortable and well-connected living environment.

## HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP RECREATIONAL ZONES? WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE, WHAT ARE THE MAIN ADVANTAGES, AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RESIDENTS?

The recreational zones at Tsavkisi Panorama are designed to cater to a wide range of activities that promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage social interaction. The zone includes a 1-kilometer bicycle path, a walking alley, children's play areas, football and basketball courts, and a training ground. Due to high demand, we've added a padel court as well. These recreational areas are integral to enhancing the residents' quality of life by offering a space for relaxation, physical activity, and socialization. The green spaces and the addition of an artificial lake add a sense of tranquility, helping to create a balanced lifestyle for families and individuals alike.

## HOW IS THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS IN TSAVKISI PANORAMA PROGRESSING? HOW FAST IS IT GOING, AND WHAT STAGE IS THE PROJECT AT NOW?

The construction of Tsavkisi Panorama is progressing well. Currently, our residents are actively building more than 20 houses, and the first residents are expected to move in soon. We've made significant strides in terms of infrastructure, green space development, and recreational



amenities. The project is steadily advancing, and in the near future, we plan to complete additional homes, ensuring that the area continues to meet the high standards we've set for this unique living environment.

## WHAT IS THE SALES PROCESS LIKE? WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM THE TENANTS, AND WHAT RESULTS DO YOU PLAN TO ACHIEVE IN THE COMING MONTHS?

The sales process is straightforward, with interested buyers able to select from a variety of plots that suit their needs. We've ensured that the development is transparent, and we work closely with buyers to provide them with all the necessary information about the project. As for expectations, we are looking for residents who value a peaceful, eco-friendly lifestyle, as well as a strong sense of community. Over the next few months, we expect the project to attract more families and individuals who are drawn to the unique environment we've created here, and we are confident that the demand will only grow as we continue to develop and enhance the area.

## WHAT DOES TSAVKISI PANORAMA PROMISE ITS TENANTS?

Tsavkisi Panorama promises a lifestyle that blends the tranquility of nature with the convenience of modern living. Residents can expect a secure, comfortable, and ecologically clean environment, complete with world-class infrastructure and recreational facilities. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards and continuously improving the area to meet the needs of the residents. Our goal is to provide a space where families can thrive, children can grow in a healthy environment, and individuals can enjoy a balanced and peaceful lifestyle.

## WHAT INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS DISTINGUISH TSAVKISI PANORAMA FROM OTHER RESIDENTIAL COMPLEXES?

What truly sets Tsavkisi Panorama apart from other residential complexes is the integration of ecological principles with modern design. The carefully planned recreational zones, the addition of the artificial lake, and the sustainable infrastructure, including solar-powered lighting, showcase our commitment to creating an environmentally friendly community. The panoramic views and the fact that every plot has access to nature's beauty are also standout features. Furthermore, we've focused on designing a harmonious environment with strict standards to preserve the visual aesthetics and ensure that the district retains its unique charm.

## WHAT PROSPECTS DOES TSAVKISI PANORAMA HAVE, AND HOW DO YOU SEE THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROJECT?

Looking ahead, Tsavkisi Panorama has great potential for long-term growth and development. The combination of its location, natural surroundings, and planned future infrastructure, including nearby Mtatsminda Park and technopark, will only enhance its attractiveness as a residential area. We see this project not just as a place to live but as a growing community that supports a high quality of life, sustainability, and innovation. Over time, we expect the area to become one of the most sought-after residential spots in Tbilisi, offering residents a truly unique living experience.



Tsavkisi Panorama projection

# Back to the Dilemma of National Enlightenment

BLOG BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Against the backdrop of current geopolitical vicissitudes, cultural metamorphosis, and economic earthquakes, the overall education of humankind will likely undergo a painful process of psychological, cognitive, and adaptive adjustments, along with indispensable technical alterations. Often, the knowledge acquired from various universities and educational institutions appears to be irrelevant or incompatible with real-life demands. Years of human life and vast amounts of money are spent on education that rarely translates into a dream-come-true future. However, there are some fortunate exceptions to this unfortunate rule.

Despite the frustrating routine of education in Sakartvelo, which seems nearly impossible to modify, there are a number of schools in the country that have successfully adapted to meet the demands of contemporary schooling. The Byron School of Tbilisi is one such bright spot in the system, firmly grounded in the academic principle of teaching language through culture and culture through language. This English-language school, founded over thirty years ago by academician Innes Merabishvili, was established with the crucial goal of rescuing the educational system of the then-traumatized Republic, a time not even recognized by today's younger generation. Over the past three decades, thousands of young men and women have passed through the nurturing hands and valuable mentorship of Byron School tutors. These educators have taught English so skillfully and faithfully

to the children of their compatriots that many graduates are now highly trained professionals with exceptional linguistic skills, contributing to various fields of life. The Byron School possesses a remarkable ability to focus its resources on where modern life places new educational demands and challenges. Even the walls and furniture here are teaching how to speak English. Most students become fluent within a few years by learning English and American literature, U.S. history and government, philosophy, grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics. The academic process at the Byron School is wholly dedicated to navigating the challenges of modern education, ensuring its graduates are confident and capable in the real world. "Fruitfully" means that the English proficiency they acquire is not only a tool for success but is also easily and pleasurably used to

become independent and self-sustaining. While other schools in the country may possess equal academic and didactic strength, the question remains: how sufficient are they in providing a qualitative education for the masses of our youth? At the Byron School, education is inseparable from life. Teachers, in fulfilling their pedagogic duties, never settle for simply providing the bare minimum of knowledge. Instead, they are committed to making the knowledge meaningful and applicable in life. Teaching a subject is one thing; preparing a child for a successful life is quite another. What truly matters is providing a strong foundation of understanding to the future leaders and caretakers of this land. We live in an era of rapid scientific and technological advancements, driving economic development and progress, which traditional education can hardly keep up

with. However, this does not mean that educators should abandon their efforts to encourage young people to master the priorities of the 21st century, even as we look toward an upcoming century likely to bring even greater changes. It is no exaggeration to say that the Byron School of Tbilisi embodies this very zeitgeist, with curricula designed to sharpen students' skills and inspire them to discover new opportunities. This is precisely what motivates them to compete with one another and bravely face modern-day challenges. I have personally witnessed this in the Byron School, and I have seen similar qualities in the children and teachers of other educational institutions. This is undoubtedly encouraging. But once again, the question remains: Is this enough to prepare our youth to be fully compatible with the demands of our increasingly complex and challenging times?

## Green Light for a New Culture? Why Tbilisi's Heroes' Square Crosswalks Are a Radical Social Experiment in Urban Ethics

BY IVAN NECHAEV

When Tbilisi's municipal authorities installed above-ground pedestrian crossings and adaptive traffic lights at one of the city's most chaotic junctions — Heroes' Square — the city didn't just get a new urban feature- it got a symbolic battlefield for the negotiation between power, bodies, movement, and visibility in the public space.



Photo from bm.ge

To some, it might look like a routine infrastructure upgrade. Yet, in reality, this development marks a philosophical and cultural shift: from a car-centric, technocratic urban ideology inherited from Soviet modernism to an embryonic gesture toward what anthropologist Michel de Certeau would call a "space of practiced place" — where human bodies reassert their agency in a city built to exclude them.

speed over safety, cars over people, infrastructure over intimacy. It was a spatial metaphor of control — unwalkable, unapproachable, unsafe. It embodied what French sociologist Henri Lefebvre called the "abstract space" of modernity — geometrically rationalized, politically depersonalized, and hostile to organic urban life.

### WHY CROSSWALKS ARE NOT JUST CROSSWALKS

Pedestrian crossings are never neutral: they are choreographies of power — silent contracts between institutions and citizens about who has the right to occupy the street, when, and how. In this sense, the newly introduced traffic lights and ground-level crosswalks on Heroes' Square are not only infrastructure, they are instruments of cultural meaning.

By contrast, the reintroduction of pedestrian logic, however minimal and partial (so far, only on the zoo side), is a rehumanization of that space. It signals an implicit recognition that cities are not machines: they are living, breathing, conflicted organisms.

### THE ETHICS OF SLOWNESS: AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF FLOW

Modernity has always been obsessed with flow: of capital, traffic, data, bodies. Urban theorist Paul Virilio warned of "dromology" — the logic of speed as a fundamental mode of organizing power. Cities that prioritize uninterrupted vehicular movement, like Tbilisi his-

torically has, internalize this doctrine.

Yet in recent decades, counter-movements have emerged — from Barcelona's "superblocks" to Paris' "15-minute city" and Seoul's Cheonggyecheon River restoration — reclaiming urban space for slow life, ecological balance, and pedestrian dignity. These interventions are not only about mobility. They are political. They ask: What kind of city do we want? Who is it for?

Tbilisi's attempt, however embryonic, to slow down Heroes' Square reflects a deeper cultural conflict: between velocity and presence, opacity and legibility, private comfort and public commons. The pedestrian crossing is thus not a piece of asphalt, it's an ethical position.

### GEOLOGICS OF THE CROSSWALK: WHOSE CITY?

Across the world, the humble pedestrian crosswalk has been weaponized as a political symbol. In 1965, civil rights activists in Selma, Alabama, chose a crosswalk, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, as the site of their protest, precisely

because it was a public space where rights could be demanded. In Warsaw, anti-authoritarian protestors in 2020 used rainbow-painted crossings to defy conservative power.

Even in post-Soviet cities, crosswalks have carried semiotic weight. In Yerevan, the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" had scenes of thousands marching across blocked intersections. In Moscow, the 2012 anti-Putin protests often centered around the metaphor of "crossing over" from fear to action, even using car convoys and pedestrian movements in sync as a form of coordinated dissent.

Heroes' Square has historically been one of the main protest sites in Tbilisi. New state crossings are not political symbols, but they might become such. Already, the backlash on social media suggests a cultural unease: "Too many traffic jams," "Why are we privileging pedestrians?" These complaints are not just about traffic. They express a resistance to changing spatial hierarchies — a discomfort with the idea that pedestrians might have an equal claim to the city.

### SMART LIGHTS, DUMB POLITICS?

According to the municipality, the new adaptive traffic lights on Heroes' Square can regulate traffic in real time. But algorithmic regulation introduces new forms of invisibility. As scholars like Shoshana Zuboff warn in "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," smart infrastructure often disguises control behind the facade of optimization.

Who programs the lights? Whose convenience is prioritized? Do the algorithms "see" differently-abled bodies, the elderly,

or non-standard behavior? Urban AI often replicates the biases of its designers — privileging efficiency over equity. In this sense, the smart light can become a new form of technocratic gatekeeping, where the machine's logic overrides the human's right.

### FROM DEAD SPACE TO DEMOCRATIC SPACE

Heroes' Square has long been a non-place — what anthropologist Marc Augé calls "spaces of transit without identity." Introducing pedestrian logic into such a site is an invitation for reanimation. It is a small step toward a democratic city, one where space is not merely passed through, but dwelled in, observed, questioned, and reshaped.

But this requires more than a crosswalk. It demands an urban ethic that sees mobility not as a function of cars, but as a civic right. It requires maintenance, education, care, trust — all things that take longer to build than asphalt.

Tbilisi stands at a crossroads: it can become a city that treats pedestrians as nuisances to be managed, or as citizens with bodies, rights, and stories. The crosswalk at Heroes' Square, then, is not a finish line. It is the beginning of a much longer walk.

### WALK, DON'T RUN

As complaints about traffic grow, we must ask: What kind of crisis are we witnessing? A logistical one, or a cultural one? Is the real issue the traffic jam, or the psychological disruption of a worldview where cars no longer rule unchallenged?

## Driven to Distraction

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

It's my own stupid fault. I was back in Canada in September last year, and knew that my Alberta driver's license would expire four months later. But I also knew that I could renew it online, from a distance, none of its particulars having changed since the five years prior when I had to do this last. So I let it slide until November, returning to Georgia in the meantime.

Then, I discovered that online wasn't having it, despite repeated tries. Emailing the office in my home town with my woes, I heard from them that I could of course solve everything by renewing in person. But I was now on the other side of the world!

An apostilled copy of the license would suffice for me to exchange it for a Georgian one, for a small fee. Great, let's do that! I found a place in Canada which would do this, sent the fee and details,

told them of the urgency, and waited for the precious document to arrive. Which it did, the day AFTER my license expired in mid-January, rendering the apostille useless. I'm still bothering them for a refund.

Now my only choices were, 1: return to Canada to renew the license in person; or 2: go through the relative tortures of taking the tests to acquire a Georgian license. I went for the latter option, as it should be cheaper, and began researching the Georgian licensing process. Thankfully, another foreigner had recently outlined the whole thing in a single helpful online post.

First, the theoretical (written) test. This can only be done elsewhere than Tbilisi. Choose your city! I opted for Rustavi as it's closest. Next, wait for any second Saturday at 9 am to apply for a precious slot online. I failed several attempts at this, as the few available slots filled up in minutes, before my eyes, while my Georgian bank failed to cooperate in the online process. Time was slipping away.

Finally, I succeeded in getting a Rustavi slot, using my cell phone... for May 1, uncomfortably close to when my wife and I had hoped to return to Svaneti for the summer, with me driving of course. I'll have one shot. Fail, and it's off to Canada for me anyway.

Then I went to the site where 1019 multiple-choice questions for the theoretical test are all listed, on some 55 consecutive pages. In English if preferred, though not great in translation quality. I answered each question, doing which not only reveals whether you get it right but also invariably reveals the right answer if you get it wrong. Took a phone photo of EVERY question, and copied them to my laptop too. This took an entire day.

Now "all" I have to do is memorize the correct answers to all 1000-plus questions. Surely there won't be nearly that many on the actual test! No, indeed. But you're given a random sampling of 30 questions... and three wrong answers give you a fail. So, learn all 1019 right



answers. That's all you have to do.

Next, sign up (on the morning of the day is fine now) for the practical driving test, once in your theoretical test location and once in Tbilisi itself. Pass both of these, and you're done. You'll be well advised to pay for some practice lessons in advance from someone who can tell you perfectly what to expect... never mind that you've been a driver for over 40 years. Just bite the bullet and do it. Pass the two tests behind the wheel, and you're good to go. Assuming you have nerves left over

with which to drive at all. Wish me luck!

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

# Tbilisi's Double Shot of Verismo and Fire: 'La Navarraise' and 'Cavalleria Rusticana' Roar Back to Life

BY IVAN NECHAEV

When a night at the opera leaves you reeling like you've just watched a war movie spliced with a brutal soap opera, you know the production has done something right, and something deeply disturbing. The Tbilisi Opera and Ballet State Theater's audacious double bill of Jules Massenet's *La Navarraise* and Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* hurls the audience into the crucible of verismo, where characters love too hard, suffer too much, and die too easily. This is opera with clenched fists and tear-streaked cheeks—no powdered wigs, no pastel fantasies, only raw nerves and blood under the fingernails.

In reviving these two operas, both one-act detonations of operatic intensity, the company not only echoes their late 19th-century Georgian premieres, but reframes their violence and psychological devastation for a modern audience. Directed by Victor Garcia Sierra, and musically steered by maestro Zaza Azmaiparashvili, this evening is less a performance and more a series of emotional stabblings. The fact that both works premiered in Tbilisi over a century ago lends the event an eerie circularity, as if these ghosts have returned to haunt us again—sharper, louder, and even more tragic.

## CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA — A WOMAN ON FIRE

The evening began with *Cavalleria Rusticana*, that emblematic firework of verismo opera, premiered in Rome in 1890 and first performed in Tbilisi just two years later. It is a work that explodes with sensuality and fatalism: Easter morning in a Sicilian village, a betrayed lover, a duel born of toxic pride.

At the heart of this performance stood soprano Makvala Aspanidze as Santuzza—nothing less than a revelation. Her portrayal was not merely tragic; it was volcanic. From her first entrance,

Aspanidze infused the role with feral emotional intensity, refusing any hint of self-pity. Her voice, lush and expansive in the middle register, could pivot to steel in a single phrase. In the famous duet with Turridu, her anguish surged like a tidal wave, yet always with technical control. Her cries were not hysterical; they were judicial indictments. This Santuzza did not weep—she burned.

Opposite her, Giorgi Sturua gave a robust and credible Turridu, equal parts seducer and coward. His "Addio alla madre" was finely sung, though it felt more like resignation than repentance—a subtle but chilling interpretative choice. Alberto Gazale, as Alfio, the betrayed husband, brought gravitas and restrained menace, his baritone grounded in the inexorable logic of masculine vengeance.

Director Victor Garcia Sierra smartly stripped the staging of unnecessary ornament. Italo Grassi's set evoked both ecclesiastical authority and emotional desolation. The tension between sacred ritual and brutal instinct was masterfully emphasized in the Easter chorus, under the precise direction of Principal Chorus Master Avtandil Chkhenkeli. The community, faceless and pious, stood as silent accomplice to the tragedy unfolding in their midst.

## LA NAVARRAISE — LOVE, WEAPONIZED

After intermission, the curtain rose on Massenet's *La Navarraise*, a lesser-known but startlingly modern work in its psychological trajectory. Premiered in 1894 and first seen in Tbilisi during the 1895-96 season, the opera is often dubbed a French response to *Cavalleria*. It compresses operatic melodrama into a war zone, where a woman assassinates a general to prove her love to a man whose father disapproves of her social station. It's a plot so morally perverse it could easily be mistaken for a Netflix noir—except Massenet's music gives it aching, terrible beauty.

Irina Tabordize as Anita was captivating in a different register than Aspanidze's Santuzza. Tabordize's voice carried a



Photo by the author

haunting, lyrical clarity, and her performance was all tension and restraint. Anita does not erupt; she calcifies. Her final breakdown—after the murder is complete and her lover recoils from her in horror—was executed with breathtaking control. Her descent into madness was not a fall but a slow, suffocating spiral.

Armaz Darashvili, as Araqui, played the soldier-lover with convincing inner conflict, his sturdy baritone colored by moments of tenderness and panic. Giorgi Lomiseli's Garrido was perhaps the most inscrutable figure of the evening—arrogant, charming, and oblivious to the tragedy closing in around him.

The production's aesthetic, shaped by costume designer Ester Martin and lighting designer Stefano Gorreri, created a nightmarish battlefield setting—an anonymous zone of conflict where love becomes a transaction and death the dowry. Gorreri's caustic blue-lit climax bathed Anita in a symbolic blood-wash that blurred morality and madness into one searing image.

## HONORING A NATIONAL TREASURE: TSISANA TATISHVILI

The choice to dedicate the premiere to

Tsisana Tatishvili infused the evening with additional layers of meaning. Before the curtains rose, the theater presented a moving tribute: a commemorative display showcasing Tatishvili's personal belongings alongside poignant photographs and performance memorabilia. This homage underscored how a single artist's passion and brilliance can mold the cultural fabric of an entire nation. In Tatishvili's memory, the revival was more than a mere resurrection of an opera; it was a personal call to remember and celebrate the echoes of Georgian musical genius that have, for decades, nurtured the national artistic spirit.

By linking the memory of Tatishvili with the revival of *La Navarraise*, the production seamlessly bridged Georgian operatic heritage with modern artistic innovation. In a society that often grapples with rapidly changing cultural landscapes, the tribute served as a reminder that true artistry is timeless.

## THE ETHICS OF OPERATIC VIOLENCE

As exhilarating as these performances were, one cannot ignore the deeply problematic ethics embedded in both works. Viewed through a contemporary lens,

these operas are masterclasses in patriarchal logic: women must either redeem themselves through suffering (*Cavalleria*) or prove their worth through acts of destruction (*La Navarraise*). In both, the female protagonists are trapped within male codes of honor and social hierarchy, rendered either monstrous or disposable once they transgress.

Yet these operas also expose those very systems—almost despite themselves. Santuzza's dignity, Anita's agency, however distorted, haunt the stage. By emphasizing the heroines' psychological trauma rather than their romantic passivity, director Victor Garcia Sierra reframes these stories as indictments rather than celebrations of masculine violence.

Still, the audience is left with unease. What does it mean to cheer for a woman's musical triumph when her narrative arc ends in shame or madness? Can these operas survive the scrutiny of a generation increasingly intolerant of misogyny disguised as melodrama?

## THE SOUND OF A RECKONING

What stood out throughout the evening was the fierce unity of musical and dramatic forces. Under Zaza Azmaiparashvili's baton, the Tbilisi Opera Orchestra and Chorus offered not just technical excellence, but interpretive daring. The orchestra did not accompany the drama—it revealed it. In Mascagni's sweeping melodies and Massenet's brittle dissonances, the musicians found emotion, irony, and dread.

And yet, all this artistry served stories whose moral universe is far from benign. Women who suffer for love. Men who murder for pride. Communities that chant hymns while turning away from injustice. In 2025, what does it mean to restage such operas?

It means, perhaps, to look at them not as affirmations, but as autopsies. To use their beauty to examine the violence embedded in our histories and our stages. Tbilisi's production did not sanitize these operas—it exposed them. It asked us not to cheer for Santuzza or Anita, but to listen to what they are really telling us.

## BI Auction Competition Interviews 'Meet the Artist' - Mariam Shakarashvili

BY TEAM GT

In my personal and professional life, I believe in the importance of 'silent' times for better projects, as they give me the chance to reflect on the past and shape a better future. I can proudly say that one of the best projects is BI Auction's Competition 'for Young Artists,' which gives us the opportunity to introduce dozens of young artists every year, - says BI Auction Co-Founder Bengü Akçardak Küçük. With this new interview series, GEORGIA TODAY introduces its readers to the artistic journey of successful artists, beginning with the BI Auction 2020 competition winner, Mariam Shakarashvili

### COMPARING NOW WITH THE PERIOD BEFORE THE 2020 COMPETITION, WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR ARTISTIC JOURNEY? HAVE NEW OPPORTUNITIES ARISEN IN GEORGIA OR ABROAD?

BI Auction is one of the most significant projects in the Georgian art scene, aiming to support the younger generation of artists and help them pave their way. I have been participating since 2016, during my student years, and I can say it was one of the first serious milestones in my biography. For me, as a young artist at that time, it served as a great source of motivation: exhibiting alongside renowned Georgian artists and having

my paintings sold alongside theirs boosted my confidence, helped me gain recognition from a wider audience, and connected me with new collectors. In 2021, won BI Auction's Young Artists' Competition, which was another joyful milestone in my career.

I can say that every stage of my creative journey has been exciting, but the most essential and significant steps have been taken after 2020. This progress is linked to several key events in my life, one of which is winning the BI Auction award.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE ART WORLD FOR ARTISTS?

Today, Georgia is going through a very difficult time, and although I strive to keep moving forward, the current events inevitably have a significant impact on both my creative process and my overall mood. The most distressing feeling is the sense that, despite all efforts, you cannot change anything—the feeling of powerlessness is hard to bear. Nevertheless, I hope that our commitment to our principles, the unity of society, and our perseverance will yield results, and we will succeed in achieving the well-being of our country.

### WHAT ARE YOUR UPCOMING PROJECTS OR EVENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

In today's reality, it is difficult to make long-term plans. However, we still have several important international projects scheduled in the near future. Among them, one of the most significant is Ria



Keburia's residency in Cannes, which is being organized in collaboration with the Georgian gallery ERISTAVI, based in Belgium, and the Ria Keburia Foundation.



# The Hidden Masters of The XX Century: Baia Gallery Redraws the Map of Georgian Art History with Rare Force



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

In a quiet, tree-shaded courtyard of Pavle Ingorokva Street 19a a cultural resurrection is underway. Behind the doors of Baia Gallery's space for private collections, the exhibition 'Collection—XX Century. Avant-garde and Modernism' has cracked open a previously unseen archive of Georgia's artistic DNA.

What we are witnessing here is less an exhibition than an aesthetic excavation. Baia Gallery, known for its deep engagement with Georgian visual culture, has gone subterranean—digging through the treasure vaults of private collectors to present works that have, in many cases, never before seen the light of public space. The result is a dazzling, sometimes dizzying constellation of masterworks that reframes the narrative of Georgian modernism and boldly reasserts the country's position within the pan-European avant-garde.

The curatorial vision behind 'Collection—XX Century' does something radical: it proposes a new narrative of Georgian modernism, one that is not limited to institutionalized canons but instead builds a living, breathing mosaic of 20th-century innovation from private, often forgotten archives. It takes art history out of the ivory tower and into the salons of collectors, the corridors of émigré memory, and the silences of exile.

Here, David Kakabadze's multiverse is finally laid out in full dimensionality. His photographic experiments from the 1920s—minimalist, searching, and eerily cinematic—converse with his Parisian works and the astonishing 'Sketch of the Flag of the Republic of Georgia.' This piece, part national emblem, part constructivist abstraction, is a missing link in our understanding of how political and visual ideologies once entwined.

Kakabadze's 'Abstraction' anchors the show with scientific detachment and poetic tension, while his lesser-known photographic works underscore his interdisciplinarity—a trait many Georgian avant-gardists shared but were rarely celebrated for.

The familiar icon Lado Gudiashvili is present but cleverly defamiliarized. His works here, along with those of Shalva Kikodze and Sergo Kobuladze, are not merely nostalgic flourishes of Georgian

exoticism. They're read here as fragments of a broader surrealist and post-symbolist dialogue, closer to Giorgio de Chirico than provincial romanticism. Gudiashvili, seen in this constellation, looks less like a folklorist and more like a metaphysical alchemist of the Caucasus.

If Kakabadze is the theoretician of Constructivism, Petre Otskheli and Irakli Gamrekeli are its mythmakers. Their contributions to theatrical design, represented here with 'Choreographic Costume' and other sketches, remind us that Georgia's modernism was not only visual but deeply theatrical, kinetic, performative. In their world, costume becomes abstraction, and the stage, a painting. Gamrekeli's architectural severity and Otskheli's expressive minimalism mark a moment when Georgian scenography was rewriting the visual language of Soviet-era performance.

And then there is Kirill Zdanevich, brother of the more radical Ilia, here presented with a pair of hauntingly intimate pieces: 'Nude' and 'Still-life Against Mountains Background.' They function like meditative pauses in an otherwise intense show, grounding the abstract and performative with a bodily, sensual quietness. Zdanevich is the one who reminds us that modernism is not always an explosion—it is sometimes the stillness before the quake.

A few steps later, Avto Varazi's 'Sleeping Woman' and 'Woman with Loose Hair' offer a radically different but equally metaphysical vision. Painted in tones of melancholy and inward collapse, these pieces are haunted by war, ideology, and spiritual ambiguity. In them, Varazi paints not just bodies but epochs; disoriented, fragmented, and seeking repose.

Baia Gallery's brilliance lies in assembling not just a canon, but a chorus. The inclusion of foreign artists who worked in Georgia, Vasily Shukhaev, Sergey Sudeikin, and Georgian émigrés like Vera Pagava and Felix Varlamishvili, blurs the tidy boundaries of "national art" in favor of a cosmopolitan vision.

Take Pagava's 'La Rencontre.' Painted in France, yet steeped in a poetics that feels uncannily Georgian, it bridges her Parisian exile with a lingering homeland sensibility. Varlamishvili's 'Harvest' and 'View of Toledo' similarly fuse Iberian landscapes with Caucasian chromatics, subtly articulating the identity crisis of the émigré painter.

Rounding out this panoptic vision are the "foreign" artists, though that term feels uneasy here. Sergey Sudeikin's 'Sadko. Underwater Kingdom' is a fantasy fragment of Russian Symbolism that echoes with shared Georgian-Russian-Silver Age undertones. And Vasily Shukhaev's 'Bouquet of Peonies' is an almost decadent contrast—lush, sensory, timeless.

Nearby, a magnificent 'Lady with a Fan' by Wassily Kandinsky is not merely a showstopper but a conceptual axis around which the entire exhibition turns. Her bold ornamental structure and biomorphic curves echo through the works of the Georgian avant-garde—not as derivation, but as transnational resonance.

This exhibition argues, quietly but forcefully, that the Georgian 20th century was never provincial. It was plugged into a broader European and Russian avant-garde dialogue, from Suprematism to Cubo-Futurism, but always expressed in a language of its own.

## THE EXHIBITION AS COUNTER-CANON: A POLITICS OF PRIVATE MEMORY

This is an exhibition about art, but also about memory politics. Private collections in post-Soviet countries often fill in the gaps left by ruptured institutions, censorship, and cultural neglect. In Georgia, they have become not only personal investments but unofficial museums of resistance.

The show draws from the Baia Gallery's own database of over 5,000 works, an archival project in progress that could one day redefine how Georgia writes its cultural history. In a country where artists have often been erased by political agendas or lost to diaspora, exhibitions like this one act as correctives.

What's more, the exhibition allows us to see how generational echoes ripple through time. The flat, decorative lines of Shalva Kikodze reappear in the stylizations of Lado Gudiashvili; the philosophical somberness of Kandinsky finds an unlikely heir in Zdanevich's sensual yet mystical 'Still-Life Against Mountains Background.'

These are not just formal resemblances, but influences born of shared dislocations—of artists moving between cities, ideologies, and personal identities. 'Collection—XX Century' shows us that modernism in Georgia was never about isolation; it was about navigation.

In an era of rapid digital visibility and algorithmic canonization, 'Collection—XX Century' reminds us of something more intimate, and more profound: the quiet heroism of remembering. Of preserving. Of collecting not just art, but the fragile traces of modernity's passage through a small but incandescent nation.

To visit this exhibition is to walk through a map of a hidden Georgia—not the one of postcard balconies and wine cellars, but the one of ideational ferment, aesthetic provocation, and historical disquiet. These works, long unseen, now return—not as relics, but as testimonies. And in their collective voice, we hear not only the art of the 20th century but the pulse of a nation still coming to terms with its modern self.

Collecting is never neutral. It's a form of storytelling, a gesture of belief in the value of what might otherwise vanish. In this sense, Baia Gallery's show is more than just an exhibition. It is an act of love—for art, for history, and for the radical beauty of rediscovery.



Photo by the author



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**PUBLISHER & GM**  
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Layout:  
Misha Mchedlishvili

Photographer:  
Aleksi Serov

International Relations & Communications  
Sofia Bochoidze  
E: sbochoidze@georgiatoday.ge

Website Editor:  
Katie Ruth Davies

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Circulation Managers:  
David Kerdikashvili  
David Djandjgava

**ADDRESS**  
22 Janashia Str.  
Tbilisi, 0179, Georgia

Tel.: +995 32 229 59 19  
E: info@georgiatoday.ge  
F: GeorgiaToday

**ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION**  
+995 577 72 52 61  
E-mail:  
marketing@georgiatoday.ge

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