

ATHENA

FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

MSc Course

"The EU and the Post-Soviet Space"

Plamen

DERMENDZHIEV

AS

GIORGI BERIDZE

Fictional Georgian
activist



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- Jean Monnet Chair -



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Context

The following speech is delivered by a fictional civil activist – Giorgi Beridze, one of the most recognizable faces of the summer protest events following the European Commission’s rejection to grant Georgia candidate status on June 17, 2022. The speech is given during one of the protests and is directly addressing EU diplomats, days before the annual EU-Georgia Association Council in September 2022, attended by the HR/VP and the Georgian Prime Minister. The goal of the speech, a recording of which will be circulated in online media, is to build pressure on the EU to grant Georgia an official candidate status.

Speech

Disappointed. Frustrated. Like undeserving leftovers who will never be good enough. That is how we, the peoples of Georgia, feel after the European re-integration we’ve long been fighting for got rejected.

When we applied for membership in March, we were hopeful. Hopeful that as terrible as the events in Ukraine were, they would lead to a better future. One that would see our big European family united by the norms and values we share. A future that all of us Georgians aspired to and for which we paid in blood with the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians and of the brave soldiers who stood against the same enemy that now wreaks havoc in Europe’s very heart. We did not waver. Our European choice remained as strong as ever. Agreements were struck, reforms were made, and progress followed.

Yet now, in times when Europe needs to band together against its common enemy, divisive lines were once again drawn. We were left out from either. Pushed to a no-man’s space, a void for those deemed unworthy. Not democratic enough to be integrated, and not autocratic enough to be isolated.

Dear diplomats, why? Why did you fail us? You say we have problems with the rule of law. That oligarchs have their way in politics. That the press is not free. Aren’t these the same issues that plague all your candidate states – all the way from the Western Balkans to the Eastern Neighborhood? Aren’t these the same issues that even your own member states are facing and have been failing so far to solve? Why are we treated differently? Have we not shown strong, consistent commitment to the European way of life?

Giving us an EU ‘perspective’ is indeed symbolic. It is a symbolic failure to grasp the consequences of your actions. You left out an ally vulnerable to the same aggressor that unjustly invaded us not long ago and whom you now fiercely fight against. You fell short of extending to us the same solidarity you’ve shown others. You disillusioned us and created a fertile ground for Euroscepticism. You failed to act as a regional, let alone the global actor you claim to be.

If you believe that we can act to address our deficiencies, so can you. You can still correct your mistake. Mr. Borrell, Mr. Vice President of the European Commission, be our voice. Show us that you truly care. Help us get recognized as a candidate before it’s too late. Use the momentum for further integration. Don’t let the ‘jungle’ engulf us. But let us build a bigger, safer and stronger ‘garden’. Together.