

# *Colloquy*

*Ambivalence: Georgian  
perceptions of the  
Arab Spring*

**Ghia  
Nodia**

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**C**I: *My first question is about the impact of the five day August War in 2008, especially within the larger context of Georgia's independence. What has been the biggest problem for Georgia in the aftermath of the August War? Was the decision to invade the result of lengthy discussions and observation on the part of the Georgian government?*

**Nodia:** The main changes brought about by the August War relate to two areas: the status of the conflicts and actual control over territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

With regards to the status issue, the position of most of the international community did not change: before the war, it considered Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be parts of Georgia, even though they were de facto *not* under Georgian control, and this did not change.

But Russia's role in the conflict has changed dramatically. Before the August War, Russia was considered an impartial mediator. While Tbilisi did not genuinely believe that this was the case, formally the Georgian government did accord Russia this role. Russia previously recognized Georgia's territorial integrity, by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as part of Georgia. With Russia's unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, that has changed. As a result, from Georgia's perspective, these

territories are now Russian-occupied, which makes this a conflict between Russia and Georgia, as opposed to issues of separatism. What this means, essentially, is that a dispute that had previously been perceived as the "Georgia-South Ossetia" conflict has become a conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia (the same applies to Abkhazia, obviously).

Secondly, before the war Georgia actually controlled parts of both Abkhazia and S.Ossetia: Kodori Valley in Abkhazia, and Akhalkgori district and several valleys in S.Ossetia. Now, territorial control of these areas is consolidated, in practice they are fully controlled by Russia, though formally they are being run by de facto governments in Sukhumi and Tsinkhvali.

There is also a third difference: the attitude of Georgian government, and the Georgian political elite towards the solution of this conflict. Before the August War, the Georgian government spoke of the potential for a relatively fast solution of the conflict. President Saakashvili in 2004 and then again in 2008 promised to resolve this conflict during his term of office, and he appeared to believe that was plausible. However, after the August War Georgian government recognized that this is a long-term problem that cannot be quickly or easily resolved. Now the problem is Russian occupation; and everybody understands that ending it, or even changing the occupation regime, is very difficult to achieve.

**CI:** *You have mentioned the attitudes of the Georgian political elite. Do you see any differences between the current government and the opposition parties in terms of their attitudes towards the solution of this conflict?*

**Nodia:** Generally speaking, opinions on these issues do not vary greatly, between government, the public, and of the majority of the political opposition. This is not to say that there are not some differences. For instance, some opposition parties accord a portion of the blame for the war to the Georgian government. Furthermore, others, such as Irakli Alasania, argue that we need to open a dialogue with the Sukhumi and Tshkinvali authorities right now. The Georgian government does not believe that there is any point in developing contacts with Sukhumi and Tshkinvali, on the grounds that at this stage the issue is Russian occupation, and for as long as that continues, there is nothing to be gained by engaging with the de facto authorities.

**CI:** *Last year, the Georgian government released a new strategy document that suggests they are ready to start negotiations with the occupied territories. In this regard, don't you think having a strategy paper containing a practical vision is enough, given the security concerns?*

**Nodia:** There are two pillars of the government's current policy: non-recognition [of independence] and

engagement. In practice, these two approaches do not necessarily sit easily together. "Non-recognition" means that the Georgian government does not recognize the de-facto authorities as legitimate representatives of the population, and urges international community to maintain the same position; but "engagement" implies Tbilisi's wish to maintain contact with the people who reside there because from Georgia's perspective, they are Georgian nationals and should be able to enjoy benefits of Georgian citizenship. This means human contacts, economic ties, cultural and scholarly cooperation, etc. But doing this without being in contact with the government that controls the situation there is, obviously, very difficult. The Georgian government recognizes that this is a problem, and it has accepted the possibility of establishing some level of contact with the Tskhinvali and Sukhumi authorities, in order to discuss issues relating to the everyday life of citizens. But there is no official political negotiation with the de facto authorities, even though this makes actual engagement with the people there very difficult.

**CI:** *The current focus of the international community is the Middle East and certain Arab states, often called the "social media revolutions". During this turmoil, the Georgian government said very little, and their silence invited criticism from some quarters. Do you think that the fact*

*that the current Georgian government is itself the product of a revolution has something to do with this? When the revolutions started in the Middle East and Arab world, the policy of the Georgian government seemed to be “keep quiet and don’t react”, and so it was not clear whether or not they supported the uprisings. What is your opinion on the Arab Spring? Why was the Georgian government so ambivalent?*

**Nodia:** I think there are two reasons behind this ambivalence. First of all, Tbilisi shared the ambivalence of the whole democratic world, including the Americans and Europeans, who were initially quite slow to define their position towards the uprisings in the Arab countries. On the one hand, they recognized that the incumbent regimes were autocratic, and it is against principles of western democracies to support autocrats against the people. But on the other hand, they thought that these regimes might constitute a lesser evil, for example, in comparison to fundamentalist Islamic regimes that might have come to power through popular uprisings. Eventually, of course, the position of Europeans and Americans became much clearer, and Georgia is also supportive of the Arab spring but not too active in expressing this support.

But in addition to this, the Georgian government has its own specific motive to be ambivalent: it was aware that the radical arm of the opposition

perceived the revolutions in Middle East as a kind of model that could be emulated in Georgia. They identified with the rebels, and projected the Georgian authorities in the role of the autocratic government. This also made the Georgian government less inclined to praise the revolutions, for fear they might indirectly encourage the radical opposition at home.

**CI:***How can we compare the Rose Revolution and the revolutions in the Middle East and Arab world?*

**Nodia:** Seven years on from the Rose Revolution, we can more or less assess the results. I think it is still too early for any such assessment of the Middle East revolutions. In fact, the uprisings are still going on in some countries. We do know that people revolted against autocratic regimes, and we believe that the impulse and motivation to overthrow the autocratic government was democratic. But we do not know what the outcome will be. How will the power vacuum be filled, and where will the new governments take their respective countries? In the Middle East, the alternative to existing autocracies was not clear; in fact, it remains unclear.

In Georgia’s revolution, we had a much clearer picture: there was an incumbent regime, and there was an alternative. When people went to Rustaveli Avenue in November 2003, they knew not only whom they were protesting against, but also whom they were bringing to power. We

knew that if Shevardnadze went, Saakashvili would come. It is not clear in Tahrir, or in Tunisia, or Libya, or Syria etc. That, I think, is one obvious difference.

Another difference is that in the Rose Revolution, the main reason why the old regime was rejected was not it being autocratic. It was much less autocratic than the Middle Eastern regimes. It was corrupt; it was inefficient; it was sclerotic.

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The revolution was not aimed against dictatorship, because Shevardnadze was not a proper dictator; the main slogan was ‘Georgia without corruption’. In that, the promise of the Georgian revolution was met: Georgia is now much less corrupt country, it has much more effective government that can and does produce public goods, although there is no comparable breakthrough in consolidating democracy.

In the Arab and Middle Eastern countries the regimes that people were fighting were clear-cut dictatorships, although arguably this was not the only reason for protesting against

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them: there was corruption, poor living conditions, what not.

However, one can also find something in common: in all cases old regimes had been led for decades by the same people, now quite old, and the regimes themselves became somewhat sclerotic. In that sense, Shevardnadze was like Mubarak or Ben Ali. People simply got tired to death of them.

**CI:***People are unsure exactly what role social media played in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) revolutions. It seems too much to say that Facebook or Twitter started these revolutions; equally the line between a “demonstration” and a “revolution” is blurred. A change in government does not mean that a revolution has occurred. Looking at the Georgian and MENA revolutions in this context, what was the role of the Georgian media during the Rose revolution?*

**Nodia:**In the Rose Revolution, the media was extremely important. Non-print media, particularly the pro-opposition Rustavi 2 television channel, played a key role in sup-

porting the Georgian Revolution. Later on, when there were rumblings against Saakashvili, Imedi TV in 2007 and Maestro TV in 2009 tried to play the same role as Rustavi 2 did in 2003. But again, the key difference is that Georgia under Shevardnadze or Saakashvili is not and has never been as autocratic as the Middle Eastern countries in question. Georgia has pluralistic traditional media, which means both print and broadcasted media, and if there arises a revolutionary situation, traditional media can provide sufficient support. This was not the case in the Middle Eastern countries.

It is true that social media is becoming important in Georgian society, but as yet we have not seen these networks playing a decisive role in protests. There may be one example so far: a protest rally against alleged police brutality after the police dispersed a protest rally led by Nino Burjanadze on May 26 this year. That non-political protest was mainly organized through social media, such as Facebook.

**CI:***The Rose Revolution brought the liberalization of media legislation, and from this perspective, it was a huge victory for the Georgian media. Back then, the media was the country's most trusted institution, according to 73% of the population. But what about now?*

**Nodia:**The Georgian media is a very controversial subject. I believe that it is free from censorship, which is crucial, and means that people who want to criticize the government can do so. Georgia also offers a much more liberal legal environment for journalists than most European countries. In European countries, you hear all the time that journalists are being persecuted with libel charges. In Georgia, libel has basically been decriminalized, which means that there is total freedom for journalists: They can write anything true or false about

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anybody: government, the opposition, public figures, whoever. From that perspective, the Georgian media is free.

But the problem is that it is politically polarized. I would say we have media freedoms, but the independent media is weak, in the sense that it is not independent from various political forces. The media is over-politi-

cized. Television is the most widely discussed problem, because it is the most influential. There are television companies that are essentially political tools of the government, namely Rustavi 2 and Imedi TV. This is obvious, and they do not attempt to conceal this. Public channel is more

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balanced, but still biased in favor of government. We also have Maestro and Kavkasia, which are the tools of the opposition. But there are barely any media organizations that follow standards of truly independent media and try to inform the public instead of mobilizing it one way or the other. That is the biggest problem, in my opinion.

But this is not the only one. Once we accept this political polarization between government and opposition media outlets, we can see that the impact of the government media is more powerful; because the two most popular television companies, Rustavi-2 and Imedi, both of which provide national coverage, are completely pro-government.

The opposition channels only broadcast in Tbilisi and in some other regions. This disbalance is also a very important problem.

**CI:***The annual Freedom House reports have an assessment scale for media independence, and according this the best time for media independence was in 2002, under Shevardnadze's rule, before the Rose revolution. Since then, the general trend is a worsening of media independence.*

**Nodia:** In the past I also wrote reports for Freedom House, and I can say that it is very difficult to quantify these issues. Both in 2002, and in 2011 the Georgian media is uncensored, and there is real pluralism. The difference is in details. Right now, we have better media legislation, but on the other hand, the lack of political balance between pro-government and pro-opposition media has become more of a problem: relative strength of the pro-government media in comparison to the opposition media has increased. It is likely on these grounds that the Freedom House ratings have declined.

**CI:***Let's continue to discuss domestic policy - I have two further questions. First of all, August War is very important not only for Georgia, but also for the region. What is your impression of the role of the media during the August War? We can see that there is a great deal of struggle between the Russian and Georgian media. What was the role of the Georgian media, in terms of its support for the government during the August War? The media's reaction is important in sensitive situations, wartime, for example, and during*

*a war, the most important thing for the population and the government is mutual trust – which the media can either support or undermine.*

**Nodia:** I think there are two aspects to this problem. The first is that today's wars are not just military events, but information wars as well. Moreover, for a small country like Georgia the information war can be even more important than the combat on the ground, because it is obvious that Georgia cannot defeat Russia in a conventional war. Of course Georgia was involved in such an information war. Initially, it was very difficult for Georgia to compete with Russia in this. I think there were moments when Georgia did not do too badly, but on balance I think Georgia lost the information war to Russia.

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It is another thing what the war does to the national media. It creates a natural tendency to self-censorship; in the name of patriotism, journalists are loathe to write anything that reflects well on the enemy. In the way, domestic pluralism recedes. This is especially so when the war is on your own territory rather than abroad

(like the U.S in Vietnam). During the August War, it was not clear whether Georgia would maintain its truly independent statehood at all. The stakes were very high. So, most journalists try to support national cause, and this does not necessarily require pressure and censorship.

Having said that, I do remember that even in the midst of the war, while the fighting was going on, many Georgian newspapers published critical articles or critical interviews about the behavior of the Georgian government, for example, blaming it for misguided policies that led to the war. Even in that period of deadly threat to the country the Georgian media was not uniform in its coverage of the war.

**CI:Dr. Nodia, do you believe that the Information War between the Russian and Georgian media is continuing? The media will play an important role in resolving the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts - if you say that the information war is ongoing, it seems unlikely that the media will contribute significantly to the resolution of the conflicts. How could media relations influence the resolution of this conflict, and what role is expected of the media?**

**Nodia:** First of all, yes: the information war between Georgia and Russia is ongoing. It is of course very important for Georgia to project posi-



tive image in the international media. This is first of all a war in the inter-

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national media. This information warfare is not a way to resolve of the conflict; rather, it is a war tool. This may be a bad thing, but it is part of life, and we cannot change that.

Of course it is extremely important that there are independent media sources available, whether international or domestic. So that even if you have an international information war, both Georgia and Russia can present their side of the story, and the coverage is not fully dominated by either version.

If we speak about the role of the media in conflict resolution, one should first ask: What conflict are we talking about? At least from the Georgian perspective, at this point, the conflict is between Georgia and Russia. And the dispute between these two countries is not based on a misunderstanding; it stems from specific choices made by the political elites of both

countries. Unless these fundamental choices are modified, media cannot help much.

One should note that the information conflicts are also going on inside Georgia and inside Russia. For instance, *Ekho Moskvi*, a Russian media company, has broadcast interviews with both Saakashvili and Medvedev; interestingly, its viewers and listeners tended to like Saakashvili better, and considered his version of events more convincing. Many people in Georgia believe that Russia also tries to use Georgian media to project ideas that it considers beneficial.

Looking to relations between Georgians and Ossetians, or Georgians and Abkhazians, media may play a role as well. Unfortunately, these relations are not on the radar of the media; they are not deemed sufficiently interesting or sensational. There is no relationship between Tbilisi and Abkhazia or Ossetia, and if there are contacts, people tend to shy away from media coverage. For instance, if an Abkhazian comes to Tbilisi, he or she does not want to be quoted in the media for fear of reprisals at home. So, yes, potentially, the media can play a positive role in the reconciliation process. But at this point, I am skeptical about the media's possible impact, because there are few points of contact between the parties.

**CI: Moving on from domestic policy, let's talk about one of the crucial**

*aspects of foreign policy: relations with neighboring countries and the international community. Historically, Georgia had economic and political relationships at a high level with both Turkey and Russia. However, a significant number of local analysts along with government officials with whom I have personal contact believe that Turkey can play a big role in the South Caucasus. So the Turkish government is improving both Georgian-Turkish relations and Russian-Turkish relations. What is your opinion on this Russian-Turkish relationship, versus the Turkish-Georgian relationship? How do they affect one another?*

**Nodia:** First of all, I would say that over the past 20 years, after Georgia gained its independence, Turkey has been considered a strategic partner and ally of Georgia, both politically and economically. The economic aspect obviously includes the strategic pipelines and other communications. In addition, Turkish business is heavily involved in many different areas of Georgia – for example, in Batumi, Turkish investment is important and has always been very welcome. Politically, Turkey was important to Georgia because it balanced the Russian influence, and also acted as a kind of bridge to NATO, as Turkey is a NATO member and it is Georgia’s aspiration to join it. Turkey was active in numerous NATO programs in Georgia. In that sense Georgian-Turkish relations have been very im-

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portant for Georgia, and that continues; nothing has changed there.

We know that there have been some changes to Turkish foreign policy. While Turkey continues to be a NATO ally and aspires to EU membership, it also wants to play a more independent role, acting as Turkey rather than just on behalf of NATO. It is not always clear to the Georgian political elite (as well as to international commentators) what this means in practice, but there seems to be consensus among this political elite that despite these changes, Turkey remains to be a very valuable strategic partner for Georgia.

When Turkey launched the design of a regional policy via the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform, I think Georgians felt ambivalent. On one hand, why not? Turkey can be a key regional player. There is no established Georgian opposition to that notion, but Georgians don’t really understand how exactly Turkey is going to play that role.

I think the first project, in which Turkey attempted rapprochement with Armenia, was met with ambivalence in both Turkey and in Georgia. The Georgian government perceived potential benefits for the region if relations between Turkey and Armenia were improved; however, we also understood that this could destabilize the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship, which is also important for us. In any case, it is not clear that the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement project has failed. However, one of its legacies is increased tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which Georgia considers a very serious threat.

**CI:** *You mention this stability pact, but no one has seen any documentation, only goodwill on the part of the Turkish Government. In this regard, Armenian-Turkish rapprochement has failed, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will paralyze the future of the region. We have on occasion heard that the Turkish government officials or political circles believe that only means of constructing an effective foreign policy strategy in the region is to achieve rapprochement with Armenia. But on other hand, Baku believes that without the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there is no way to start this process. From that perspective, it does not seem as if the Georgian government will see any risk from Turkey before this of this conflict is resolved. What do you think?*

**Nodia:** It is generally agreed that the

Stability pact is more of a general idea than a specific strategy, and that was my initial impression. The three years following the August War have shown that it has not been developed beyond this general idea. It seems that the idea was not well thought through. I think it was somewhat naïve to think that Turkish-Armenian rapprochement would succeed without taking into account the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the resulting complication of Armenian-Azerbaijani and Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. After this point, we did not see any important initiatives coming from Ankara on how to improve stability.

Currently, there are two big interstate conflicts in the Caucasus: Armenia-Azerbaijan and Georgia-Russia. In the Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute, unfortunately, the dynamic is more negative since the August War, which as I have said constitutes a serious practical concern for us. So, the Turkish initiative has so far failed there. With regard to Georgian-Russian relations, supposedly Turkey may have ambitions to improve the situation, because it wants to have good relations with both countries, and is successful in having them. But we do not see how Turkey can contribute to the improvement of Georgian-Russian relations. If we do not have progress in at least one of those two conflicts, however, there will be no progress in the regional security.

**CI:** *Ok, if we start to talk about se-*

*curity in the region, one of the important international players is the U.S, not only for Georgia but also for Azerbaijan and Armenia. The U.S played an important role in the region during the 1990s. But right now, we are seeing a “reset” of U.S-Russian relations, which concerns not Georgia but other countries that are anxious about Russia, such as Poland. After the August War, former U.S President George W. Bush was a big supporter of the Georgian government. At this point, how do you perceive the relationship between Georgia and US? Is it the same as it was four years ago?*

**Nodia:** Generally, it is understandable that Obama wanted to differentiate himself from Bush, and I think it was this desire that lies at the heart of this “reset” policy. In isolation, there is nothing bad about the improvement of relations between the US and Russia. But I think that the current administration did not think through the dynamics of the American role in the region, beyond the relationship with Russia. The U.S has hardly any policy regarding this region, so the problem is not the improved relationship with Russia, but the lack of a strategy to deal with larger regions nearby. The American role in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus has declined, and there are some concerns about that in Georgia.

But this decline is relative to the previous administration or even to the Clinton administration. In general,

American support continues to be very important for Georgia and the financial support we receive remains rather high; it is just that the political attention is somewhat lower than Georgia would like. It is true, though, that the August War was a topic for debate during the pre-election period in the U.S, when it was debated by Obama and McCain. Georgia is a talking point for the Democratic and Republican parties, in discussions between liberals and conservatives, and it remains on the table. Georgia has many friends on the Hill who criticize Obama’s passive role in the Caucasus. This means that the U.S continues to play an important role for Georgia specifically as well as for the region as a whole.

**CI:***It has been said many times that Euro-integration, or even EU membership is an important component of Georgia’s foreign policy. Do you think that there is still hope for EU or NATO membership?*

**Nodia:** I do not think that we have lost anything in terms of the prospect of EU membership, because there had been no real prospects anyway, at least in the foreseeable future. There is a change with regards to prospects of NATO membership. The change occurred in 2008; I do not think that it was necessarily the result of the war, the decisions of the Bucharest summit were more important for that, but certainly the hope of NATO membership has been postponed.

I think that these two factors: the loss of momentum in the movement towards NATO membership and the reduced role of US have been partly compensated for by the increased role of the EU. Georgia-EU relations have significantly developed and intensified over the past couple of years. Now we have the Eastern Partnership as a new instrument of EU, which was an indirect result of the August War. Georgia has seen some progress with visa requirements, there are negotiations on the Association agreement, and we expect that there will be a start date for negotiations on a more in-depth, comprehensive free trade agreement. There has been a steady trend in terms of the increasing role of the EU. When we judge all this we should remember that the EU never does anything quickly. They always progress slowly. But in general I would say that this slow increase of the EU's role is a positive development for Georgia.

**CI:** *On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the Russian President in an interview with "Ekho Moskvi" said that the August War was a serious lesson for Armenia and Azerbaijan. But Azerbaijan is operating within the bounds of international law by improving its military capacity and continuing negotiations under the umbrella of Minsk Group, with the intention to liberate the occupied territories if the negotiations fail. Do you see any developments that could suggest war might be on the horizon?*

**Nodia:** A new war would be a disaster – certainly people in Georgia think it will be a disaster for both Armenia and Azerbaijan (as well as for Georgia). In Georgia nobody doubts that. But the fact is that at least the possibility of war has risen in the wake of the August War, and so in that sense I do not know what Mr. Medvedev means when he says that other countries have learned their lesson. What is the lesson they have learned? I assume that the "lesson" implied by Medvedev is that Russia must be respected. There is nothing new about the fact that Russia demands special kind of respect, but I do not think that the August War brought anything positive to other countries in the region.

**CI:** *Let's talk about Georgia-Azerbaijan relations. When foreigners visit Tbilisi, they can see SOCAR petrol stations, and evidence of Azerbaijani investments. In 1990s, Georgia and Azerbaijan became involved in a number of joint projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and now there is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. After the August War, some said that Azerbaijan had stayed neutral, but in reality Azerbaijan gave support to Tbilisi in its time of trouble. What do you see as objectives in improving bilateral Georgia-Azerbaijan relations?*

**Nodia:** Firstly, I agree that Georgia-Azerbaijan relations are very stable and positive. And I think both countries recognize that they need to

maintain a friendly and cooperative relationship. I do not think that Georgia is unhappy about Azerbaijan's behavior during the war. Theoretically, Azerbaijan was neutral but in reality, Georgia felt the support of Azerbaijan, especially through economic cooperation during the war, the related energy supplies and so on. This support was very important for Georgia in maintaining its internal functionality. So I think the war did not weaken Georgian-Azerbaijani relations. It was difficult to strengthen the relationship, because it was already strong; I could say that it reconfirmed that Georgian-Azerbaijani relations should continue. With regard to possibilities for improvement, I think there is a lot of potential in the human sphere. It is clear that we have well-developed economic relations, and lots of political goodwill, but we

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need to enhance interpersonal relations, through more cultural and academic exchanges, for instance. I think that beyond relations at political and economic levels, we need more human relations.

**CI:** *The last question is about Armenian-Georgian relations. The Georgian war had a negative impact on the Armenian economy. Russian-Georgian borders remain closed, but Armenia has opened up a passage allowing travel to Russia via Georgia. So how would you describe current Georgian-Armenian relations? And what about the foreign policies of the countries in the region? Azerbaijan is always described as having a balanced foreign policy and Armenia as having a "complementary" foreign policy, but what about Georgia?*

**Nodia:** First of all, with regard to relations with Armenia, I think that there is ground for some uneasiness, due to Armenia's reliance on its strategic partnership with Russia. This creates mistrust in Georgia. For instance, Georgia was unhappy that in the UN, Armenia voted against Georgia's resolutions on IDPs and refugees in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But on the other hand, I think both countries and both governments are very pragmatic about these strategic differences, and know how to maintain very good relations in practical terms.

I would say that one of the consequences of the war for Georgia's foreign policy is that it has become more pragmatic. Earlier, it was more ideologically driven, for instance, in terms of supporting color revolutions in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, or a failed revolution in Belarus, and so

on. Now Georgian foreign policy is more about “Realpolitik”. It has too many problems with Russia, and so it strives to eliminate problems with anybody else in the neighborhood. But at the same time, the government wants to combine this pragmatic sense of balance with a clear sense of general direction, and that is European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

*Colloquy conducted by Zaur Shiryev, 16 August 2011, Tbilisi, Georgia*