

Communication Regime in Georgia: Dialogue in the Context of Severed Diplomatic Relations

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Abstract. This article presents the results of a research on the information and communication situation in Georgia, the role and importance of national and foreign communication resources, conducted by the annual monitoring of the friendliness of communication regimes of the National Research Institute of Communication Development (NRICD). The authors examined the main challenges and threats in the communication regime of the two countries. The article reveals the latent problems of the communication regime, including the concentration of media in the hands of a narrow circle of individuals and political forces, as well as the increasing politicization of information. The article examines the peculiarities of presentation of news materials that shape anti-Russian rhetoric and agenda. The communication regime between the two countries is largely determined by the continuing tension around the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, as well as the instability of the internal political situation. The increasing fragmentation of Georgian society, the extreme polarization of various political forces, and the growing role of non-regional actors have a great impact on Georgian political discourse and official rhetoric and serve as a facilitator for the complication of bilateral relations.

The article uses the materials of the annual monitoring of the communication regimes of post-Soviet countries. Monitoring is provided by the National Research Institute for the Communications Development (Moscow).

Keywords: communication regime, Georgia, information field, national interests, humanitarian cooperation

For citation: Skvortsova N.A., Abazov D.A. Communication Regime in Georgia: Dialogue in the Context of Severed Diplomatic Relations. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2024; 1(11): 38-53, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2024-4-1\(11\)-38-53](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2024-4-1(11)-38-53)

Introduction

Russian-Georgian interstate relations are a complex political, humanitarian and information system. Historical, cultural and geopolitical factors determine the nature of bilateral relations.

Political factors. The history of Russian-Georgian relations lasts for many centuries, during the period of the Soviet Union. The Georgian SSR was part of the USSR, which had a significant impact on the formation of their political interaction. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia gained independence, which led to a new stage in relations between Russia and Georgia. Despite the restoration of diplomatic ties, tensions arose after the escalation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the so-called “five-day war” in August 2008. Subsequent years were characterized by attempts to normalize relations, but the resolution of the issue of recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains a source of misunderstanding. Political differences over the status of the republics remain a limiting factor in the development of full-fledged cooperation.

Humanitarian factors. The humanitarian aspects of Russian-Georgian relations determine the importance of cultural and educational ties between the countries. The exchange of cultural values, language programs and student exchanges contribute to deepening mutual understanding at the civic level. However, tensions in political relations have an impact on humanitarian exchanges. Discussions continue on the preservation and protection of cultural heritage, including monuments and monuments in areas that have been subject to conflict.

Information factors. Information influence plays an important role in shaping public opinion in both countries. The media, including television and the Internet, have become a platform for the formation of the “enemy image” in the person of the Russian state and influence the perception of political events.

Materials and Methods

The methodological foundation for the study of communication regimes is focused on concepts developed by Russian scientists from the National Research Institute for Communication Development (NIIRK). Within the framework of the article prepared by V. I. Gasumyanov and V. V. Komleva, the communication mode is considered as a separate entity in the field of political science. This concept is understood as a controlled system, including formal and informal norms, rules, traditions, actors and tools that regulate communication processes in a specific space [1:45].

In this study, the communication mode is conceptualized as a system that has its own set of explicit and implicit (hidden) principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which the expectations of participants are formed.

The process of monitoring the communication regime covers four main stages: 1) collection of empirical information, including 12 groups and a total of 74 indicators; 2) processing of primary information and its transformation into a small database; 3) analysis of the obtained data; 4) interpretation and presentation of results.

In the process of scientific research, various methodological approaches were used, including methods of content analysis and event analysis, structural-functional method, as well as a systems approach. Additionally, discourse analysis of news materials provided by news agencies was used.

The empirical basis of the study is represented by legal acts that establish the framework for the functioning and regulation of communications in the country; strategic documents of the state; speeches by representatives of the executive and legislative branches, as well as civil organizations. Additional materials include information provided by the media, as well as the results of public polls revealing attitudes towards Russians and Russia.

Discussion

The study was conducted to determine the communication regime of Georgia with the Russian Federation. To achieve the set objectives, the regulatory framework regulating the activities of the media was studied, news collection and discursive analysis of the media space of Georgia was carried out. Additionally, an analysis was carried out of the history of Georgian-Russian relations, which is the context for formulating the conditions of communication.

The value of the study lies in the enrichment of methodological and practical aspects. The effectiveness of the tools used is confirmed by testing the methodology developed by the National Research Institute for Communication Development. The results allow specific conclusions to be drawn on a wide range of communication-related issues. It was possible to create an objective picture of communication between Georgia and Russia. Negative, neutral and positive aspects of relations between countries are highlighted, which is important for understanding and analyzing the complex dynamics of their communicative interactions. This study provides specific practical recommendations and clarifications.

It is important to emphasize the limitations associated with openness and access to data. It is physically impossible to carry out a complete analysis of all Georgian media, so public television, opposition and pro-government media were selectively examined. Difficulties have arisen with access to some statistical data, since the Georgian Statistics Service, for example, does not keep records of statistics on interethnic marriages. In such cases, the expert assessment method was used. This made it possible to compensate for the lack of specific data by using expert opinion to analyze and interpret the information.

This work contributes to the understanding of communication between Georgia and Russia, providing fundamental data that can be used for further analytical research in the field of political science and international relations, where significant attention should be paid to studying the possibilities and limitations of public diplomacy in the absence of diplomatic relations.

Regulatory framework affecting Georgia's communications regime

Legislation in the field of television and radio broadcasting in Georgia is formed on the basis of several key regulations, including the Constitution of Georgia¹, international treaties, organic law "Electoral Code of Georgia"², as well as laws "On national regulatory bodies"³, «Об авторском праве и смежных правах»⁴ и закон «О вещании»⁵. This legislative body is the basis for regulating activities in the field of television and radio broadcasting.

An important element of the system is the Communications Commission⁶, which serves as the permanent national regulatory body. It has the legal status of public law and is independent from other government bodies. The legal status of the Commission is determined by the laws "On Electronic Communications"⁷ and current legislation of Georgia. The members of the Commission and its apparatus are independent in the performance of their functions and are subject exclusively to the law. Any unlawful interference in their activities is prohibited, and decisions taken under the influence of such interference are considered invalid.

The Commission has the authority to develop legal acts in accordance with its competence. Such acts include resolutions, decisions and orders of the Chairman of the Commission. The decisions of the Commission have normative force and are adopted in accordance with this Law and other legislative acts.

The Commission also actively participates in the formation of government policy in the field of television and radio broadcasting, based on the results of public opinion and the market. It oversees the implementation of its proposals, determines licensing conditions, controls the use of the frequency spectrum, takes measures to ensure competition and oversee compliance with safety standards and the free circulation of products. One of the important functions of the Commission is also to regulate the amount and procedure for payment of licensing and regulatory fees. In addition, it introduces legal acts, including codes of conduct, and authorizes broadcasting activities.

The communications regime in the country is not only formed under the influence of legal control by the communications control center, but is exposed also to external control centers seeking to globalize the sphere of communications and overcome national boundaries. The European Union actively encourages the standardization of the legal

1 The Constitution of Georgia. 1995. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/30346?publication=36>.

2 The Electoral Code of Georgia. 2011. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/1557168?publication=78>.

3 About national regulatory authorities. 2002. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/14062?publication=26>.

4 About copyright and related rights. 1999. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/16198?publication=12>.

5 The Law of Georgia On Broadcasting. 2004. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/32866?publication=69>.

6 The Communications Commission. Available from: <https://comcom.ge/en/>.

7 About electronic communications. 2005. Available from <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/29620?publication=46>.

framework for its members, creating a common regulatory framework governing the activities of the media within the EU.

Georgia's desire to integrate into the European Union provides Brussels with an opportunity to influence the communication order in the country⁸. Influential EU representatives are promoting the idea that the media in Georgia are insufficiently independent.

As part of the 12 recommendations for obtaining candidate status for EU membership, European directives are given that provide for mandatory reforms as Georgia strives to promote European integration⁹. Unlike recommendations and comments, directives are mandatory, which is reflected in statements by international organizations and EU representatives.

After reviewing the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting and related laws at the end of 2022, Council of Europe experts presented a number of recommendations to the Georgian Parliament on key issues¹⁰. However, the country's parliament only partially took into account these recommendations.

Having analyzed the regulatory framework of the Georgian media, it should be noted that in the process of developing this policy document in June 2023, in order to fulfill one of the mandatory requirements for obtaining EU candidate status (namely, ensuring media freedom), the Parliament of Georgia approved significant changes in Law "On Television and Radio Broadcasting". These changes included a number of measures aimed at resolving problematic issues identified in the recommendations presented by Council of Europe experts¹¹.

Political parameters in assessing the Friendliness of Georgia's Communication Regime: Official Discourse and Civilizational and Value foundations

Since 2008, Georgian-Russian relations have undergone complex changes. In official circles in Georgia, the Russian Federation is not considered a partner in foreign policy; on the contrary, in a number of strategic documents it is considered a potential threat to national security¹².

8 2023 communication on EU enlargement policy. Available from: https://www.eas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/2023_Communication_on_EU_Enlargement_Policy_Eng.pdf

9 Varhelyi: Three of the 12 EU Recommendations Have Been Addressed in Georgia, 3/9 in Moldova and 2/7 in Ukraine. Georgia Today. 2023. Available from: <https://georgiatoday.ge/varhelyi-in-the-direction-of-de-oligarchization-georgia-has-achieved-limited-progress/>.

10 Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law. Council of Europe. 2023. Available from: <https://rm.coe.int/geo-georgia-legal-opinion-law-of-broadcasting-feb2023-2756-8707-0983-1/1680aac48d>.

11 The Parliament of Georgia (June 30, 2023). On amendments to the Law of Georgia "On Television and Radio Broadcasting" – III hearing. Available from: <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/335021>.

12 The concept of National Security of Georgia. Available from: <https://mfa.gov.ge/national-security-concept>; Georgia's Foreign Policy Strategy. Available from: <https://mfa.gov.ge/Foreign-Policy-Strategy>.

Discussion of the civilizational community between Russia and Georgia has become the object of widespread public debate. Within the official discourse, the Georgian elite seeks to return to European society (since the official and dominant discourse in Georgia conveys Georgia's belonging to European civilization, current integration into European structures is understood as an act of return), viewing Russia as an "Oriental despotism"¹³. This civilizational ambivalence manifested itself in the views of representatives not only of liberal circles, but also of conservative ones, which emphasize the commonality of Georgia and Russia in the context of the Christian paradigm and traditional values. Complex political dynamics, civilizational ambivalences and the problem of divided regions make this region an extremely important object of study.

Among the ruling elite, there are key figures who exert institutional influence on political decisions. Georgia, as an established parliamentary republic, completing the process of full transition in 2024, has the following heads of state structures: the prime minister, the chairman of parliament and the president. The most ardent and active critic of Russia is Georgian President Salome Zurbashvili¹⁴. Prime Minister I. Garibashvili¹⁵ and Chairman of Parliament Sh. Papuashvili¹⁶ make statements hostile towards Russia under pressure, on memorable dates or on international platforms.

Georgia seeks integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, considering Russia as a potential threat to national security. A multi-vector foreign policy has never been characteristic of Georgia since it gained sovereignty in 1991. Consequently, regional projects and initiatives involving cooperation with Moscow are not a priority for Tbilisi¹⁷. The situation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains a key problem. Georgia views Russia as an occupier who has violated international law, while Russia considers recognition of these republics a settled issue. Even with the rhetoric softening after the change of government, the problem persists at the doctrinal level and on international platforms¹⁸, but at the same

13 The Constitution of Georgia. 1995. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/30346?publication=36>.

14 Statement by Salome Zurbashvili. The First Public Channel. 2023. Available from: <https://1tv.ge/lang/ru/news/salome-zurbashvili-na-protjazhenii-vekov-my-postojanno-nabljudаем-zagressiej-rossii-nash-otvet-na-politiku-rossii-tolko-odin-jeto-evropa-mir-i-mir-v-evrope/>; "I do not welcome the restoration of flights to Russia!" – Statement by Salome Zurbashvili." Mtavari Archi. 2023. Available from: <https://mtavari.tv/news/110201-ar-mivesalmebi-rusetan-prenebis-aghdgenas-salome>.

15 Garibashvili's speech at the Munich security Conference. Rustavi 2. 2023. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/249237>.

16 Papuashvili's statement at the session of the International Parliamentary Union. Interpressnews. Available from: <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ru/article/155638-shalva-papuashvili-okkupatsia-iavliaetsia-instrument-rossii-dlia-postoianno-destabilizatsii-regiona-etovyzov-dlia-gruzii-regiona-i-globalnoi-bezopasnosti/>; "A year has passed since the aggression of the Russian Federation brought chaos, destruction and pain to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people," Papuashvili said. Rustavi 2. 2023. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/249724>

17 Georgian Foreign Ministry: Tbilisi will not participate in the 3+3 meeting. Available from: <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/564994>.

18 Irakli Garibashvili – The de-occupation of the regions occupied by Russia remains the main task of our state, I believe that the future belongs to the unity and peace of Abkhazians and Georgians. The First Public Channel. 2023. Available from: <https://1tv.ge/lang/ru/news/iraklij-garibashvili-deokkupacija-okkupirovannykh-rossiej-regionov-ostaetsja-glavnoj-zadachej-nashego-gosudarstva-javerju-chto-budushhee-prinadlezhit-edinstvu-i-miru-abkhazov-i-gruzin/>.

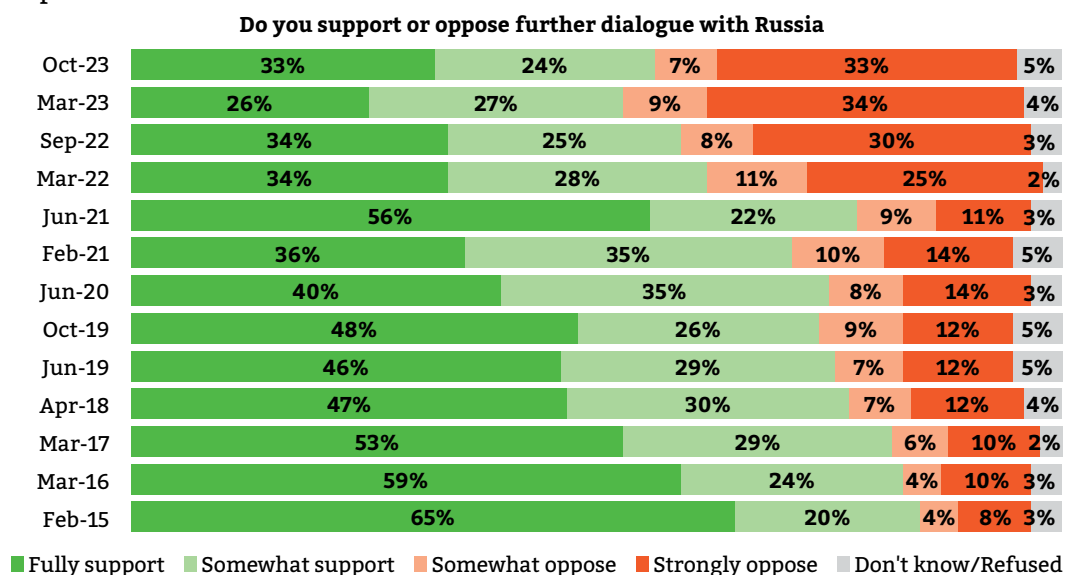
time, government representatives are trying to soften criticism of Russia, pointing out that the conflict could have been avoided.

The civilizational community between Russia and Georgia is the subject of public debate. The understanding of the commonality of the two countries is not only characteristic of liberal groups known as “pro-European”, it is present in conservative movements, albeit with a rejection of the neoliberal agenda. Some conservative circles seek to unite with Western conservatives in the Christian paradigm, where the fundamental values of Europe are faith in God, adherence to traditional values and the maintenance of national identity. The other part, also sharing traditional values and trying to move away from the neoliberal agenda of Western associations, reveals the similarities between Georgia and Russia, justifying this with a common Orthodox identity. Historical and cultural ties and the experience of joint state existence for almost two centuries support this discourse.

Russia: enemy or partner?

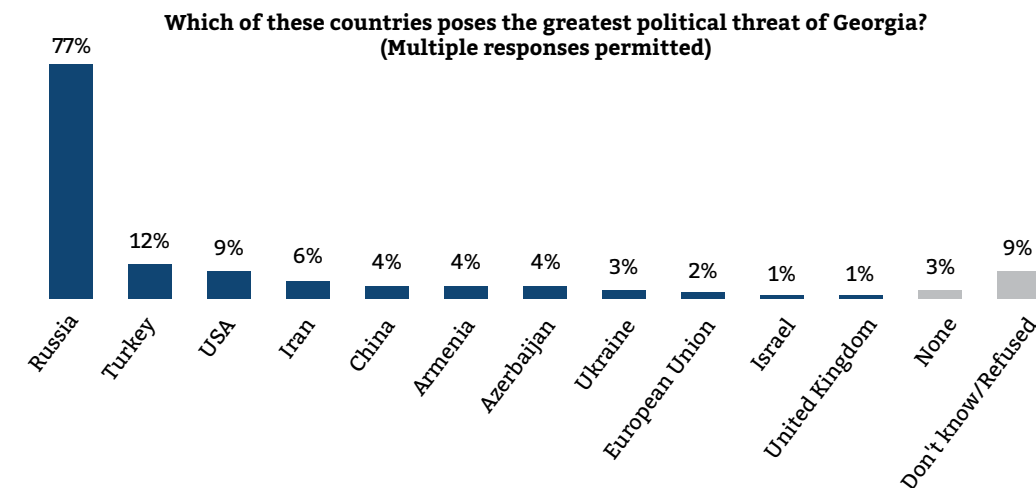
There are no official state media in the Republic of Georgia. Instead, there is a public broadcaster, in particular Channel One (Pirveli Archi), oriented towards the European model of governance, where management is carried out by a board elected by the Communications Commission. The editorial policy is maintained in a fairly neutral manner, avoiding

Figure 1. International Republican Institute (IRI) poll (dialogue with Russia). September-October 2023



Copyright © 2023. Public opinion poll in Georgia. The International Republican Institute. Available from: <https://www.iri.org/resources/georgian-survey-of-public-opinion-september-october-2023/>

Figure 2. International Republican Institute (IRI) poll (greatest political threat to Georgia). September-October 2023



Copyright © 2023. Public opinion poll in Georgia. The International Republican Institute. Available from: <https://www.iri.org/resources/georgian-survey-of-public-opinion-september-october-2023/>

coverage of events that could discredit the country or provoke civil protests. However, the public broadcaster in Georgia lacks popularity among the local population¹⁹.

From the point of view of the information situation, Georgia is divided into two camps. On the one hand, there are pro-government media, such as the Imedi and Rustavi 2 TV channels, whose owners are affiliated with government officials or their proxies. “Imedi” occupies a leading position among TV channels in terms of popularity and trust of viewers [2:432]. On the other hand, there are three TV channels – “Mtavari Arkhi”, “TV Pirveli” and “Formula”, which are affiliated with various opposition forces. “Mtavari Arkhi” takes second place in popularity and trust of viewers regarding news and political information²⁰.

There is no direct criticism of Russia either in the public broadcaster or in the pro-government media, but it can arise depending on the situation, for example, events on the border with South Ossetia²¹ or the death of Georgian citizens in Ukraine fighting as part of the illegal armed formation “Georgian Legion”. The lack of direct criticism creates a negative context in which Russia is portrayed as an aggressor, violating international norms and ignoring its obligations²².

¹⁹ National Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Georgia. Available from: <https://www.iri.org/resources/national-public-opinion-survey-of-residents-of-georgia-march-2023/>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ F.ex.: 2 citizens of Georgia were illegally detained by the representatives of the occupation forces in the occupied territory near the village of Koshki – according to the locals, they were illegally detained in the so-called Tskhinvali. He was taken to the pre-trial detention center. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/245918>.

²² “I don’t see this issue as very tragic” – Zakaria Kutsnashvili on closing the occupation line with South Ossetia. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/245920>.

Social polls in Georgia indicate a negative attitude towards Russia among citizens, although some respondents (from 12% to 17%) express a positive opinion. 65% of respondents support dialogue with Russia. According to 77% of respondents, Russia poses the greatest threat to Georgia (Figures 1, 2).

In Georgia, attitudes toward the Russian government and Russians are different, especially before the events in Ukraine. In social surveys, respondents are asked about their attitude toward the country, not the people, which serves as an indicator of Georgians' attitudes toward the Russian government and Russians. This is also confirmed by the absence of domestic conflicts between Georgians and Russian visitors.

Regarding the status of the Russian language, it is important to note that Georgia has one official language – Georgian. However, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality is actively working to preserve and disseminate the languages of the various peoples living in the country. Russian remains one of the most common: in Tbilisi, 91% of respondents speak Russian, in large cities – 92%, in villages – 82%²³.

Trade and economic relations: trade, business and sanctions

In a situation of confrontation in the global political arena, issues of economic interaction between Georgia and Russia acquire key importance. Analysis of data from recent years indicates the complexity of this interaction and the influence of anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the US and EU. Georgia has created a favorable environment for the functioning of foreign business, defined at the legislative level²⁴. However, difficulties arise for Russian companies under the sanctions regime imposed by the US and EU due to the risk of indirect sanctions against Georgian companies cooperating with Russian sanctioned entities.

At the same time, in recent years, despite the circumstances, trade and economic relations between countries have been improving. Trade turnover for the first half of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 increased by 32%, amounting to \$1.2 billion²⁵. Russia's share of Georgia's total trade rose to 12.4%, the highest in the last 16 years.

In January–June 2023, imports from Russia increased by 31% and amounted to \$927 million. The share of imports from Russia in Georgia's total imports is 12.9% (Figure 3).

In the first half of 2023, petroleum products were the leader in Russian imports – \$321 million, followed by natural gas – \$78 million (Figure 4).

²³ Taking Georgians' pulse. Findings from August 2022 face to face survey. National Democratic Institute. 2022. Available from: <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Taking%20Georgians%E2%80%99pulse%20Findings%20from%20August%202022%20face%20to%20face%20survey%20%28English%29.pdf>.

²⁴ The Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs. Available from: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/28408/49/ru/pdf>; Russian business in Georgia. Radio Liberty. Available from: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/ne-nuzhno-nichego-boyatsya-rossiyskiy-biznes-v-gruzii/32364929.html>.

²⁵ The National Statistical Office of Georgia. Foreign trade in goods. 2023. Available from: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/765/external-merchandise-trade>.

Figure 3. Import of Russian goods to Georgia

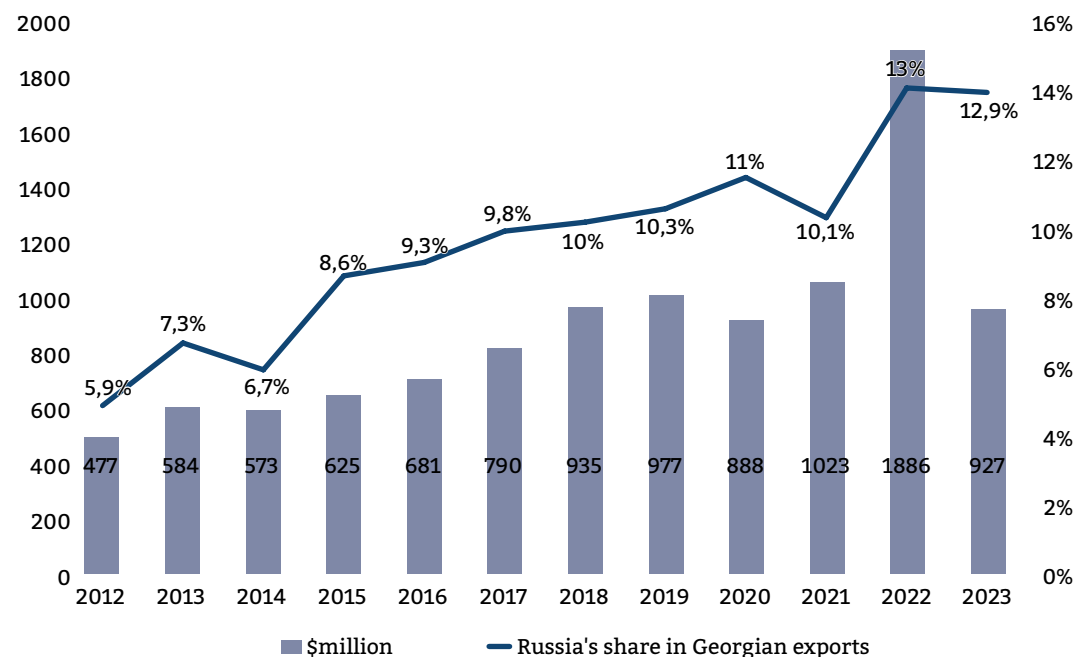
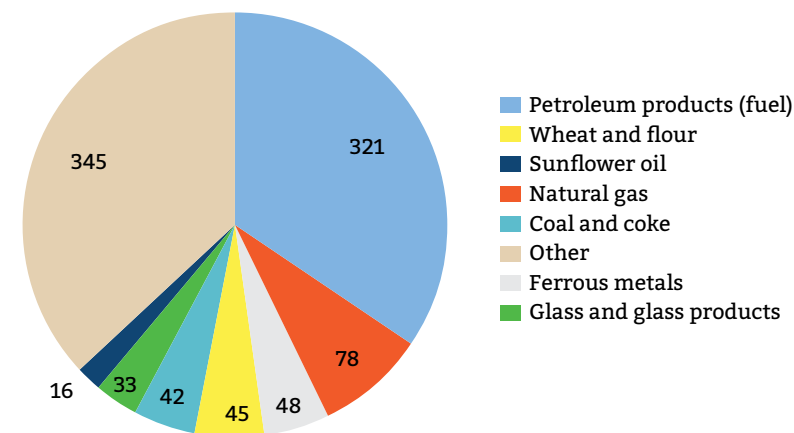


Figure 4. Import of goods from Russia to Georgia by commodity groups



Traditionally, Georgia has been dependent on imports of energy resources (electricity, gas, oil products) and baking raw materials (wheat, flour) from Russia. During the reporting period January–June 2023, the volume of imports of wheat and flour from Russia increased by 26 thousand tons (21%), which accounts for up to 75% of wheat consumption in Georgia. Imports of natural gas from Russia also increased by 119%, amounting to 422 million cubic meters. Thus, the share of Russian natural gas in Georgia's domestic consumption increased

to 24%. Over the 6 months of 2023, the import of petroleum products (fuel) from Russia increased the most – by \$137 million (by 75%)²⁶.

In the first half of 2023, exports of Georgian products to Russia increased by 34%, reaching \$344 million (Figure 5).

Russia's share in Georgia's total exports amounted to 11.3%, increasing by 1.3 percentage points compared to 2022²⁷. Among exported products in the first half of the year, wine took first place, reaching \$82 million, which is 41% more than in the same period last year. The Russian market share in total Georgian wine exports also increased and reached 65%, the highest since 2013, following the return of Georgian wine to the Russian market. Soft drinks came second with \$66 million, followed by passenger vehicle exports with \$53 million. (Figure 6).

In 2023, developing trade and economic relations became more difficult when the EU and the US began to strengthen anti-Russian sanctions and put pressure on the Georgian government due to the improving economic dynamics between the countries.

The sanctions regime that American and European politicians are trying to implement affects Russian-Georgian trade relations, since Russia's disconnection from the international payment system and sanctions against Russian banks and companies affect the prospects for cooperation with them by Georgian banks and entrepreneurs who fear indirect sanctions. The sanctions affected not only the banking and business environment in Georgia, but also directly affected a profitable industry in trade relations between countries – on September 26, the export and re-export of European cars from Georgia to Russia and Belarus was banned²⁸.

Representatives of the ruling party and a number of experts believe that sanctions against Russia will greatly harm the national interests of Georgia and hit the citizens of the country²⁹. According to Georgian experts, if the country were to join anti-Russian sanctions in 2022, instead of double-digit economic growth, the country's economy would experience an 11% decline in terms of trade, remittances and investment.

The humanitarian dimension of communication friendliness: the absence of diplomatic relations and the presence of so-called “red lines”

In promising youth communications in Russia and Georgia, the Russian side is often the initiator, since Russia has financial, human and other resources and can provide platforms on its territory. The initiative and formation of the agenda most often comes from Russia, and the Georgian side only participates in the events.

²⁶ Transparency International Georgia. Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia Continues to Grow: January–June 2023. Available from: <https://transparency.ge/en/post/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-continues-grow-january-june-2023>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Georgia prohibits the re-export of cars imported from the EU to Russia and Belarus. Civil.ge. Available from: <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/561104>.

²⁹ An expert on the effect of joining the current sanctions against Russia. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/247995>; Арчил Талаквдзе про санкции. Available from: <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/248310>.

Figure 5. Export of Georgian goods to Russia

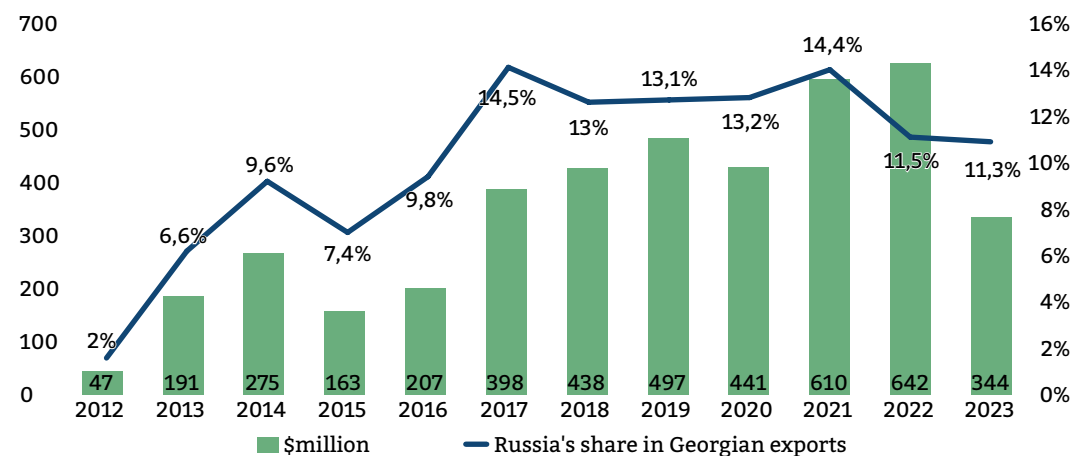
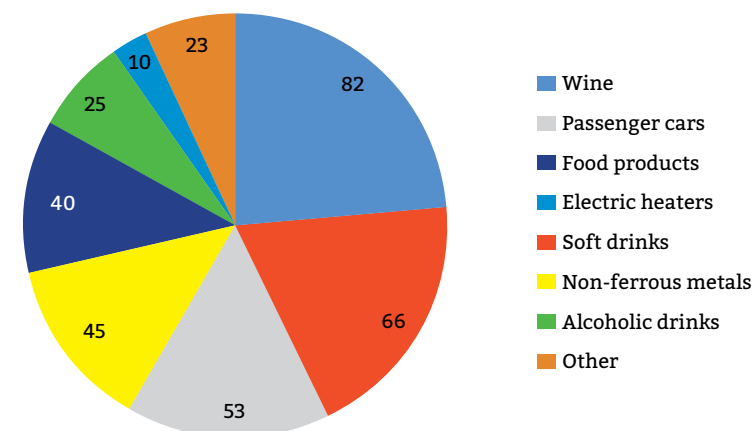


Figure 6. Export of Georgia goods to Russia by commodity groups



Various forms of youth interactions include forums, festivals, workshops, trainings, summer and winter schools. A notable event in 2023 was the summer school organized at the North Caucasus Federal University from July 2 to July 9³⁰.

The interest of Georgian youth in cooperation and Russian projects remains small, which is explained by individual and objective factors. The events promise participants a Chatham House format, but in practice meeting materials are often not published, which is important for Georgian youth who are ready for dialogue and cooperation, but prefer to avoid public discussions in the first stages of interaction. Often access to these events is

³⁰ The North Caucasus Federal University gathers historians of the Greater Caucasus at the International Youth School. Available from: <https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/69914/>

limited, they are not sufficiently covered in the media, and they are ineffectively organized.

In Georgian-Russian intercultural relations, it is worth highlighting such public and cultural organizations as the Tbilisi State Academic Russian Drama Theater named after A. S. Griboedov³¹, "Russian Club in Georgia"³² and the organization of Russian compatriots "KSORS", Georgian-Russian Public Center named after E. M. Primakov.

Despite the lack of interstate relations in the field of culture, in the Republic of Georgia there are such symbolic memorial places as Victory Park, the Arch of Friendship of Russia and Georgia, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, burial places that attract the attention of residents, monuments to Russian poets, including A. S. Griboedov, in the center of Tbilisi, which is significant for Georgian-Russian relations.

An important aspect of public interaction is common memorial dates for Georgians and Russians, primarily Victory Day. In Georgia, May 9 is officially celebrated as Victory Day over Fascism.³³, while in Russia this day is Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War. Discussions about this memorable date in Georgia are related to the question of the possibility of celebrating Victory Day and Europe Day simultaneously on May 8. Some part of society expresses the opinion about the need to abandon the celebration of May 9 in favor of May 8, which distances Georgia from the Russian discourse on World War II, while supporters of tradition insist on preserving the celebration of Victory Day on May 9, emphasizing the importance of honoring the memory of veterans and fallen Georgian soldiers. This is not necessarily related to sympathies towards Russia, since national identity and anti-Soviet sentiments of Georgian society often prevail. This is due to the anti-Russian and nationalistic interpretation of historical events presented in school textbooks and the lack of consensus on key historical events.

In the scientific communications of scientists from Georgia and Russia, despite the lack of formalized relations, such interaction exists. These contacts, as a rule, are initiated and supported by the Russian Federation: participation in scientific conferences, expert forums and discussions aimed at dialogue and joint research.

Scientists from Russia and Georgia interact both on the territory of Georgia and in Russia, but more often, these meetings are limited to personal contacts, which allow colleagues to invite each other to various scientific events, but do not receive systematic development. For example, Russian scientists can be invited to conferences of ethnographers and Caucasian studies at Tbilisi State University, and Georgian researchers can take part in forums dedicated to the 240th anniversary of the Treaty of Georgievsk³⁴, academic sessions at the Primakov Readings and events of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

³¹ The Russian Drama Theater named after A. Griboedov. Available from: <https://www.griboedovtheatre.ge/>

³² The Russian club. Available from: <http://www.russianclub.ge/>

³³ May 9 is Victory Day over Fascism. Satellite Georgia.2023. Available from: <https://sputnik-georgia.com/20230509/9-pashizmze-gamarjvebis-dge-277475941.html>.

³⁴ International round table "Russia and Georgia: 240 years of the St. George's Treatise". Available from: <https://sfedu.ru/press-center/news/72391>.

Conclusions

Russian-Georgian relations represent a complex sociocultural context in which political, humanitarian and informational dimensions interact, shaped by the historical, cultural and geopolitical heritage dating back to the times of the Russian Empire. The events of 2008 became a source of tension and issues of political disagreement, especially regarding the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, are currently an obstacle to the development of cooperation between states. On the other hand, humanitarian aspects, including cultural exchange, emphasize the importance of deepening mutual understanding, despite the presence of political tensions in various aspects of sociocultural relations. In this context, the information dimension plays a key role in shaping public opinion and can both increase and decrease tensions. It is important to strive for objectivity in information campaigns to establish trust and promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

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Contribution of the authors

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: November 21, 2023. Approved after peer review: December 25, 2023.
Accepted for publication: January 14, 2024. Published: March 20, 2024.

The authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.