

## GEORGIA ON THE POLITICAL MAP OF EUROPE: NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES

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When Georgia became a newly independent state in December 1991, it regarded the West as a geopolitical entity, while Europe became part of its living space.

Later, when Europe finally sorted out its status, Georgia found its place on the continent's political map. Very much interested in the Euro-

pean Union's expansion, Tbilisi had to answer the question: What is Europe after all?

In Soviet times, Europe was divided (for political rather than geographic reasons) into Western and Eastern Europe. The Iron Curtain disappeared together with the Soviet Union to make way for the newly independent states and

new geopolitical realities in Eastern Europe. Today Tbilisi is wondering: Does Georgia stand the

chance of gaining full membership in the European Union?

## Rooted in the Past: Georgian Europeism. History, Culture, Geography or Politics?

*History.* Georgia has never let Europe out of its sight. In 1713-1716, Prince Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, a prominent public and political figure of his time, toured Europe in search of political support and, possibly, a union. He visited Pope Clement XI and French King Louis XIV; he even adopted Catholicism, but his efforts remained unappreciated.

In the 18th century, the idea of Europeism gained even wider currency in Georgia. In his *The Sage of the Orient* (written in Georgian), the first political treatise in Georgia, Alexander Amilakhvari testified that the European enlighteners, Montesquieu in particular, exerted huge influence on Georgian society.

In the 19th century, Georgia remained as Europe-oriented as ever. Iakob Gogebashvili, one of the most prominent public figures of his time, wrote in so many words: "Since the 18th century, our nation has been aware of the need to draw closer to Europe."

In 1918, it looked as if the dream had finally come true. Having detached itself from the Russian Empire, Georgia allied with Germany only to discover that the alliance was built on sand. Europe, as represented by Germany, betrayed Georgia. It abandoned it to its fate: having lost the battle against the Soviet occupants, Georgia also lost, for many years to come, the chance of developing along with Europe.

It should be said that the Social-Democratic government of Georgia that was in power in 1918 was the first of its kind on the continent. In his work *Georgian Foreign Policies* (in Georgian), Prime Minister Noah Zhordania wrote that at all times his country had been striving toward Europe and its culture and that socially it had always been part of the continent.

*Culture.* Christianity, which the country embraced in the 330s, is a weighty argument in favor of Georgia's European affiliation.

The new religion was intended to bring Georgia closer to the Greco-Roman world at a time when the aggressive policies of the Oriental empires threatened Georgia's very existence.

Since that time, Christianity has become part of Georgian life and greatly affected Georgian culture.

In the 20th century, many of the prominent Georgian academics agreed that the Georgian version of feudalism in the form it existed in the 11th-12th centuries was identical to the European, in particular French, version.

They went even further to argue that Georgia was developing in parallel with Europe, especially when it came to forms of land ownership, social structure, etc.

Shalva Nutsunidze, for example, formulated a theory of the Georgian Renaissance and postulated that the Renaissance had begun in Georgia earlier than in Italy.

It is hard to say whether they were right or wrong, but the very fact that there is any number of academic writings proving that Georgia is part of the European heritage showed beyond doubt that at all times the Georgians wanted to be part of Europe.

The cultural identity issue remained on Georgia's agenda at all times; this was amply confirmed by a collection of articles by Georgian authors and public figures of the early 20th century which appeared in the 1990s under the tale-telling title *Europe or Asia?*

Anthropology and archeological finds likewise confirmed that Georgia is part of the European civilization: in 1991-2007, the remains of at least four of the earliest people (*Homo georgicus*) who had lived about 1,700,000 years ago were found in the Dmanisi urban-type settlement. The dating is confirmed by stratigraphic and paleo-magnetic studies, as well as by faunal finds.

Georgian academics and some of their foreign colleagues describe *Homo georgicus* as Europe's earliest man.<sup>1</sup>

From time to time, the top crust of the Georgian political class deems it necessary to remind everyone that "the Georgians were the earliest Europeans."

What is European mentality after all? What does it mean to be a European? Where do Europeans feel at home? *Label France*, published by the French Foreign Ministry, tried to answer these questions in its July 2000 issue (when France chaired the EU).

Marc Ferro, an outstanding French historian, offered the following answer: "The real frontier... lies in that feeling of belonging to the same community. Do the French feel at home in London, Berlin and Moscow? Probably. In some of the Caucasian mountains? Definitely not." The French historian answers to the question "How far to the east does Europe stretch?" in the following way: "Not as far as the Urals but all the way to Vladivostok, to the eastern edge of Siberia. When I found myself in Irkutsk (Russia, Eastern Siberia) and in Khabarovsk (Eastern Russia), I was in the same frame of mind as if I had been in Riga (Latvia) or Antwerp. But in Tajikistan and in some areas of the Caucasus that form part of the Russian landmass, it is obvious that we are leaving Europe."<sup>2</sup>

*Geography*. So far, Georgia has not found a suitable place on the map of the world. Soviet geographers refused to see Georgia as part of the Soviet Union's European part: all the maps excluded it (together with the Transcaucasus) from Europe.

During Soviet times, the borders of Europe were never questioned; in post-Soviet times, the issue came to the fore together with the newly independent states; the Transcaucasian republics were especially aware of it.

It should be said that Georgia, while still part of the Soviet Union, always sought a place on the map of Europe.

On 14 November, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Georgia addressed the participants of the Paris conference, heads of state and government of the CSCE (the OSCE's predecessor), with the following: "The recent multiparty elections gave Georgia the chance of choosing a road that would bring it back to the family of European nations. It will not be an easy road, but Georgia's resolution to become independent should not develop into an instability factor in Europe. Georgia should do even more: it should contribute to regional security and cooperation, which will promote European integration... We do hope that the Paris conference and the countries involved in the Helsinki process will assess in real terms the events now underway in the European part of the U.S.S.R. (we have in mind the well-justified desire to restore the state independence of the formerly democratic states) and avoid any negative interference into the process of global European integration and final stabilization."

Soon after that Georgia was officially recognized as an independent (but not European) state. For a long time, the European Union looked at it (and the region as a whole) as a link between Europe and Asia and refused to recognize the Georgians as an obviously European nation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.dmanisi.ge].

<sup>2</sup> "European Awareness: Myth or Reality. Interview with Marc Ferro," *Label France*, No. 40, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Commission Communication. Towards a European Union Strategy for Relations with the Transcaucasian Republics, 1995.*

In 1992, Foreign Minister of Germany Hans-Dietrich Genscher visited Georgia and said at a welcome meeting: “From this time on Europe will never betray Georgia. It has been always orientated toward Europe; twice it was disappointed not to receive help from Europe. This will not happen again.”<sup>4</sup> His optimistic forecast was realized nearly 16 years later.

Soon after the visit, namely in September 1993, regular units of the Russian army together with Abkhazian and North Caucasian fighters captured Sukhumi, the capital of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic. Europe remained indifferent and once more abandoned Georgia to its fate. It had to join the CIS, a modernized Kremlin-sponsored version of the Soviet Union.

*Politics.* In the early period of its independence, Georgia was not accepted as a European state; it was geopolitical projects that placed it on the political map of Europe. Significantly, immediately after the Soviet Union’s disintegration, Georgia was involved in one of the key military-political processes. I have in mind the Treaty on the Conventional Forces in Europe, which put limitations on the deployment of conventional forces in the continent. Signed on 19 November, 1990 by 22 states, it covered the territory from the Atlantic to the Urals.

In the post-Soviet period, the treaty was ratified by 8 Soviet-successor states; it also acquired so-called flank zones with even stricter limitations.

In this way, Georgia, which had not been regarded as part of Europe, was the first to find itself within one of the flank zones. They also covered the continent’s other parts: Norway, Iceland, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkey, Greece, Rumania, and Bulgaria and chunks of Russian and Ukrainian territories.

At that time, there was no awareness that the European identity hinged on politics rather than on geography, culture, or civilization. This is best confirmed by the process that brought Georgia and Europe closer together.

## The First Steps toward Europe. The Council of Europe is not Europe

Why do the Georgians want to join Europe?

Most of the liberal-democratic countries are found in Europe. In Georgia, Europe is associated with civilization, democratic values, and economic prosperity; those who have enough money renovate their apartments “in the European style,” even though the “style” is merely a post-Soviet invention.

The Georgians want to become Europeans—this can be seen everywhere and is especially obvious in sport, in football in particular.

Encouraged by the leaders of the national-liberation movement and Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first president of Georgia, the Georgian Football Federation became independent even before the republic gained its independence.

In 1981, Dynamo of Tbilisi won the UEFA Cup. In Soviet times, only the Ukrainian team (apart from Dynamo of Tbilisi) managed to do it: it won the trophy twice. As soon as Georgia became independent, its Football Federation joined the UEFA, a European, albeit sports, structure.

In 1999, the republic joined the Council of Europe; this was, in fact, the first institutional recognition of Georgia as part of the European civilization.

The historic phrase “I am a Georgian hence I am a European!” said by then speaker of the Georgian parliament at the PACE session that admitted Georgia as its member meant that Georgia had returned to Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> *Sakartvelos Respublika*, 14 April, 1992 (in Georgian).

This historic event, however, was predated by a long and violent discussion about whether Georgia should be accepted into the Council of Europe.

On 30-31 August, 1998, a Council of Europe delegation paid an official visit to the Caucasian states. Headed by CE Secretary General Daniel Tarshis, it concluded: "Because of its historical and cultural ties the Caucasus and its population belongs to the European family..."

In many respects, the CE membership justified the hopes for a European development vector; it also allowed Georgian citizens to apply to the European Court of Human Rights.

It turned out that the Council of Europe became a sort of a "preparatory structure" in which the post-communist countries are taught to respect democratic standards and values; the best pupils are moved to the European Union.

Recently, the Georgian political community and politicians of other countries have been asking: "Georgia's membership in the Council of Europe means that it is a European state. The question is: Why is Europe indifferent to its problems?"

In March 2001, for example, the German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* published an article by a prominent politician and one of the Reichstag members in which he pointed out that the strategic value of the Caucasus remained underestimated in Germany, where everyone expected that the Americans would sort things out. The author was convinced that Germany should stem Russia's claims in the region and Georgia as its part; to achieve this, he argued, Germany should seek stability in the Caucasus and its unification with Europe.<sup>5</sup>

In 2003, the European Union offered a new program called the European Neighborhood Policy, which covered all the countries bordering on Europe either on land or sea. (Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia were excluded.)

At first the program related to Algeria, Belarus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Moldova, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. The Caucasian states were left out, but their rising importance for fuel transit finally got them an invitation.

Russia refused to be involved in the program and is now engaged in so-called strategic partnership within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union.<sup>6</sup>

Willing to become a full-fledged EU member, Georgia did not like some of the provisions which prohibited, among other things, barriers and other obstacles between the expanding European Union and its members. The very term "neighborhood" indicated that Georgia was not regarded as a potential member, which contradicted Tbilisi's European ambitions.

In 2006, the twelve-month long consultations with the EU produced the Plan of Action of the European Neighborhood Policy Program, which still did not guarantee EU membership.

It should be said that after the Rose Revolution, EU and NATO membership became an officially declared foreign policy course.

## Georgian Foreign Policy: "Eurovision" and the Europe Square

During the so-called Rose Revolution, the enthusiastic crowds waved the EU official flag; those who represented the European Union in the republic looked at it as a revolutionary banner. After the revolution, it was ruled that all state structures should display the EU flag. Today, during his social

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from *Droni*, 10 March, 2001 (in Georgian).

<sup>6</sup> [www.delgeo.ec.europa.eu], 2008.

functions the Georgian president is always shown against its background. It can be seen in front of the Georgian parliament and in the offices of the top leaders, together with the national flag.

Symbols are important but not all-important: before the revolution, the political establishment had never dreamt of EU membership. The new leaders went as far as identifying the date—2010 (give or take a year or two).

Salome Zurbishvili, a Georgian and a French citizen, was appointed foreign minister to attract the attention of Europe.

A new post, that of minister for European integration, was created; the authorities busied themselves with a set of documents and decisions needed to draw closer to Europe. One of the old squares in Tbilisi acquired a new name—the Europe Square. In short, everything was done to stress Georgia's desire and intention to integrate with Europe.

During one of his first visits to Europe, President Mikhail Saakashvili pointed out to the Euronews channel with a great deal of offence: "You should cover Georgia in your weather forecasts; it is a European country after all!"

After the revolution, the public service broadcaster of Georgia joined the Association of Public Service Broadcasters in Europe, which gave the country the chance of competing in the annual Eurovision Song Contest.

To accelerate integration, education was announced to be one of the priorities, even though young Georgians were very much interested in higher education in Europe. Recently, student exchanges became part of the state strategy in this sphere.

Georgia was one of the first to join the Bologna Process to become part of the single European expanse.

This means that everything which is going on in many spheres of public life in Georgia (politics, the economy, and culture) is associated, in one way or another, with Europe.

In the summer of 2009, Georgians had the opportunity to see Picasso's works; the exhibition visited several cities; the opening ceremony was attended by the Georgian political elite. The parliamentary speaker said that the exhibition showed that Georgia was strengthening its position in European politics and cultural life.

## The European Union— A New Factor in the Caucasus

The year 2008 marked a turning point in Georgia's relations with the European Union. Germany, which was like France known for its euroskepticism, suddenly showed an interest in the Abkhazian conflict and offered its mediation.

Foreign Minister of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Tbilisi and even went to the conflict zone; this happened when the Russian-Georgian war was still several months away.

The German foreign minister devised a settlement plan ("the Steinmeier plan"), which remained on paper because of the war.

The very fact of Europe's greater interest in Georgia's problems encouraged the political elite. Indeed, any careful observer could register positive shifts: in 1996, the request of then President Shevardnadze to Foreign Minister of Germany Klaus Kinkel, on an official visit to Georgia, to help settle the frozen conflicts was declined.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See: *OMRI Daily Digest*, No. 18, 25 January, 1996.

In August 2008, during Russia's intervention against Georgia, Europe played the key role as mediator. France, which chaired the EU, was actively involved: President Sarkozy and French Foreign Minister Kouchner twice visited Georgia during the hostilities.

The European leaders extended unprecedented moral support to Georgia. (This can be said, in particular, about the presidents of Poland and the Baltic states, the OSCE chairman, and the foreign minister of Finland.) German Chancellor Angela Merkel, well known for her skepticism when it comes to drawing the newly independent states and the EU closer, visited Georgia as an intermediary.

The European leaders stopped the war after five days; it should be said that the Europeans, who have never approved of close relations between Georgia and the United States, halted the Russian onslaught on Tbilisi.

Nicolas Sarkozy said that the President of the United States had tried to dissuade him from going to Tbilisi, which was practically besieged by the Russians. This means that the French President, as the head of the European Union, was aware of Europe's special service to Georgia. On the other hand, the hitherto latent rivalry between the U.S. and EU for regional influence became obvious.

Before the war, the Georgian political establishment had been scathingly critical of Europe's indifference to Georgia and delighted with the United States. More than that: two old rivals (America and Russia) acquired another rival likewise seeking domination in the Caucasus. The August war of 2008 made it clear that the EU has its own interests in the region.

Its military observers in Georgia can be described as unprecedented "interference" in the affairs in the post-Soviet expanse.

Their role increased in 2009 when Russia vetoed the mandate of the OSCE and U.N. military observers in the Caucasus.

Twelve months later, however, skepticism about the EU and the French president's mediation in the Caucasus became apparent. In June 2009, *Le Monde* of France carried an article which argued that the president had fallen short of what was required. It was argued that to halt the Russian tanks, which had been pressing down on Tbilisi, President Sarkozy entered into an agreement with Moscow (the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan) and that the French leader, pursuing a higher rating, had obviously overestimated his services.

The European Union extended its mediation during the domestic political crisis in Georgia; Peter Semneby, who represented the EU in the Southern Caucasus, played an important role when, on 9 April, 2009, the domestic crisis developed into mass protest rallies.

Cooperation between Georgia and the European Union began in 1992 (when the EU recognized Georgia's independence), never went beyond the established framework, and was determined by the geopolitical realities.

The EU, however, did not look at Georgia as a full-fledged partner, was not interested in political cooperation, and limited itself to humanitarian and economic aid.

Between 1992 and 2004, for example, its aid amounted to about \$450 million.<sup>8</sup>

In 1999, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Georgia and the EU (developed since 1996) came into force; it is based on regional approaches, which means that the European Union has its representative in the region (since 2003), but not in any of the three states.

In fact, the ambitious Georgian political establishment is not entirely satisfied with this: there is a firm conviction that Georgia should become an EU member earlier than its Caucasian neighbors.

Europe was never much interested in Georgia as a separate country; it would have been much easier to join the EU together with Ukraine, an obviously European country which has already traveled part of the road.

The EU membership of Rumania and Bulgaria brought Europe to Georgia's borders across the Black Sea; the regional geopolitical balance had changed accordingly. This explains the EU's unprecedented involvement during and after the Russian-Georgian war.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.enp.ge].

So far the Georgian political leaders are still seeking an answer to the question: “Is NATO or the EU closer to Georgia?” Indeed, before the war NATO membership looked more realistic, while after the war EU membership became the aim.

Significantly, before the war it was expected that Georgia would get \$120.8 million of aid within the European Neighborhood Policy Program<sup>9</sup>; the war changed the situation to the extent that the conference of donors held in Brussels on 22 October, 2008 and which involved the U.S. and EU decided to increase the economic aid to approximately \$4.5 billion.

## Eastern Partnership: Surrogate or Real Integration?

On 7 May, 2009, the EU signed the Eastern Partnership Treaty with 6 Soviet successor-states (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus).

Some time before that Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Moldova formed GUAM with the explicit aim of joining the Euro-Atlantic structures. The Eastern Partnership program was initiated by Sweden and Poland (two of Georgia’s most enthusiastic supporters); this explains the optimism of the Georgian top crust. For them, the program is not an alternative to EU membership<sup>10</sup> but an instrument for drawing closer to the EU.

This program presupposes a simplified visa regime, a free trade agreement, etc. Lithuania was the first among the EU members to announce its intention to simplify the visa regime for Georgia.

The Georgian leaders are convinced that the program will bring the country closer to EU associated membership, even though they know that it is limited to countries that cope with their obligations under the neighborhood program. Ukraine has already been invited.<sup>11</sup>

On 29 May, 2009, during the Georgian president’s visit to Italy, Foreign Minister of this country Franco Frattini assured the guest that Italy supported associated membership for Georgia. Earlier, Italy had shared its skepticism about continued expansion of the Euro-Atlantic community with Germany and France. At the April 2008 EU summit, Berlin and Paris blocked the decision to grant Georgia the status of a NATO candidate-country.

The Russian-Georgian war urged the EU to accelerate the Eastern Partnership program. According to President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, the war served as an impulse; he went on to explain that the program was not intended to create new spheres of influence and draw new dividing lines in Europe: it merely demonstrated the “soft power” of the European Union.<sup>12</sup>

This, however, caused a lot of concern in the Kremlin. Indeed, in the event of NATO’s expansion, Russia can be concerned about its national security, but the fact that former Soviet republics want to draw closer to the EU cannot be viewed as hazardous. After all, Russia is maintaining close economic contacts with the EU: 60 percent of its fuel exports go to its members.

Everything said in Russia about closer cooperation between NATO and the Soviet successor-states brings to mind the aggressive Soviet rhetoric. The Russian establishment is irritated with the prospect of the former Soviet republics drawing closer to the EU.

On 22 May, 2009, speaking at the Khabarovsk Russia-EU summit, President Medvedev specified: “As far as the Eastern partnership is concerned, it is not yet very clear to us what shape this

<sup>9</sup> See: *European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument. Georgia. National Indicative Program, 2007-2013.*

<sup>10</sup> [www.eu-integration.gov.ge].

<sup>11</sup> [www.civil.ge], 4 December, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.



partnership will take... But we would not like this partnership to turn into a partnership against Russia.”<sup>13</sup>

Russia’s concern albeit unfounded about NATO’s expansion is understandable: it does not want to see the Alliance’s military infrastructure at its borders. It is not so understandable, however, why its main economic partner is unwelcome at its borders. Today, the program envisages closer cooperation rather than full EU membership for the former Soviet republics.

The answer is obvious: on the one hand, Russia does not want to lose the post-Soviet countries, which in the 1990s were its satellites; on the other, it fears being left outside the European community. During the previous EU expansions, Russia was likewise dead set against them because, it argued, this could impede its closer cooperation with the European Union.

Moscow feared that once within the EU the three openly hostile Baltic republics would tip the balance of its relations with the European Union. Today, Russia is likewise disturbed by Georgia’s possible EU membership. At a briefing the president of France held to specify the issues related to the Russian-Georgian war, a Russian journalist asked him: “Why does Georgia, which is not a EU member, display the EU official flags on all its state offices?” and was told: “That is Georgia’s affair.”

“Will Georgia repeat the fate of Turkey?” is the question which is often asked when it comes to Georgia’s plans to join the EU, something that has been eluding Turkey for a long time. In 1963, it signed an association agreement, which meant that it could expect full membership in 1987. The Helsinki Summit of 1999 granted Turkey a candidate-country status. It is still waiting its turn.

Georgia is a Christian state which means that it might be granted EU membership ahead of Turkey.

Here are some of the relevant facts: in 1987, when Turkey and the European Union embarked on the long and difficult road of drawing closer, there were no Baltic states on the map of Europe. Today, they are EU members.

Turkey is still offered one cooperation alternative after another, the Mediterranean Cooperation Organization initiated by France being one of them. In fact, this is nothing more than a group of countries involved in the European Neighborhood Policy.

More than that: Georgia, along with another five post-Soviet states, has been invited to join the EU Eastern Partnership program. This is not a “free ticket” to the European Union but is much better than the Mediterranean surrogate which was offered to Turkey, a candidate-country.

Before Bulgaria and Rumania joined the EU, Turkey was Georgia’s only geographical outlet to Europe. Turkey likewise profited from its cooperation with a small Christian country: it was Ankara that initiated the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Rumania and Bulgaria, its two members, belong to the EU; Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are drawing closer, while Russia’s position is not yet completely clear.

It should be said that the increased interest in Georgia and the other Soviet-successor states has nothing to do with democracy. Indeed, Belarus and its president, known in the EU as “Europe’s last dictator,” is a pertinent example. Its fuel transit role has pushed to the background everything that Europe cherishes as universal democratic values.

The Eastern Partnership is intended to build up and extend EU influence in the European part of the post-Soviet expanse, which might cause fairly bitter geopolitical rivalry among the main political players in the region.

## *Conclusion*

At the early post-Soviet stage, Europe was obviously unwilling to push the EU to the East; political reality, however, taught it to accept Georgia as a European state. Over the centuries, the borders

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<sup>13</sup> [[http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/05/22/1419\\_type82915\\_216713.shtml](http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/05/22/1419_type82915_216713.shtml)].

of Europe have changed and the geopolitical projects related to them belong to specific political epochs and strategies.<sup>14</sup>

This means that in the Caucasus Europe will be seeking new source of fuel and territories to move it (Georgia is one of the best options) from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran bypassing Russia. In the summer of 2009, Brussels passed an important decision to implement the Nabucco project. In 2014, natural gas deliveries will bypass Russia. Before that there was no unified stand on the energy issues, but it was absolutely clear that sooner or later Georgia would become the main transit corridor for gas and oil deliveries. In fact, in 1997, the European Union included Georgia in its Black Sea strategy, under which the Caucasian infrastructure was seen as part of the European pipeline system.

The discussions about the boundaries of Europe are closely associated with the issue of EU expansion; in fact, Europe is associated with the EU. Today, many of the European countries belong to it.

Indeed, quite often Europe means the European Union, which means that Georgia's potential EU membership is closely connected with the fact that it be accepted as a European country. The geopolitical dynamics in the Caucasus (which only recently was dismissed as Europe's margins) suggest that Georgia will contribute to the process of drawing new political borders in Europe and to the new European architecture.

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<sup>14</sup> See: M. Foucher, "About the Frontiers of Europe," *Label France*, No. 40, 2000.