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Russian Influence on Georgian NGOs and Media

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Introduction

The conference held in May 2015, prior to the Riga Summit of the EU Eastern Partnership, with the participation of representatives of international media and related NGOs, discussed the ways of counteracting Russian propaganda. Representatives of all countries stressed the enhancement of Russia's "soft power", and suggested that Russia uses local media and NGOs as its primary weapon.

Georgia is no exception for that matter. Recently there has been significant increase of anti-western rhetoric in social networks, online media, various radio and TV programs. Such purposeful narrative facilitates popularization of Russian rhetoric. Meanwhile, the organizations depicting the West (the U.S. the EU) as Georgia's enemy, are distinguished with xenophobic, homophobic statements, and make emphasis on the restoration of Russian-Georgian "friendship", normalization of the relations, or Georgia's neutrality.

The present research discusses the NGOs and Media organizations which we believe are distinguished with such rhetoric. The two organizations especially active in this connecting are – **Eurasian Institute** and **Eurasian Choice**.

It's worth mentioning that the founders of these organizations are also in charge of other organizations.

For instance, the **Young Political Scientists' Club** founded by Eurasian Institute and **People's Movement for Russian-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation**. Partners of the institute are non-commercial legal entity **Historical Heritage**- founder of Georgian and the World (Geworld.ge) edition, information portal **Saqinform** and **Iverion**.

Founder of Eurasian Institute Gulbaat Rtskhiladze is also co-founder of **Caucasian Cooperation** together with former Public Defender Nana Devdariani. The latter in turn is founder of a number of organizations, including **Global Research Center** and **People's Orthodox Movement**.

Eurasian Choice is headed by Archil Chkoidze. Its co-founder is **Society of Erekle the Second**, also with markedly pro-Russian rhetoric. Chkoidze is most frequently cited by Russian propagandist media outlets. Eurasian Choice has its own internet television-**Patriot TV**.

The aforementioned organizations pursue their activity in two directions. If Eurasian Institute is mainly engaged in analytical activity, organization of conferences and seminars, Eurasian Choice, for that matter, carries out more proactive activity by holding various rallies and demonstrations.

The research revealed that the meetings organized by the given organization mainly involves the **same participants** being ultimately associated with either Eurasian Institute or Eurasian Choice.

None of these organizations have disclosed their source of financing on their websites. However, several Russian foundations have themselves included some of the organizations on the partners' list.

For instance, **International Eurasian Movement-organization of Alexander Dugin, ideologist of the Eurasian Union and aggressive Russian expansionist policy, suggests Eurasian Choice to be its partner in Georgia**¹.

An article of International Eurasian Movement published in July 2013 reads the following: *“Several NGOs have united around the popularization of the idea of Eurasian Union in Georgia. The NGOs have united under the Eurasian Union-Georgia coalition.*

International Eurasian Movement also names Society of Erekle the Second and Eurasian Institute as part of the main locomotive of the Eurasian movement in Georgia, as well as the Georgian Minister of Security in 2001-2004, **Valeri Khaburdzania**, founders of Society of Erekle the Second and Eurasian Choice: Archil Chkoidze and his spouse, Maia Khinchagashvili². Eurasian Institute conducts Russian language courses with the support of Russian state budget-backed **Russian World** organization.

¹<http://www.evrazia.info/article/4672>

²<http://www.evrazia.info/article/4672>

The Gorchakov Fund is yet another organization actively operating in Georgia, founded by order of former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. One of the members of its board of advisers is Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Gorchakov Fund has founded Russian-Georgian Public Center in Georgia, which was headed by historian Zaza Abashidze. Like Nana Devdariani, Abashidze was also a member of Kakha Kukava's Free Georgia Party during the 2012 parliamentary elections, and was appointed Head of the Georgian National Center of Manuscripts (formerly Institute of Manuscripts) in spring 2015.

Referring to open sources the present research discusses the activity of these and other organizations and the projects they have implemented in Georgia.

1. Eurasian Institute and Related Organizations

Eurasian Institute was founded in Georgia in 2009. Its owners stress in the report on their



Nana Devdariani, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze

activity that in 2008 Gulbaat Rtskhiladze managed internet forum Politforum - one of the Georgian editions directly accusing Georgian government of that period of initiating an open war with Russia. Politforum members state that the government disconnected the webpage's server.

The organization's report reads: "Such

actions on the part of the government, coupled with radically confrontational course adopted against Russia, has entailed the establishment of Eurasian Institute". The portal was later restored.

Founders of Eurasian Institute are **Gulbaat Rtskhiladze** and **Irakli Vekua**. Rtskhiladze is also a member of **Caucasian Cooperation** board. Former public defender Nana Devdariani is another member of Caucasian Cooperation. She was also Saburtalo district majoritarian MP from Kakha Kukava's Free Georgia in the 2012 parliamentary elections.

Gulbaat Rtskhiladze is director of the Eurasian Institute project-**People's Movement for Russian-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation**.

Eurasian Institute was joined by **Shota Apkhaidze** released under the status of political prisoner, and was appointed project manager of the organization. He's also a member of **Democratic League** and **Protect Georgia**.

The organization's adviser on military issues is **Koba Otanadze**, known to society as one of the accused for participation in the so-called Mukrovani mutiny.

Youth projects of the organizations is managed by **Irakli Kipiani**, known as an active supporter of Vladimir Putin and Russia.



Nana Devdariani and Kakha Kukava with voters

The main initial goal of Politforum portal, currently managed by Eurasian Institute, was practical assistance of the improvement of Russian-Georgian Relationship.

The apparent significant increase in the organization's activity followed Bidzina Ivanishvili coming into politics in 2011. Namely, the organization published an article called "Boris, you are right", in which expressed its hope that Ivanishvili wouldn't falter in the face of the "propagandist machine" pressure, especially when focusing on the necessity of restoration of friendly relations with Russia.

The organization report says that "the institute was making positive comments in Russian media regarding Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream, alongside preliminary preparation of positive background aimed at improvement of Russian-Georgian relations".

The organization's activity starts increasing from 2012, with frequent conduct of meetings and public discussions³

³http://frontnews.ge/old/?action=news_read&npid=14665&lang=geo



Irakli Kipiani. Dmitry Medvedev in the background.

In 2013 Eurasian Institute founded Young Political Scientists' Club.

In 2014 representatives of the institute started attending meetings in Russia at the Institute of CIS Countries, Institute of Forecasting and Settlement of Political Conflicts, Russian Strategic Studies Institute(RISS) under the Administration of Russian President and representing a leading political science center⁴.

On July 2014 Eurasian Institute and Russian RISS held a round table at the Ambassador Hotel in Tbilisi, dedicated to the “Islamic Ideology and Security Issues of Caucasus Region” topic⁵.

The cooperation continued further members of the Eurasian Institute participated in the Young Political Scientists

Forum⁶ conducted by RISS in Moscow.

Financing sources of the organization haven't been openly declared. Information on their income isn't found on the institute's webpage. Therefore, we may assume that financing, within the framework of the joint project, comes from the aforementioned Russian partner institutions.

⁴<http://geurasia.org/geo/1518/shexvedrebi-politologiur-elitastan-moskovshi.html>

⁵<http://geurasia.org/geo/1534/islamizmi-da-kavkasiis-usafrtxoeba---mrgvali-magida.html>

⁶<http://geurasia.org/geo/1556/axalgazrda-politologta-moskovuri-forumi.html>

In addition, in one of the comment Gulbaat Rtskhiladze himself says that veterans of Telavi and Shida Kartli village of Dirbi **were handed 45 GEL free vouchers, with the aid of Nizhpharm company, directed by his friend Alexandre Papukashvili.**

Nizhpharm is representative of Russian concern- Nizhny Novgorod Chemical-Pharmaceutical Plant in Georgia. The company is engaged in the important of medicines in Georgia.

1.1. Projects of Eurasian Institute

People’ s Movement for Russian Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation

In 2013 Eurasian Institute launched “**People’s Movement for Russian-Georgia Dialogue and Cooperation**” project(georus.org). The project description reads that “People’s Movement for Russian-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation has been established as a response of the Georgian people to those political forces, both within or outside the country, that artificially create tension and continue today to strain relations between Russia and Georgia”.

Members of the movement’s board are: **Grigol Rukhadze** - chief editor of the Sami Saunje(Three Treasures) magazine, **Gvantsa Koplataдзе** - professor, **Zaur Mchedlishvili** - turkologist, ex Georgian consul in the city of Trabzon, **Hamlet Chipashvili** - political scientist, **Givi Vanishvili** - retired Lt.Colonel, **Levan Okromchedlidze** - historian, **Nana Tselashvili-Ermakova** - journalist, **Ioseb Archvadze** - doctor of economic sciences, **Ioseb Koridze** - lawyer, legal specialist.

1288 persons have already jointed the movement. The list is uploaded on the project’s webpage. Photos of every one of them comes with a note that reads “he/she support equal dialogue between Russian and Georgia, as well as an adequate cooperation in the political, economic, scientific, cultural-religious, and humanitarian sphere”.

May 9 initiative

Eurasian Institute also began working with pupils. The project named “why May 9 is the victory day for Georgia” involves refugees from the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone. The project aims at provision of “objective information” on World War II.

According to information on the movement’s webpage, on May 2, 2015 meeting of the pupils with



Irakli Kipiani with the project participant pupils at K.Leselidze monument, 2015

WWII veterans was organized within the initiative, on youths were told about the importance of May 9. In the conversation with the pupils the veterans stressed that “Georgia was saved from a dismal destiny due to the unity of the peoples of the Soviet Union, their heroism, and the wisdom of those people’s leader, and rightful pride of Georgia, Josheph Stalin”.

The children in turn read their essays dedicated to the Day of May 9.

1.2. Partners of Eurasian Institute

Partners of Eurasian Institute are Georgian editions: Georgia and the World, Saqinform, Iverioni, Gia Boklomi (Open Lock), Scientific Society of Caucasiologists(SSC), and Lev Gumilev Center. Banners of these organizations are placed in the “Partners” section of the Eurasian Institutes webpage.

Learning the activity of any organization's or movement's partners can give certain idea about that organization or movement itself. The information below will have brief review of the institute's partners, which will help our readers assess its activity.

1.2.1. Historical Heritage

Non-commercial legal entity Historical Heritage, publisher of Geworld.ge (Georgian and the World) and Saqinform famed for their anti-western rhetoric, was founded in Tbilisi in 2009. Its founder and



From left to right: Geworld's Editor Irakli Todua and Tarial Gagnidze at the presentation of "Unknown Putin", 2013

head is Tariel (Taras) Gagnidze.

Statement made in the process of the organization's foundation stressed that information regarding Russia and Georgia is being falsified, and the organization will help young generation to learn about their country's real past. For

that purpose it will publish state historical acts, contemporary recollections, biographic materials, etc. The organization aims at the restoration of friendship between Russian and Georgian nations.

It should be noted that the initiative of the foundation of Historical Heritage received a response from then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, in which he stressed that "the initiative will aid reinforcement of mutual respect between Russian and Georgia people".

Political scientist Alexandre Chachia has been a member of the Public Council of Geworld.ge’s founder **Historical Heritage** from the day of its foundation. In 2008 he was conferred an order by the Russian President for “his great contribution in the sphere of friendship and cooperation with the Russian Federation¹”

Georgian citizen Alexandre Chachia is also the head of the Public Council of the Georgian-based **Center for Globalization**, as well as the head of **Samegrelo** organization and **the Georgian Association of Lomonosov Moscow State University Graduates**.



Sergey Bagapsh and Alexandre Chachia

Alexandre Chachia is mentioned in media as a business friend of Igor Giorgadze. Chachia was also a member of the **Unity Party** functioning in Georgia, which leader was former First Secretary of the Georgian SSR Communist Party Central Committee **Jumber Patiashvili**.

It’s also interesting to review projects carried out under the auspices of the aforementioned organization.

On July 9, 2010 a round table was held at RIA-Novosti Moscow office dedicated to the subject of “human rights in Georgia”, followed by the presentation of the Russian-language edition of “the Zone of Lawlessness”, a documentary collection prepared by **Historical Heritage** reflecting human right violations in Georgia. The collection was also printed in Georgian and English languages. Then followed 10 editions put together under a common title “the Time of Salvation”

Historical Heritage published “**Unknown Putin**” book in 2013. At the book’s presentation Taras Gagnidze stated that information regarding Vladimir Putin and Russian policy available in Georgia is very scarce, hence their decision to make a collection containing information on the personality of Vladimir Putin unknown to the Georgian society⁷.

The presentation was also attended by then Deputy Foreign Minister David Jalagania.



As regards the recent activity of the organization, on April 28, 2015 “Internation Forum of Victors”, dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, was conducted in Russia under the “Great Victory Achieved through Unity” slogan.

The forume **organized by Historical Heritage** was attended by 11 person group from Georgia, which included WWII vetarans, head of **Young Political Scientists’ Club Irakli Ubilava** and head of the board **Alexandre Chachia**.

Among the guests were also the Russian Federation President’s Special Envoy for International Cultural Cooperation Mikheil Shvidkoi, Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, President of Eurasian Studies Institute Valery Torsunov.

⁷http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16233:2013-10-10-07-41-42&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#ixzz3bSqkfnGo

Historical Heritage conducts conferences on which it mainly invites persons known for their pro-Russian and anti-western stances. For instance, on November 14, 2014 they held a conference “Kiev’s Maidan: Lessons for South Caucasus Countries”. Among the invitees were **Elizbar Javelidze, Valery Kvaratskhelia, Nana Devdariani, Arno Khidirbegishvili, Hamlet Chipashvili, Yuri Mechitov. As well as Victor Tsaava-Center for Globalization; Vano Tsiklauri- Left Powers Union; Irakli Ubilava- Center for Globalization; Grigol Oniani-“Stalin” society; Zviad Iremandze-Iverielebi anti-globalist center; Gulbaat Rtskhiladze- Eurasian Institute⁸; Tamar Kiknadze-professor at Caucasus International University, head of International Relations Department.**

At the end of the conference the participants adopted a resolution in which they stressed:

“The West absolutely ignores the interests of Georgian and Georgian people, as has been clearly seen during the last 25 years. But the West needs Georgia’s territory for the deployment of NATO bases and air defense systems, to carry out subversions in Russia’s south, and as a corridor for accessing the Caspian Sea and its energy resources.

Saakashvili tried to act even more American as Americans themselves, but instead scared them away with his mental disbalance; but he was replaced by much calmer persons. Yet there are signs that the circumstances may soon entail a situation in which Americans might need exactly a mentally abnormal person in Georgia. Therefore, the chance of another Rose Revolution in Georgia cannot be excluded.

Our countries are in danger! Any large-scale destabilization may result in a bloody conflict spreading over the whole region! Another “revolutions” pose a threat to the very existence of our states and nations! People, be careful!”⁹

⁸<http://bit.ly/1GvreoO>

⁹http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20593:-2014-23-lbetsys-hotelr&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#ixzz3aWhW30j9

1.2.1.1. Georgia and the World (Geworld.ge)

Georgia and the World has been coming out as a newspaper since 2009. It has a three-language website “Geworld.ge”, updated on a daily basis. The website accommodates banners of several organizations, including- **Center for Global Studies, Historical Heritage, Medianews and Bakur Svanidze’s Internet Television**. The fact that Geworld.ge’s banner is also placed on these organizations’ websites suggests all the aforementioned organizations being partners of Geworld.ge

According to the Anti-Western Propaganda research¹⁰ of the Media Development Foundation NGO, Geworld.ge is among the editions *most frequently circulating anti-western sentiments*. Geworld.ge is distinguished with homophobic and xenophobic materials¹¹. It actively provides coverage of the Eurasian Institute members’ activity, invites them for commenting on various subjects and gives the floor for the dissemination of their viewpoints.

Chief-editor of the edition is Irakli Todua, also a member of the **Journalists Creative Union of Georgia’s** board. The same creative union in turn embraces the editors of the Asaval-Dasavali, the Georgian Times, TV company New Georgia, etc.



Gulbaat Tskhiladze, Arno Khidirbegashvili

1.2.1.2. Saqinform

Domains of Geworld and Saqinform are both registered to head of Historical Heritage Taras Gagnidze. Saqinform information agency was an information agency of the Georgian SSR Council of Ministers, and after the gain of independence went under the President’s Administration Press-Service, and

¹⁰<http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/Antidasavluri-GEO-web.pdf>

¹¹<http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/Antidasavluri-GEO-web.pdf>

ceased functioning in 2004. In 2010 an information agency was established under the same name by several Journalists. Head of owner of the edition is **Arno Khidirbegashvili**.

In terms of content, Saqinform follows the line Geworld.ge - through circulating homophobic and xenophobic statements, anti-Western sentiments prevailing in their materials. The two editions are in fact conveying the same messages¹², which are also expressed by the editor, Arno Khidirbegashvili, himself. He often evaluates the ongoing events both on the websites of Saqinform and Geworld.ge and



Georgian PM Irakli Garibashvili and Arno Khidirbegashvili, 2015

his own - www.arnoxidi.com. The given webpages are bilingual-with material published in both Georgian and Russian.

Arno Khidirbegashvili's viewpoints are published on Russian information agency www.iarex.ru, which is a partner of Saqinform. Its banner is placed on the Saqinform's webpage and vice versa. The content of Rex is also distinguished with anti-Western sentiments.

Editor of Rex is Modest Kolerov, while also the founder and editor of **Regnum.ru** information agency from 2002. Kolerov held the post of the Regional and Cultural Relations Department of Russia's Presidential Administration until 2007. He's the main Russian ideologist in relations with CIS countries. His duties included prevention of "Colored Revolutions", after the change of government in Ukraine and Georgia through peaceful protest rallies¹³

Saqinform's partner Kolerov is banned entry on the Georgian territory. He was declared persona non-grata by Estonia and Latvia. The latter imposed a sanction upon him in 2012 and stressed that Kolerov had been pursuing a secret activity against the Latvia's security, as well as territorial integrity and economic security.

¹²<http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/Antidasavluri-GEO-web.pdf>

¹³<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=16419>

The Kommersant dedicated the following lines to Kolerov's dismissal from the Presidential Administration of Russia: "He has undertaken vigorous activity in Post-Soviet states, namely in Georgia, Transnistria and Estonia, yet that hasn't yielded the improvement of their relations with Russia.

Apart from Georgia, Rex also has partner media outlets in other countries. Those include IA REX in Kazakhstan, information portal www.imperya.by in Belarus, and military-political www.belvpo.com, as well as new federal initiative www.nsi-press.ru, online political television www.kreml.tv and International Russia (www.evrazsojuz.ru) .



Obieqtivi.net is another Saqinform partner. Its programs are transmitted both through television and radio.

Media Union-Obieqtivi was officially registered in 2010. The organization was headed by Irma Inashvili, who after leaving for politics (the party joined the Patriot Alliance) also left Obieqtivi officially.

The channel has several tens of presenters which select the topics and format at their own discretion. **Obieqtivi** appears in various types of monitoring reports as media outlet spreading hate speech, homophobic and xenophobic statements¹⁴

¹⁴http://www.osgf.ge/files/2013/publikaciebi%202013/Hate_Speech.pdf

1.2.3. News Agency Iverioni

Iverioni was found in the fall 2012, formerly known as Iveron agency it was financed a Russian-based Georgian businessman Mindia Gulua. Like in the case of Iverioni, Iveron agency was also headed by Zaur Nachkebia.

Director, founder and 50% owner of Iverioni information agency is **Zaur Nachkebia**, the rest 50% is owned by **Malkhaz Oniani**. Nachkebia is also 90% owner of Inovation publishing house and founder of charitable organization Iveron.

On October 29, 2012 Iverioni published an editorial letter on its website explaining the reasons behind Iveron's changing of its name and creation of a new agency as Iverion.



According to the letter, Iveron was associated with Mindia Gulua, which was making problems to them. For that reason they decided to establish Iveron's twin information-analytical agency Iverioni.

Nachkebia often appeared on Geworld.ge and gives assessment of various events. For instance in a material published in 2013-“Careful, We’re Playing with Fire” Nachkebia delivers an anti-Turkish narrative and says that the recent period has seen a large-scale accession of local youth in various organizations funded by Turkish capital, the purpose of which is incitement of religious fundamentalism. However, he doesn’t specify which organizations carry the given purpose, and who the funders are.

He also published a post –“Imperial Russia or LGBT bound West?!” which reads:

“We must define what’s more important to us: flirting with the West or preservation of our own historical values and identity?!”

I support balanced relations with Russia (and with others of course). Though it's true that the current government failed in making efficient steps in that direction, however, it's not over yet..."

Isari.ge is a partner webpage of Geworld.ge (Georgian and the World) and Iverioni, disseminating roughly the same kind of content as the two. Isari.ge reports that their materials are prepared by **Valery Kvaratskhelia, Vakhtang Kharchilava, Aleko Aslanishvili, Ruslan Rusia, Guram Gogishvili, Spartak Kobulia, Irina Jorbenadze, Belgium-based political scientist Omar Khakhashvili, Hamlet Chipashvili,** and others.

The webpage was created in 2013. Its domain-isari.ge is **registered to Hamlet Chipashvili**, and mainly hosts articles of anti-Western content.

Meanwhile, Hamlet Chipashvili himself, as a political scientist, evaluates various events together with Eurasian Institute, Saqinform, Reporter, Geworld.ge and Iverioni.

For instance, a scrap from his article suggesting why we shouldn't strive for the West:



Hamlet Chipashvili

“An American would never sing “Suliko”, as he hasn't overcome centuries long hardships with Georgians, never fought against fascism, wasn't rebuilding destroyed homeland, or experienced starvation, cold and poverty side by side with them.

We have little appreciation of our immediate neighbors and try to find

*an ally overseas, and yet we don't want to know that the new "ally" has a mindset totally different from ours*¹⁵.

Hamlet Chipashvili assessed the Riga summit conducted by the EU on May 22, 2015 the very same day, published an article on Isari.ge in which he stressed:

*A government which puts so much effort to achieve visa-free regime with the EU, is an enemy of its own country just like the EU itself... A government which aids escape is a traitor. And the European Union, the author of the Western Partnership program and the offerer of visa-free regime for the countries involved in it, is a guileful robber with far-reaching designs for the country's collapse and destruction, and one that will make you eternally grateful for the noble gesture*¹⁶.

Apart from distribution of materials of Geworld.ge, Saqinform and Eurasian Union, isari.ge also publishes the digest of Russian press. That includes propagandist editions such as russian.rt.com, regnum.ru, TVC.ru. svpressa.ru, inosmi.ru, vz.ru, iran.ru, fondsk.ru, rosbalt.ru

1.2.4. Lev Gumilev Center

One of the partners of Eurasian Institute is **Russian organization Lev Gumilev Center**, founded by the Eurasian Center in Moscow in 2011. The Center envisions settlement of ethno-conflicts through popularization of the idea of "Eurasionism".

Head of the Gumilov Center is **Pavel Zarifulin**, head of the International Eurasian Movement (headed by Alexander Dugin) until 2009.

¹⁵http://www.gruzinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14280:2013-04-26-09-36-56&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#ixzz3arZxFBpe

¹⁶http://isari.ge/RIGA_Sammit_21_05_15.php#ixzz3arhV8G98

Gumilov Foundation has organized several meetings in Georgia. The last visit of the center's representatives, including Pavel Zarifulin, in Georgia was in **May 2015**, when they held a joint seminar with the Eurasian Institute, and discussed the issue of Georgia's accession to the Eurasian Union¹⁷.



КАКХА Kukava and Vladimir Khomeriki at the Gumilov Foundation organized meeting on Georgia's outlook for accessing the Eurasian

As in the case with the aforementioned organizations, Gumilov Center also hasn't declared its source of financing.

1.2.5. Scientific Society of Caucasiologists



Alexander Krilov

Scientific Society of Caucasiologists (SSC) is a partner of the Eurasian Institute. Decision on its foundation was made in October 2010, at the international conference of Caucasiologists, in the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia. Later it was registered as an NGO by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation.

The organization is headed by doctor of historical sciences **Alexander Krilov**. He defended his thesis on

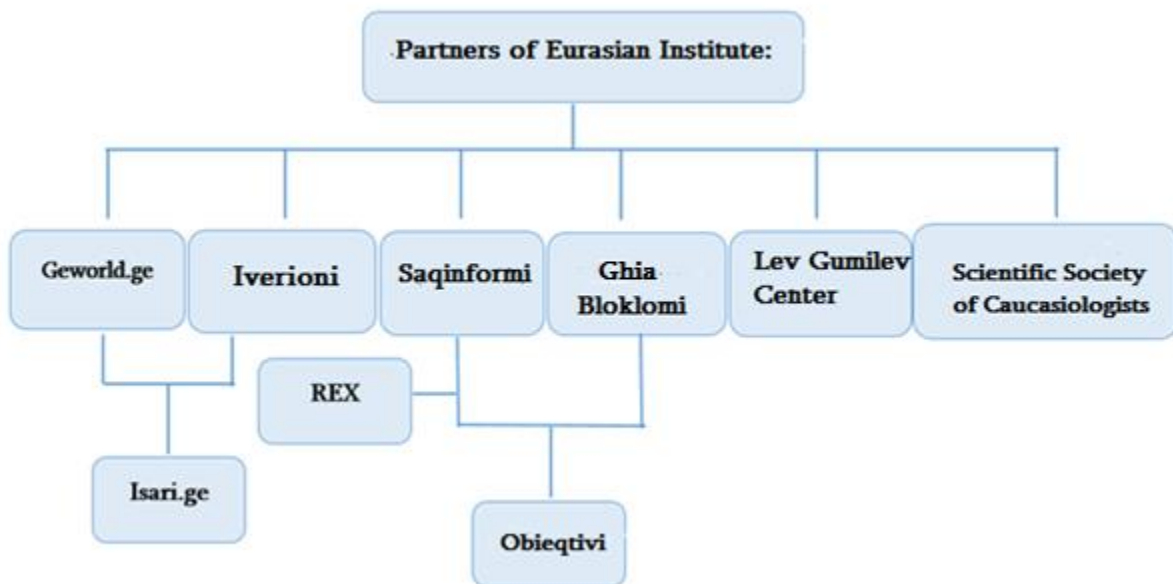
¹⁷<http://www.fmabkhazia.com/news/4443-tbilisshi-evraziis-kavshirthan-sakharthvelos-integrirebis-seminari-gaimartha.html>

the subject of “Abkhazia’s religion and customs”. Krilov worked at various Russian universities. From 2005 he’s a researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations¹⁸.

According to SSC, their goal is to study the Caucasus and its adjacent regions, sharing of experience between Caucasiologist scientists, organization of seminars, conferences and trainings, publication of educational literature, and facilitation of the unity of people living on the territory of the Russian Federation and CIS countries. The organization also has representatives in occupied Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. With the support of the Russian President and Russian NGO “Knowledge” SSC is implementing the “Russian ethno-cultural diversity as a factor in the formation process of civil identity” project.

The organization holds round-tables and seminar-conferences in Russia and within the Eurasian Union context. For instance, in September 2014 SSC held a round-table discussing the “Russian-Abkhazian relations: contours of new scale of integration” topic.

Partners of the organization in Georgia are Society of Erekle the Second and Eurasian Union. Banners of both are placed in the Partners section of SSC website.



¹⁸http://apsnyteka.org/955-krylov_a_izbrannye_stati.html#1

1.2. Organizations associated with Eurasian Institute

1.2.1. Young Political Scientists' Club



Irakli Ubilava, Giorgi Mdivani and Ramaz Bechvaia

Young Political Scientists' Club was founded in the beginning of 2013, by the initiative of Eurasian Institute. The organization is headed by **Irakli Ubilava**. Its board also includes member of Eurasian Institute **Irakli Kipiani**, as well as **Giorgi Mdivani**, **Ramaz Bechvaia**, **Giorgi Chikviladze**, **Vlomidir Tsomaia**.

The members are ardently engaged in anti-Western discourse. For instance, in their speeches they bring forth the idea that the U.S and the EU aim at undermining the nationality and national traditions in Georgia. Several months after the foundation, representatives of the organization assessed the violence following the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia held on May 17, 2013, and called it a provocation from the West¹⁹

It's noteworthy that head of the organization **Irakli Ubilava** says in an interview that the U.S. and the EU aim at dissolution of traditional social institutions.

"In order to achieve dissolution-disruption-dissociation of a nation's historical-cultural unity, it is necessary to promote and finance such organizations and leaders that will facilitate destruction of their nation's cultural basis, the one upon which the culture of a certain nation stands²⁰".

¹⁹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Acl0yrSaNM>

²⁰<http://www.geworld.net/View.php?ArtId=5714&lang=ge&Title=miSel+obama+qarTvel+baptistebs+lobirebs>

1.2.2. Center for Globalization

Irakli Ubilava is also one of the founders and head of **the Center for Globalization**. He registered the organization in 2013. The other founders are **Victor Tsaava, Zviad Mirgatia, Zaur Gakharia**.

Head of the Center for Globalization Issues board is **Alexandre Chachia** which, as suggested above, is a person associated with the Kremlin. The Center conducts various types of meetings, with the participation of **Tariel Gagnidze, Valeri Kvaratskhelia, Nana Devdariani** and others, that discuss events taking place in the world.

1.2.3. Caucasian Cooperation



Irakli Ubilava, Tariel Gagnidze and Nikolai Silaev

Founder of the Eurasian Institute **Gulbaat Rtskhiladze** together with former public defender Nana Devdariani founded **the Caucasian Cooperation** organization in 2011. There was also an organization functioning under the same name in Moscow. According to Saqinform, *the Georgian organization is legally separated from the Russian, but maintains close relations with it.*

As per Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, *the goal of the organization is restoration of the scientific relations ones existing in the Georgia-Russian scientific and*

expert circles, in spite of the current political tensions²¹.

²¹http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5747:--q-----q&catid=77:politika&Itemid=419#ixzz3atA6LMxF

From the day of its foundation up until the present the organization has conducted several conferences, including “Great Victory Achieved through Unity: Caucasus in the Years of the Great Patriotic War” and “Demographic Issues Existing in Georgia”.

The Russian-Georgian organization has a joint webpage-“**Russia-Georgia: Expert Dialogue**” georgiamonitor.ge, where information is published only in Russian language.

Head of the Russian “Caucasian Cooperation” is **Nikolai Salaev**- senior researcher at the Center for Caucasus Issues and Regional Security of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) of the MFA of Russia.

In 2012 Nikolai Silaev published the “Georgia after the 2012 Elections and Prospects for Russo-Georgian Relations” research at MGIMO, in which he stressed that reconciliation between Russian and Georgia is the only option. One of his conclusions suggested that the opportunity of receiving education in Russia must again become available for Georgian students, “as young people from Georgian often go to Europe or the U.S. for that purpose, and do not have the Russian alternative”.

According to the same research, “restoration of socio-economic ties between Russia and Georgia, as a means for the settlement of relations, may be expressed through establishment of a common space for the transfer of people, commodities,

capital and services between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with the direct participation of Russia as the main structural part of the given space”.

In February 2013, Georgian delegation visited Northern Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan by the initiative of **Caucasus Cooperation**. The delegation was comprised of **Shota Apkhaidze (Eurasian**



Shota Apkhaidze, May 9, 2015

Institute), Shalva Gvimradze(Center for Strategic Studies), Giorgi Kinashvili(Caucasian House), and expert in economic issues Demur Giorgkheldze. It was this very meeting at which Shota Apkhaidze stated that Saakashvili committed genocide of Ossetian people in 2008²².

One of the founders of the Caucasian Cooperation **Nana Devdariani** is also the founder of the **Center for Global Studies, People's Orthodox Movement** and **People's Legal Foundation**.

2. Global Research Center

In 2013, when **Irakli Ubilava** founded **Research Center for Globalization**, another organization carrying similar name- **Global Research Center** was established. The organization is yet another partner of Geworld.ge. The founders are **Ioseb Archvadze, Maia Chubineishvili** and **Nana Devdariani**. Nana Devdariani is also head of the center. The goal of the organization is “promotion of expert dialogue in Georgian and abroad”.

Since the day of its founding the organization has published several researches and has conducted a number of conferences and seminars. The organization's researches mainly carry anti-Western sentiments, and are primarily based upon the viewpoints or analysis of Eurasian Institute's members. The material “NATO-Myths and Reality”, the North Atlantic Alliance is depicted in a negative context:

“If we look at the lukewarm positions of the countries with “friendly” attitude towards us, we will have an impression that the West only needs our membership for its own interests. This implies “cheap” soldiers for various NATO operations, and some other things. But Russia doesn't need NATO at its southern borders.

NATO could have been a good counterbalance in the dialogue with Russia to facilitate recovery from our “illness”, but the case of Kosovo has shown that territorial integrity is not the red line

²² <http://www.ghn.ge/com/news/view/84027>

which the West cannot cross. Therefore, the issue of neutrality is interesting provided that Georgia's territorial integrity will be restored through negotiations with Russia²³.

The organization held its last conference on security issues on November 14, 2014. It's interesting that the main participants of the organization's events are organizations, experts and researchers spreading nihilistic sentiments regarding the issues of intergration with the West in the society, and often cultivating the pro-Russian ones.

For instance, meeting held by Global Research Center on March 14 discussed the Ukrainian development. The conference was



Nana Devdariani, discussion of Ukrainian developments

attended by **Irakli Ubilava, Victor Tsaava, Zviad Mirgatia, Nana Devdariani, Valery Kvaratskhelia(For Neutral Georgia Party), Bondo Mdzinarashvili(media union-Obieqtivi).**

The conference was covered by Geworld.ge²⁴ and [Saqinform](http://Saqinform.ge)²⁵

3. People's Orthodox Movement

Non-commercial legal entity People's Orthodox Movement was founded in 2010. Along with Nana Devdariani its founders are also **Rati Maisuradze, Giorgi Bagaturia, Merab Lomsadze and Malkhaz Gulashvili, publisher of the Georgian Times newspaper.**

²³http://globalresearch.ge/research/our_research/georgia-nato-myths.html

²⁴<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=5743&lang=ge>

²⁵http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5747:--q-----q&catid=77:politika&Itemid=419#ixzz3atA6LMxF

According to the organization's statute, its goal is to facilitate building of a state based on the Orthodox values, preservation of Georgian identity and development-maintenance of traditional Christian way of life, as well as the popularization of **the idea of monarchy as a form of Georgian state structure**, and implementation of mutual projects of the Georgian Patriarchy.

The name People's Orthodox Movement became recognizable after May 7, 2010, when its members criticized Erekle Deisadze's book "the Secret Bullshit". Some of the movement members were detained by the police due to the physical confrontation that had taken place at TV Kavkasia's talk-show dedicated to the given topic. One of the participants of the scuffle was Malkhaz Gulashvili, which took to Russia through Tskhinvali after the incident.



Gulashvili was later detained by the police at the Georgian-Azerbaijani border for the incident at Kavkasia TV and illegal border crossing. He was paroled a year after from the correctional facility.

4. TV Company DRO

In November 2014 Malkhaz Gulashvili became the owner of the TV Company. He got 25% of the broadcasting company, which represented the Quality Channel, as a gift from Avtandil Sologashvili. Quality Channel was founded in 2012 and was headed by technical director of Apkhazetis Khma (Voice of Abkhazia) **Gia Asatiani**. He also owns 26% of the company. In 2014, after Malkhaz Gulashvili's appearance among the founders, the company was renamed **DRO**.



Malkhaz Gulashvili, Valery Khaburdzania

The address of Malkhaz Gulashvili in which he speaks about the TV Company and the planned programs, was published by Geworld.ge. In his address Gulashvili stressed –*“Shorty after we had managed to thoroughly go on air, our partners and sponsors of various new*

programs started including successful companies such as: Aversi, Liberty Bank, Caucasus Business Group, SOCAR, Global TV, PSP, Tegetamotors, Tetris construction company, Talizi clinic, Salkhino, School of Welders, etc”.

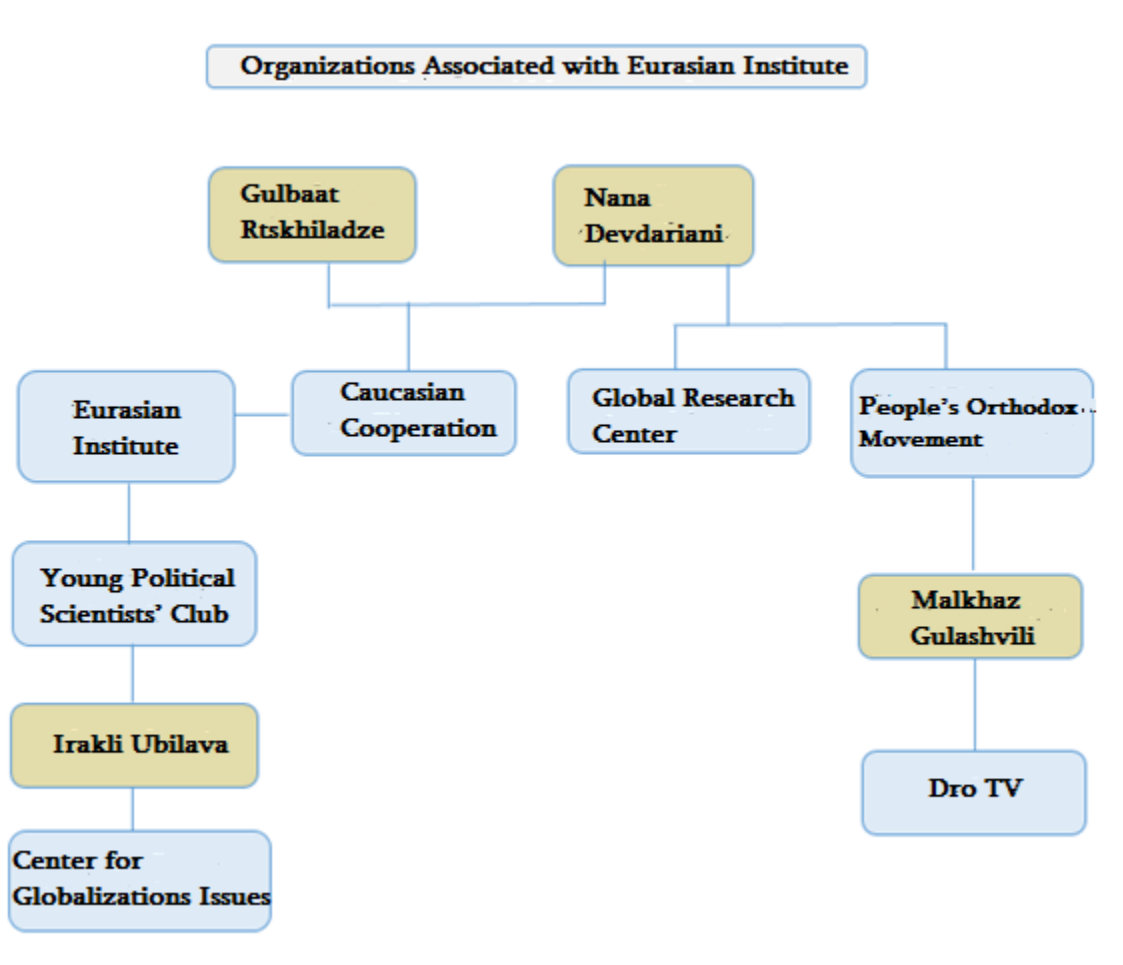
According to Malkhaz Gulashvili, TV company Dro is focused on the popularization of currently topical and not so much personalities in Georgian media space, and aims at bringing forth new faces which have stuck in the society’s memory with their principaled and unwavering positions.

Today the TV company airs several programs, which include: **Language, Homeland, Faith**-hosted by **David Giorgobiani**, which was an active campaigner against the new ID cards. In an interview with Iverioni he stressed²⁶-*“those who will not resist the adoption of the new IDs, will not offer much resistance to RFID chip implantation as well. When the majoriy will have chips implanted, that will be the time for the Antichrist to arrive, that will not find it difficult to play the God’s role.* Malkhaz Gulashvili’s spouse **Nana Gagua**, editor of information agency-**Interpressnews Irakli Managadze**, and former Alia journalist **Eka Sekhniashvili** are hosting the “Timely Dialogue” program. Malkhaz Gulashvili himself is presenter of the Politics Time and Business Time programs.

²⁶<http://iverioni.com.ge/print:page,1,5292-davith-giorgobiani-roca-umravlesoba-daichipeba-mashin-mova-antigriste-da-aghar-gautcirdeba-ghmerthis-rolis-thamashi.html>

Host of 'Solidarity Time' is Tato Laskhishvili, who's also head of the Georgian bureau of Russian propagandist channel Sputnik.

TV company Dro is transmitted through both the cable network and satellite. As per information of the Georgian National Communications Commission(GNCC), the income of Quality Channel in 2014 was only 6750 GEL, whereas since the channel had started broadcasting under the Dro name, its income totaled 14 206 GEL in just the first quarter of 2015, which significantly exceeds the total income from the previous year.



5. Eurasian Choice

Eurasian Choice NGO was founded on May 30, 2013 by editor of the Georgian subsidiary of Russian TV channel MIR Boris Manzhukov, along with Archil Chkoidze and Maia Khinchagashvili, all three of them Georgian citizens.

According to statute, the goal of the organization is implementation of cultural, educational, scientific and social projects in the Eurasian space, as well as pursuing various activities in the children's and youth sphere, organization of educational and civil activities(meetings, round-tables, discussions, conferenes, rallies, etc) and facilitation of the involvement of local society.



MIR Georgian Bureau managers Boris Manzhukov and Badri Nachkebia, 2012

Eurasian Chose states “it will aid the elevation of the nation’s spiritual and national self-awareness, as well as popularization of the history of the Georgian people and development of other national traditions”. One of the goals of the organization intends various types of charitable activity, publication of museum and educational newspaper-magazines, translation and publication of foreign scientific-

practical-educational literature, and deepening of various types of relations with the neighboring countries.



Archil Chkoidze and Alexander Dugin

Eurasian Choice's statute suggests that the organization is pursuing supporting type commercial activity, which serves its purposes without changing its nature as a non-commercial legal entity.

As its source of funding the Eurasian Choice names grants, donations,

membership fees, funds received from various charitable events and economic activities. Despite that, the organization hasn't specified the funding sources anywhere.

Founder of the organization Archil Chkoidze often appears in media as an active supporter of Georgia's of pro-Russian foreign policy.

Archiel Chkoidze doesn't conceal his business and private relations with such ideologists of the government of the Russian Federation as Alexander Dugin.

Yet another evidence of relations between Archil Chkoidze and founder of Dugin's Foundation Alexander Dugin, is a correspondence on Choidze's Facebook page from March 2014, in which Dugin had appraised Chkoidze for an anti-NATO campaign: "Eurasian hero of Georgia-Archil Chkoidze, in combat against the Alliance, bravo Archil! Eurasian in the first place!"

Leader of Eurasian Choice Archil Chkoidze responded to Dugin’s status and thanked him for the worm words: *“Dear Alexander Gelyevich, thank you for your warm words. By virtue of your precious work and lectures I have understood the meaning of the Eurasian Union for Georgia. I’m sure that my fellow citizens will understand that too. Your support is invaluable for us, especially considering the difficult background which the former President and his team had inherited us. I thank you ones again”*.

In August 2014 Archil Chkoidze reported to online edition Netgazeti that he was at the meeting with representatives of the Russian political elite, Vladimir Zhirinovski and Genady Ziuganov in Moscow, and said that “calling Russia an occupant is betrayal”. ²⁷Archil Chkoidze has posted on his Facebook page photos of awards received from Genady Ziuganov and Vlamidir Zhirinovski.

In April 2014, at the press-conference held in Tbilisi Chkoidze stated that a referendum must be conducted in Georgia “that will reveal whether it’s Europe or Russia that the people prefer”.



Awards of Archil Chkoidze from Genady Ziuganov and Vladimir Zhirinovski

²⁷https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JldER_XmBkc

“I’ve had meetings at Moscow State University (MSU) with political scientists very closely associated with the Kremlin, Alexander Dugin one of them. Their positions with respect to Georgia have also changed dramatically. If 3-4 years ago they weren’t even considering the option of withdrawing their recognition of Abkhazia and Samachablo, today in behind-the-scenes talks they say that in case Georgia changes its course and resumes strategic cooperation with Russia, then it will definitely have Russia’s support in the resolution of these conflicts”, - Archil Chkoidze stated²⁸

Leader of the Eurasian Choice is frequently cited by Russian media outlets, which regularly offer their users his opinion on issues related to the Russian-Georgian relations.

For instance, in December 2014 Russian agency regnum.ru published²⁹ short news titled: “Archil



Chkoidze Saw Good Sign in Vladimir Putin’s Words”.

Арчил Чкоидзе увидел в словах Владимира Путина хороший знак



“Speaking about Russian foreign military bases Putin stated that Russia had only two bases for that matter-in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. He altogether didn’t mention Abkhazia and Samachablo as separate states, which indicates to Putin’s good tone in relation to Georgia. By not mentioning the given states, Putin sort of offered Georgia a chance to continue working in that direction”,- Chkoidze stated

In addition, in an interview with RussiaPost Chkoidze stated³⁰ that it’s was the West that had occupied Georgia.

²⁸<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/30646/>

²⁹<http://www.russiapost.su/archives/7965>

³⁰<http://www.russiapost.su/archives/7965>

5.1. Organizations Founded by the Members of Eurasian Choice

5.1.1. Society of Erekle the Second

Prior to the foundation of Eurasian Choice Archil Chkoidze together with Ramaz Kiparodze, Solomon Khodeli and Manana Turashvili founded Society of Erekle the Second Organization. Archil Chkoidze has been the head of Society of Erekle the Second since 2008.

According to the statute, the goals of Society of Erekle the Second include promotion of cultural-educational relations between Georgian and its neighboring countries, cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations both inside and outside the country, various charitable activities, organization of conferences and seminars.

The statute also prescribes “spreading of the ideas of Society of Erekle the Second through the printed and other types of media as yet another objective of the organization”.

Like in the case with other anti-Western organizations, Society of Erekle the Second also tries to mobilize its like minded persons around the so-called religious, namely Orthodox ideas. The Society was one of the organizers of the homophobic rally held at the EU Embassy on May 17, 2015. In the announcement of the rally the organization wrote:

“Let us protect our religion, sacred things, and honor our ancestors’ blood shed in the battle against the unfaithful. Let us not be lions only on Facebook pages and at dinner table, let us cry out “No to gay Europe”, long live united, strong and Orthodox Georgia!”

The Society also uses citations of the clergy for the purpose of disseminating anti-Western sentiments.

For instance, on its official Facebook page the organization has published the following citation of the Father Superior of Avchala St. Ketevan the Martyr Church Giorgi Razmadze: “I ask each representative of the government: who your fear more, the God or the European Union? Respond me!”

Archil Chkoidze and the organizations founded by him believe that the basis of implementing Georgia's pro-Russian policy is a common faith between the two countries. In his interview and public speeches Chkoidze often stresses the given fact. For instance, interview³¹ with Archil Chkoidze from August 22, 2014 is published on ambebi.ge under the following title: "I cannot shoot my genetically fraternal Russian Orthodox people".

Society of Erekle the Second also conducts permanent rallies at the buildings of various state agencies with the request of entering in closer relations with Russia. For instance, on April 29 the organization held a rally at the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs with the request of restoring diplomatic relations with Russia, which was breached following the August 2008 war between Russian and Georgia.

In addition, the Society of Erekle the Second actively disseminates statements of businessman Levan Vasadze through its official Facebook page. "*The profile of the West-funded NGOs is hostile and directly contradicts the interests of our country*";- Levan Vasadze's statement uploaded by the organization on its official Facebook page on February 26, 2015.

Apart from the clergy, the organization is using Russian pop-music celebrities, politicians, as well as statements of certain Georgian MPs, as a means for spreading anti-Western opinions.

On March 2012 the Society published anti-Western citation of the majority MP Gogi Topadze in which he says: "*Going closer to NATO will bring Georgia a lot of problems. There isn't any country that has benefited from the ties with the Alliance. Let's recollect what our NATO has done to Yugoslavia- torn the country apart in the middle of Europe, not to mention the case with Iraq and Syria. 80% of the Georgian population doesn't want to join NATO, go hold a referendum and see*".

Along with the restoration of diplomatic relations with Russia, the Society's another principal demand is to hold a referendum for determination of the country's foreign policy course.

³¹<http://www.ambebi.ge/politika/109141-qchems-genetikur-modzme-rus-marthlmadidebel-khalkhs-iaraghs-ver-vesvriq-yvelaze-prorusuli-garthvelis-qghia-amboriq-ruseths.html>



Tristan Tsitelashvili, Archil Chkoidze and Petre Mamradze discussing the outlook for Georgia's accession to the Eurasian Union, 2013. Source: Netgazeti.ge

5.1.2. New Leftists-People's Patriotic Movement

Founder of the Eurasian Choice Archil Chkoidze is also one of the founders of the New Leftists-People's Patriotic Movement organization established in 2010. Apart from Chkoidze, founders of the organization are **Nugzar Avaliani, Akaki Alania, Givi Gureshidze and Mziuri Janelidze.**

The organization is almost non-active from the publicity point of view. Political scientist Givi Gureshidze is one of its founders that has been appearing over the recent years, publicly voicing anti-Western slogans. On June 26, 2013, several days prior to the arrival of the North Atlantic Alliance Committee in Georgia, he held a one man's rally under the "No to NATO" slogan in front of the parliament in Kutaisi.



In March 2015 Givi Gureshidze conducted another one man’s rally in front of the parliament in Kutaisi, prior to the speech of the President Giorgi Margvelashvili, and demanded change of the country’s foreign policy course.

“One of the founders of New Leftists Nugzar Avaliani was the candidate of the United Communist Party of Georgia in the 2013 presidential elections. The main goal of his presidential campaign was getting closer with Russia, creation of the Society-type popular assembly, as well as restoration of the basic Soviet structures of state administration.

5.2. Projects of Eurasian Choice

5.2.1. Patriot TV

Eurasian Choice and Society of Erekle the Second founded new internet television-**Patriot TV** in the beginning of 2015, **for the purpose of disseminating pro-Russian sentiments.**

I want appeal to everyone who likes Patriot TV, stand beside us, so that with your help we are able to establish a television based on the authentic Georgian traditions, useful for the future generation of our country. A television which serves the purpose of Georgian, ethical ideas and not anti-Chistian, sodomite propaganda which, unfortunately, floods our media space”- the message published by Society of Erekle the Second on its Facebook page in the beginning of 2015.

Archil Chkoidze is the author and host the “**Two Side of the Same Coin**” program on Patriot TV. The internet television has voiced anti-European, homophobic and pro-Russian opinions many times.

For instance, in one of the programs from April 2015, Archil Chkoidze had **former Georgian Security Minister Valery Khaburdzania** as a guest, with whom he discussed the “**Eurasia or Europe**” topic³².

During the course of the program Chkoidze tried to argue how the accession to the EU had brought down the economies of the Eastern European countries:

“I had a conversation with a person at the Polish Embassy who frankly told me that their agriculture had suffered a major impact after joining the EU, that they had been imposed a quota on the production of milk, which resulted in the farmers going bankrupt. And that the reason for that was that they no longer had the opportunity to produce milk in the same quantities as before. And that they develop their economy at the expense of countries like us- Poland and Bulgaria, and they already see they haven’t benefited much from the European Union”.

The program’s guest Valery Khaburdzania meanwhile suggests the only possible option to the viewers: *“we are more competitive in the Eurasian space, but we are gradually going to miss the schedule for that matter as well”.*

Programs of Patriot TV are currently being distributed through only Youtube and Myvideo. However, they promise their viewers to create their own webpage soon.

5.2.2. Russian language courses for Georgian citizens

In September 2014 the Society of Erekle the Second launched Russian language courses for Georgian citizens in Tbilisi, carried out by the initiative and organization of Russian World.

³²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKXJlyWtjls>

Russian World foundation is created by order³³ of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, aimed at popularization of Russian language and promotion of its studying both inside and outside the Russian Federation. The founders of the foundation on behalf of the **Russian Federation are Russian Foreign and Education and Sciences Ministries, with the Russia’s federal budget being the main source of its funding.**

Archil Chkoidze gave an interview³⁴ to Russian TV Channel MIR with respect to the opening of the course, in which he said that the Society of Erekle the Second had already offered free-of-charge courses of Russian language to Georgian citizens back in 2009.

“Everybody can still clearly remember the time of sweeping close downs of Russian schools, Russian-language faculties and radio-stations, the time when singing in restaurants in Russian and showing of Russian-dubbed movies in cinemas were banned. In short, the previous government declared terror against everything Russian, and in this sense the language of the “the enemy” was the first that had been affected”,- Archil Chkoidze stated to MIR.

According to Archil Chkoidze, as of the fall 2014, Russian World had funded the Russian language courses for the third time, and that with the given stream **the foundation had received up to 120 students, with the total number of applicants totaling 600.**

Head of the Society of Erekle the Second says that apart from the Russian language, **the students of the courses also study the Russian literature and Russian state history.**

In his interview Archil Chkoidze also stated that “Georgian economy is being revitalized by virtue of the Russian business”, and that Russia makes annual investments worth 1 billion USD in Georgia. He expressed hope that the consolidation of the Russian-Georgian business ties will boost the demand for the Russian language at the employment market.

³³<http://ruskiymir.ru/fund/>

³⁴<http://ruskiymir.ru/publications/149444/>

Participants of the Russian language courses were handed certificates on May 15, 2015 at RIA Novosti(Sputnik) Georgian Office.

5.3. Partners of Eurasian Choice

5.3.1. Russian and Georgian People's Unity Foundation

Russian and Georgian People's Unity Foundation³⁵ is a partner of the Society of Erekle the Second. The organization publishes on its website various information from Russia and Georgia with respect to the relations between the two countries. **Head of the Foundation is Russian resident Vladimir Khomeriki.** At his last press-conference in Georgia, by the end of 2013, he stated that Russia wasn't an occupant and that the Georgians people were to be



From the left: Gulbaat Rtkhiladze, Alexandre Shalamberidze, Natia Mikiashvili, Nana Devdariani, Kakha Kukava, Vladimir Khomeriki.

blamed³⁶ for everything, that the actions of Georgian government entailed the occupation, and that it is Russia in fact occupied by Georgia, as it accommodates more than a million Georgians.

³⁵<http://rusakartvelo.org/ge/>

³⁶<http://news.ge/ge/news/story/56073-vladimer-khomeriki-es-ar-aris-okupatsia-da-yvelaferi-saqartvelos-bralia>

6. Russian-Georgian Public Foundation and Gorchakov Fund

Alexander Gorchakov Fund for Public Diplomacy is an active distributor of Russian soft power in the post-Soviet space. The fund was established in 2010, by the decree of then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev. The address of the organization's management, published on the foundations webpage, stresses that the "so-called policy of "soft power" has started playing a bigger role in international environment, where a priority is given not to military and economic power of the world's national-administrative units, but to a capability of a state and society to exert influence in international space



Vladimir Putin, Leonid Drachevsky

by using their cultural, historic and political values.”

The fund was created for purpose of supporting the given activity. Members of its **board of trustees** are **Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov**, as well as shareholder of oil company Lukoil Vatik **Alegperov**, which according to Forbes 2015 data rates 6th among the Russian

billionaires.

The fund is headed by **Russian politician Leonid Drachevsky**, a member of RAO UES board of directors in 2004-2008. Currently he holds the post of executive director at major Russian investment company ONEXIM.

Gorchakov Fund has **two partners-information center in Kiev, Ukraine, and Russian Georgian Public Center in Georgia, the latter founded in 2013 by historian Zaza (Zaal) Abashidze** who then became its head. Members of the board are also representatives of the Gorchakov Fund **Natalya Burlinova, Maria Lyamtseva**, and Georgian citizens **Ana Bokhua** and **Natalya Tsereteli**. The latter is a correspondent of Saqinform we had discussed earlier.

[Фонд Горчакова](#) [Программы и проекты](#) [Гранты](#) [Клуб друзей](#) [Информцентры](#) [Мультимедиа](#)
 Попечительский совет

[О фонде](#)
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 **ЛАВРОВ СЕРГЕЙ ВИКТОРОВИЧ**
 **АЛЕКПЕРОВ ВАГИТ ЮСУФОВИЧ**
 **ВАРЛАНЯН РУБЕН КАРЛЕНОВИЧ**
 **БЕТУШЕНКОВ ВЛАДИМИР ПЕТРОВИЧ**






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 Лавров: пятый Всемирный конгресс соотечественников

As a matter of fact, founders of the Russian-Georgian Public Center are representatives of the Gorchakov Foundation and Institute of International Relations. **Zaza Abashidze** and **Nata Tsereteli** are also founders of the given institute. Despite that the **Institute of International Relations** is registered at the Entrepreneurial Registry, information on its activities cannot be found on the Internet, so it remains unknown what the institute is doing.

Historian Zaza Abashidze was a member of Kakha Kukava’s Free Georgia Party at the 2012 parliamentary elections. It was Zaza Abashidze’s pre-election interview to Radio Free Europe in which he stressed that his “Free Georgia Coalition” was against accession to NATO, yet that only concerns the short term perspective.

The process of integration with the European world should not be hampered, - he said, and added – “We mustn’t omit the state which market we intend to access. Why we are campaigning for normalization of relations with Russia, well, we do not mean to fall into Russia’s embrace... Our goal is to have Russian tanks withdrawn from our territory, so that Georgian doesn’t feel a slave before any

state³⁷. He further stated that the relations with Russia forces Georgia to give up the idea of joining NATO.

On April 7, 2015 head of the Russian-Georgian Public Center Zaza (Zaal) **Abashidze** was replaced by **Bezhan Khurtsidze**, along with Natalya Burlinova replaced by Maria Borodachyova. However, the Public Registry didn't register the changes



Zaza Abashidze

due to technical issues. Accordingly, Zaza Abashidze remains officially recorded as the head of the organizations as of today. **Bezhan Khurtsidze** was Vani majoritarian deputy from the UNM in the Georgian parliament, yet he was dismissed from the party in February 2012, which was attributed to him being at variance with the party's vision. **Bezhan Khurtsidze is also founder of the Institute of International Relations along with Zaza Abashidze and Natalya Tsereteli.**



From the left: Alexandre Shalamberidze, Dimitry Lortkipanidze, Zaza Abashidze, Nana Devdariani, Kakha Kukava, and Akaki Asatiani with the Catholicos-Partiarch of Georgia.

³⁷<http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/media/video/24699955.html>

The last time Zaal Abashidze had appeared in the spotlight of public attention was when he replaced³⁸ Buba Kudava as Director of the Institute of Manuscripts.

According to information published by Russian-Georgian Public Center on Facebook, the organization launched a full-fledged functioning in February 2015, and that they would be hosting weekly public meetings with the participation of Georgian, Russian and other foreign experts from economy, politics, media, and culture and art issues.

Shortly after, the Center published an announcement inviting young experts from Georgia for the participation in **the “Academy of Collective Security Treaty Organization” project**, scheduled for the end of this year’s June in Moscow.

As in the case with the Society of Erekle the Second, the Russian-Georgian Public Center also implements a Russian language courses-related project, which participants were taken on tour to the Stalin Museum in Gori this year’s May 9.

Apart from the cooperation with Russian-Georgian Public Center, the Gorchakov Fund has organized a considerable number of events. For instance, at the meeting held in Tbilisi on March 2014, participants from the Georgian side were PM’s Special Envoy for Relations with Russia **Zurab Abashidze**, his advisor **Giorgi Kajaia**, as well as **Zaza Abashidze**, **Bezhan Khurtsidze**, former Georgian Foreign Minister **Irakli Menagarishvili**, **Kakha Gogolashvili**, head of the Center of European Studies, **Tornike Sharashenidze**, **Ivliane Khaindrava**, head of Georgian Reform’s Associates **Sergi Kapanadze**, **Soso Tsiskarishvili**, **Tengiz Pkhaladze**, and **Revaz Gachechiladze³⁹**

In September 2014, a press-tour for 14 Georgian journalists was held in Moscow, which was supported by the Gorchakov Fund, and where the journalists met with Russia Today’s head and principal ideologist of the Russian propaganda **Dmitry Kiselev**, head of the Georgians’ Union in Russia **Mikheil**

³⁸<http://rustavi2.com/ka/news/16434>

³⁹<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/28773/>

Khubutia, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister **Grigory Karasin**, former Russian PM **Evgeny Primakov** and **the Patriarch of Russia Kirill**⁴⁰.



Georgian journalists with Evgeny Primakov

Such level of the meetings is a confirmation of the Gorchakov Fund's serious attitude towards the mentioned projects.

The journalist team included
1. **Tato Tsetskhladze** - Adjara TV, 2. **Sandro Jupalakiani** - 3 TV Imedi. **Jana Israelian** – former PIK TV and "Komsomolskaya Pravda"

journalist, 4. **Eka Karsaulidze** - newspaper Georgia Today 5. **Giorgi Gobronidze** – Radio First 6. **Christina Marabiani** - journalist from Akhalkalaki, 7. **Tatia Janibegashvili** – MIR TV 8. **Nazi Zhorzholiani** – News agency Newsgeorgia 9. **Sofia Tetradze** - TV3 10. **Irene Ardashelia** - agency Focus. 11. **Maia Tsereteli** - project coordinator (Saqinform) 12. **Gia Surmanidze**- director of TV 25. 13 **badri Nanitashvili**- director of TV Trialeti. And politician **Kakha Kukava** also among the participants of the meetings.

Well-known Georgian NGO **Caucasian House** is also engaged in active cooperation with the Gorchakov Foundation. In conjunction with the latter the organization has held quite a number of conferences between Russian and Georgian youth. The



Dmitry Kiselev with Georgian Journalists

⁴⁰<http://gorchakovfund.ru/center/news/10069/13572/>

meetings were held within the framework of the “Russian-Georgian Dialogue for Peace and Cooperation” project, which the Caucasian House implements with the support of the Government of Great Britain. It should be noticed that unlike NGOs, mentioned above, Caucasian House and its members are not distinguished with anti-western narrative.

7. Sputnik in Georgia

Sputnik is a major multimedia project of the Russian propaganda. The process of its implementation and worldwide enhancement started in November 2014. Sputnik represents a foreign service of the Russian state information agency RIA Novosti and the Voice of Russia radio, headed by **Dmitry Kilesev**.

Sputnik’s Georgian language webpage says that Sputnik reflects multipolar world, in which each country has its own interests, culture, history and traditions.

According to the organization’s statement, each of its editorial office administers its own website in world’s major cities, and broadcasts from the local radio stations’ studios. The total number of Sputnik’s radio-broadcasting in 30 various languages, 130 cities of 34 countries worldwide, will have exceeded 800 hours a day already in 2015.

The agency has its own multimedia press-centers, which create content for the websites and broadcast for the local audience.

"Sputnik" broadcasts in Georgian, Azerbaijani, Arabic, Abkhaz, German, Dario, Spanish, Estonian, Turkish, Japanese, English, Latvian, Moldovan, Polish, Portuguese, Pashto, Russian, Serbian, Armenian, Tajik, Uzbek, Ukrainian, Finnish, French, Kurdish, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, the Crimean Tatar, Chinese, and Hindi languages.

Like in other countries, Sputnik also decided to launch radio-broadcasting in Georgia in November 2014. Its programs were aired on the FM 101.4 frequency, which belonged to the Monte-Carlo (aka R Radio) radio. The given fact stirred up resentment on the part of society. Non-governmental

organization Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) demanded the documentation of the Monte-Carlo Radio were publicized and followed by the clarification⁴¹. Later, the case drew attention of the Georgian National Communications Commission which launched the relevant proceedings.

Studying of the case revealed that Sputnik's Georgian language content was prepared by news agency Newsgeorgia. However, the agency together with the Monte-Carlo radio denied any connection with Sputnik. Head of Newsgeorgia **Elene Imedashvili** said that she was forwarding the prepared programs to *Rossia Segodnya*, with the right of using them, and that they knew nothing as to where those materials were placed by the receiver. On his part, representative of "Monte-Carlo" said they had sold the air space to Newsgeorgia, and didn't know it was in fact supposed to host Sputnik's content.

Ultimately, the GNCC imposed sanctions upon both organizations. Sputnik's radio programs were no longer broadcasted. However, the radio-programs distinguished with anti-Western messages were transferred to Newsgeorgia's webpage (Newsgeorgia.ge)



Arno Khidirbegishvili and Tato Laskhishvili

By January 23, 2015 Newsgeorgia's employee Anton (Tato) Laskhishvili had registered Sputnik Georgia LLC, and became its official owner. At the same time, Laskhishvili has also been heading the *Svobodnaya Gruzia* newspaper, which on its part is a partner of *Objective* and the *Georgian Times*.

Sputnik launched the new webpage in May 2015, and also transferred the Georgian language content from NEWSGEORGIA to the given portal. Along with articles, Sputnik's Georgian language webpage (sputnik-georgia.com) also transmits a radio broadcasting.

⁴¹https://idfi.ge/ge/idfis-statement-about-russia_segodnyas-project

<p>ახალი ამბები</p> <p>არჩევნების შემდეგ თურქული ლირა რეკორდულ მინიმუმამდე დაეცა</p> <p>ყველა ახალი ამბავი >16:17</p>	<p>ჯუნა დავითაშვილი მოსკოვში გარდაიცვალა</p> <p>15:52</p>	<p>5 თვის მანძილზე ბიუჯეტის საგადასახადო შემოსავლებმა 1,4 მლრდ აშშ დოლარი შეადგინა</p> <p>15:43</p>	<p>უკრაინის სახელმწიფო სანარმოების მონიტორინგს უცხოელებს მიანდობენ</p> <p>15:34</p>
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ყველა ახალი ამბავი

The Anti-Fascist Coalition of Multi-National Georgia has already held press-conferences at Sputnik’s office, a place where the press-center of former RIA Novosti- current Russia Today is located. Those participating in the press-conference included President of the organization Revaz Gogidze, General Tristan Tselashvili, Head of the Political Movement of (law enforcement and armed forces) Veterans and Patriots of Georgia Nodar Tsojniashvili, Journalistic Investigation Agency Director Tengiz Chkhikvadze, President of Azerbaijan’s National Congress in Georgia Ali Babayev, employer of the Eurasian Institute Shota Apkhaidze.

Press-conference was also held by the Union of Unemployed for Employment and head of the Pushkin Society Arion Mikhail Aidinov, as well the Congress of National Slavic Peoples of Georgia and journalistic investigation agency Time and Space.

Politician Kakha Kukava was among those that had held press-conference at Sputnik’s office. The conference was dedicated to the “prospects of railway opening in South Caucasus” topic. It should be noted that it was Kakha Kukava that has participated in the press-tour conducted by Gorchakov Foundation in Moscow, and his former party fellow Zaza Abashidze (currently head of the National Center of Manuscripts) is a co-founder of Russian-Georgian Public Center along with Gorchakov Fund.

Conclusion

The studies have shown there are only two NGOs with open pro-Russian platform operating in Georgia - **Eurasian Institute** and **Eurasian Choice**. At the same time, there are several other NGOs associated with the given organizations, the majority of which was founded after 2013. Despite that the total number of organizations with openly anti-Western rhetoric is quite large in Georgia, their founders are in most cases represented by the same persons. The activity of Eurasian Institute is primarily confined to organizing of seminar-conferences, whereas Eurasian Choice puts greater emphasis on protest rallies. Their activities are covered by the partner media outlets Geworld.ge and saqinformi.ge

Russian organizations cooperating with the Eurasian Institute are Lev Gumilov Center, Scientific Society of Caucasiologists (SSC), and International Eurasian Movement. The partner of the latter is also Eurasian Choice, which cooperates with yet another Russian organization Russian World.

Gorchakov Fund is also one of the actively functioning organizations in Georgia, with the partnership of which Russian-Georgian Public Center NGO was founded. The organization was headed by historian Zaza Abashidze, which was later appointed director of the National Center of Manuscripts.

It's worth mentioning that Russian multimedia project Sputnik is gradually gaining momentum in Georgia. The project is the basic locomotive of the Russian propaganda in the world. After having been banned broadcasting in Georgia by the GNCC, Sputnik relocated in the web-space, where together with text materials they also publish video and photo production, as well as internet-radio programs.

Small part of the mentioned organizations have declared information on receiving of funds from the Russian state budget. However, the information on the financing of their majority is not open. It's interesting that on June 5, information agency Expressnews published an article, with reference to a confidential source, according to which, Russian World foundation and Rostelecom LLC-owned by Sputnik, had transferred 5 million GEL until May 25, 2015 for the purpose of reinforcing Georgian online and electronic media(media outlets geworld.ge and Saqinform received indirect funding from

both organizations)⁴². In the meantime, as we have mentioned above, Russian World foundation is also one of the partners of the Society of Erekle the Second in Georgia. Ultimately we can say that after 2013 Russian “soft force” has become especially active in Georgia, relying mainly upon NGOs and media organizations to that end. However, despite that the number of such organizations is constantly increasing, it should be mentioned that they are principally founded and headed by the same people.

⁴² <http://epn.ge/?id=7099>