



FOCUS

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Simple Heroes around Us Protecting Wildlife: Stories from Rangers in the Field

Sometimes, heroes are not only those protecting the homeland in battles and frontlines: they exist around us, are ordinary members of society, doing their jobs quietly and diligently. Here, we're going to tell you about such heroes fighting every day to save the nature and wildlife. These heroes are rangers, who deserve their contribution and hard work to be praised accordingly.

At a time when environmental protection has never been more important for the future of our planet, the jobs of rangers have never been as vital and valuable.

Georgian rangers, just like their colleagues worldwide, are protecting the rich and endangered natural heritage of the country at the risk of their lives against the background of growing threats from the illegal wildlife trade and poaching, which is destructive for the environment.

Moreover, rangers of the Agency of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture of Georgia play an important part in ensuring the safety of tourists and those communities who live alongside animals, and in



ensuring that the national parks of Georgia, distinguished by their unique beauty and biodiversity, remain safe and protected for all.

Despite their busy schedule, nature protectors willingly shared with us what motivates them to protect wildlife.

One of the most distinguished organizations

working to protect wildlife in Georgia over the years is SABUKO - the Society for Nature Conservation and Birdlife Partner in Georgia. SABUKO aims to protect wildlife birds and their habitats, and to raise awareness about the value of nature and the importance of protecting it.

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Markets					
	Price	w/w	m/m		
BONDS				STOCKS	
GRAIL 07/28	87.66 (YTM 6.42%)	-5.3%	-10.6%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 9.86 -25.2% -33.5%
GEORG 07/23	105.64 (YTM 1.84%)	+0.3%	+0.0%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 4.59 -18.3% -32.1%
GEOPAP 03/24	96.67 (YTM 7.96%)	-1.0%	-4.3%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 9.01 -25.0% -40.5%
SILNET 01/27	99.97 (YTM 8.38%)	-1.2%	-1.8%		
TBC 06/24	103.23 (YTM 4.24%)	-1.1%	-1.2%	CURRENCIES	
GGU 07/25	103.08 (YTM 6.72%)	-2.5%	-2.7%	GEL / USD	3.4400 +7.5% +18.0%
				GEL / EUR	3.7478 +4.4% +12.4%
				GEL / GBP	4.5059 +5.0% +14.2%
				GEL / CHF	3.7143 +6.2% +17.7%
				GEL / RUB	0.0243 -20.2% -37.2%
				GEL / TRY	0.2386 +3.5% +11.3%
				GEL / AZN	1.9759 +4.7% +15.0%
				GEL / AMD	0.0067 +1.9% +10.5%
				GEL / UAH	0.1058 - - +5.4%
COMMODITIES				EUR / USD	0.9213 +3.4% +5.4%
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	123.21	+22.0%	+32.9%	GBP / USD	0.7631 +2.4% +3.3%
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 998.11	+4.7%	+9.8%	CHF / USD	0.9255 +0.9% +0.2%
				RUB / USD	120.1375 +22.5% +59.1%
				TRY / USD	14.3851 +3.9% +5.8%
				AZN / USD	1.6956 -0.0% -0.0%
				AMD / USD	513.7200 +5.5% +6.9%
INDICES					
FTSE 100	6 959.48	-6.7%	-8.1%		
FTSE 250	19 169.78	-9.1%	-12.1%		
DAX	12 834.65	-11.2%	-15.6%		
DOW JONES	32 817.38	-3.2%	-6.5%		
NASDAQ	12 830.96	-6.7%	-8.5%		
MSCI EM EE	73.31	-25.1%	-57.6%		
MSCI EM	1 107.30	-5.5%	-9.2%		
SP 500	4 201.09	-4.0%	-6.3%		
MSCI FM	2 567.12	-2.5%	-4.2%		



The prime ministers of Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic departed on a train bound for Kyiv on Tuesday

BY KETEVAN SKHIRTLADZE

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia is the main concern of leaders around the world. The President of the United States, Joe Biden, wrote on Twitter that Putin “may be able to take a city, but he will never be able to hold the country.” “This much is already clear: Ukraine will never be a victory for Putin. Putin may be able to take a city, but he will never be able to hold the country,” he tweeted.

US State Department Ned Price made a comment involving Georgia, stating that very few countries realize the potential consequences of Russian aggression, yet one which does is Georgia, which was invaded by Russian forces in 2008. He noted that many Georgians still have these bitter memories.

Price also highlighted that many Geor-

gians, including those in government and among the citizenship, have expressed solidarity with their Ukrainian counterparts.

“We call on all countries to support Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, but also to uphold the core principles underpinning a rule-based order that has maintained an unprecedented level of stability, security, and prosperity for more than 70 years. These are the principles that Russia violated in 2008 when Russian forces invaded Georgia, and are the same principles that Vladimir Putin is violating today: The idea that borders should be inviolable, that big countries should not oppress small countries,” Price said.

PMS OF POLAND, SLOVENIA, AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC HEAD TO KYIV, GEORGIA ABSTAINS

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, released a video address in which he called on the leaders of friendly countries to come to Kyiv.

The World Standing by Ukraine: Official Visits to Kyiv and More Sanctions for Russia

The prime ministers of Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic departed on a train bound for Kyiv on Tuesday, with the aim of meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. The purpose of the visit was “to confirm the unequivocal support of the entire European Union for the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine and to present a broad package of support for the Ukrainian state and society,” a government spokesperson said.

The EU delegation met Zelensky on Tuesday evening as a curfew began in Kyiv, the BBC reported. They are the first Western leaders to visit Ukraine since Russia invaded.

The Czech leader, PM Petr Fiala, told the Ukrainians that they were “not alone.” “We admire your brave fight,” Fiala wrote in a tweet. “We know that you’re not alone, our countries stand by your side.”

“Your visit is a powerful expression of support for Ukraine,” Mr. Zelensky is quoted as telling the group.

On Wednesday, Poland’s Mateusz Morawiecki tweeted that Ukraine was reminding Europe what courage was, and that it was time for “sluggish and

decayed” Europe to reawaken and “break-through her wall of indifference and give Ukraine hope.”

Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Georgian Dream, commented on Georgia’s own possible visit to Ukraine, noting that the issue should be resolved through “broad consultations.”

“Any such issue should be resolved on the basis of extensive consultations, including with our international partners. These consultations should be based primarily on a risk analysis. When such consultations take place, we will be able to voice our position,” Kobakhidze said.

THE SANCTIONS

The Council of the European Union this week approved a fourth package of economic and individual sanctions against Russia.

“The fourth package of sanctions is another major blow to Russia’s economic and logistical base, which Russia relies on to continue hostilities in Ukraine. The aim of the sanctions is for President Putin to put a stop to this inhuman and senseless war in Ukraine,” said Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The fourth package of EU sanctions against Russia includes: Prohibition of transactions with certain state-owned enterprises; Prohibition of the provision of any credit rating service to any Russian person or entity, as well as prohibition of access to any subscriber services in connection with credit rating activities; Expanding the list of persons with ties to the Russian defense-enterprise base, which imposes stricter restrictions on materials and technologies that may contribute to the technological refinement of the Russian defense and security sector; Prohibition of new investments in the Russian energy sector, as well as imposing comprehensive restrictions on the export of equipment, technology and services to the energy industry, and; Introduction of further trade restrictions in iron, steel, and luxury items.

Sky News reported that the United Kingdom was imposing sanctions on another 350 companies and individuals in Russia, including Dmitry Medvedev (Russian politician, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council), Sergei Shoigu (Russian politician and army general, Russia’s Defense Minister since 2012) and Mikhail Friedman (Russian billionaire and co-founder of Alfa-Group).

Kaladze: Ukrainian Children Can Attend Kindergarten for Free



Photo source: pia.ge

We have decided, together with the Tbilisi

City Council, that the children of Ukrainian families stuck here will be able to go to kindergarten without any payment,” said Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze.

The mayor instructed his deputy, Ilia Elovshvili, to coordinate the issue so that the decision could be enforced through direct communication with the families.

“We will stand by these families while there is a need and until there is peace in Ukraine,” Kaladze said.



Parliament Unanimously Endorses Draft Resolution on Georgia’s Integration to the EU

The Parliament unanimously endorsed the draft resolution on Georgia’s integration in the European Union with 111 votes.

Before introducing the text of the proposed resolution, Maka Botchorishvili, the Chair of the EU Integration Committee, addressed her colleagues. Georgia’s accession to the European Union, she claims, is a strategic goal for the country, based on the will of the Georgian people and the Georgian Constitution. She noted that Georgia has created a solid platform for continued development on its path to EU integration during the last decade.

“Unfortunately, despite its ambitious content, despite the fact that the Association Agreement provides the greatest opportunity for EU integration of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, the Association Agreement does not provide for the possibility of joining the EU. I also note that joining the European Union is not a one-sided process,” Botchorishvili stated.

She pointed out that with Russia carrying out completely unjustified aggression against Ukraine, there is unanimous support from the European Union towards Ukraine, one of the manifestations of which is the possibility of granting Ukraine EU membership status.

“This political gesture by the European Union, in and of itself, creates a window of opportunity for Georgia to


speed up the integration process. At the same time, it is apparent that the requirements of EU membership have not altered, and that all steps must be completed successfully. To succeed on the road to EU integration, Georgia needs the strong support of EU member states and institutions, and we must do all possible to gain that support,” Botchorishvili stated.

The Chair of the Committee presented a draft resolution to her colleagues, outlining the key messages that the country needs to join the European Union.

- The draft resolution emphasizes that since the day of the restoration of independence, EU integration has been the driving force of Georgia’s democratic development and economic transformation and a top foreign policy priority.

- The document calls on the Georgian executive to step up its efforts towards Georgia’s European integration and to implement the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union, in order to properly prepare Georgia for EU membership.

- The resolution also calls on the EU to engage at a high level in strengthening Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as in promoting peace and stability in Georgia and the region, and to intensify efforts to fully monitor the implementation of the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement in order for the EUMM to gain access to the occupied territories of Georgia.




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Invites 16-20 year old young speakers to take part in the

Public Speaking Competition

The theme of the competition is “We expect too much from our heroes”. Speakers may interpret this theme in any way they see fit, but they should not use the theme as their title. Each speaker will be allocated 5 minutes.

The competition will be held in three rounds. The first round, March 21, at the English Language Centre “British Corner”.

The date and theme of the second round will be announced later.

The competition is sponsored by the Bank of Georgia.

Due to the pandemic the final of the competition in London will be held online.

The deadline for registration is March 15.

Contact us:
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(entrance from I. Abashidze St.).
Tel.: 032 226305, 591339993, E mail: marinaesu@yahoo.com; britishcornerbc@gmail.com
www.esugeorgia.com <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnIKLMA7rBA>

President's Annual Address Raises Concerns of Constitutional Violations

BY TEAM GT

While Georgian political events this week have largely been focused on the ongoing war, it also came time for President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili to deliver her annual report to Parliament.

On March 14, she entered the session hall together with the temporary representative of Ukraine. Her annual speech began with a minute of silence and the Ukrainian national anthem.

The President noted that the selfless struggle against Russian aggression "only leads to respect, solidarity and support," and added that Georgia stood and stands by Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Zurbishvili addressed the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky on the issue of his country's Ambassador, withdrawn from Georgia two weeks ago "for consultations."

"In my parliamentary speech, I appeal to the Georgian government to return our Ambassador to Ukraine, and, today, from this tribune, I address my colleague and friend, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and ask him to return the Ambassador so that the connection between the two nations in these difficult times, can be fully strengthened and brought closer and made more unwavering."

The President also expressed dissatis-



President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili speaking in Parliament. Source: Publika.ge

faction with the government and noted she had been refused the chance to visit Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and Warsaw, instead having to use personal contacts and to carry out "unofficial" visits.

"The restrictions imposed on the President's international activities are incomprehensible when the need is greatest and time is running out. On February 26, I was refused in writing to pay working visits to Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Warsaw. Despite the current situation, I had to cancel all official formats and found it necessary to use my personal contacts and turn working visits into

personal meetings. I think this approach and such restrictions are harmful to our country, it being in such a difficult region," Zurbishvili said.

She went on to highlight her 40 years of experience in diplomacy and strategic affairs, and noted that the personal contacts she has acquired during this period should be used to the maximum rather than lost.

Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Georgian Dream, responded to Zurbishvili's statement by saying that if the Georgian president had truly visited Europe in such a way, it meant she had

violated the country's constitution and, as such, the Georgian government would be appealing to the Constitutional Court against her.

The subsequent statement released by the Georgian Dream Political Council reads that in the process of implementing Georgia's foreign policy, the President had violated the Constitution, a fact needing to be confirmed by the Constitutional Court.

"The Constitution of Georgia gives the Government the exclusive authority to implement foreign policy," the statement reads. "In accordance with the principles of the Parliamentary Republic, the President of Georgia may engage in the implementation of foreign policy only in exceptional cases, with the extraordinary consent of the Government of Georgia. The President is not subject to any state agency related to the implementation of foreign policy, which makes it impossible for them to be effectively involved in the implementation of these powers."

"[Further] The appointment of ambassadors and other diplomatic representatives is one of the most important tools for foreign policy implementation. The relevant act is issued with the co-signature of the President and the Prime Minister, and, according to the Constitution, political responsibility for such an act lies solely with the Government. This means that the material authority to appoint an ambassador is vested in the Government by the Constitution, while the president has only legal and ceremo-

nial powers in this area.

"However, even if a reservation is not made, the power to appoint ambassadors to all parliamentary republics is defined in this way - the President formally appoints ambassadors and the Government is politically and practically responsible for their selection. Over the past year, there have been a number of cases in which the President has refused to appoint an ambassador or diplomatic representative nominated by the Government, which is grossly contrary to the Constitution of Georgia. During the past months, a number of meetings were held between government officials and the President, where the President was repeatedly explained the content of the Constitution of Georgia, but, unfortunately, to no avail. In these circumstances, the Government of Georgia is forced to apply to the Constitutional Court within the framework of the dispute over the competencies of the Court, and to request confirmation of the violation of the Constitution by the President of Georgia."

In contradiction to the reaction of the ruling party, ex-PM Giorgi Gakharia thanked President Salome Zurbishvili for the sentiment expressed in her annual address.

"I am grateful to the President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, for her leadership during this difficult period for Georgia and its future. I am grateful for her showing the will of the citizens of Georgia and for the restoration of national self-esteem," Gakharia wrote on Twitter.

Week Three of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine



Ukrainian President Zelensky. Source: Forbes

BY ANA DUMBADZE

The third week of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has seen Russian forces continuing to bombard several cities, including the capital, Kyiv, Mariupol and Kharkiv.

On the 22nd day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UN figures showed that more than three million Ukrainians have fled the country and a further two million have been internally displaced.

The confirmed civilian death toll in Ukraine is 691 people killed and 1143 wounded, the United Nations human rights office reported, adding the true figures were probably "considerably higher."

Ukraine's President Zelensky says 100 Ukrainian children have died since the invasion began.

Entering the third week of the devastating invasion, all the big cities of Ukraine apart from Kherson are still being controlled by the Ukrainian forces.

Here are some key developments from week three of war on the ground:

MARCH 13

On Sunday, March 13, Russia began a deadly assault in western Ukraine. Russian forces launched an air strike near Lviv and fired eight rockets at the International Peace and Security Center. A

Russian attack on a Ukrainian military site located some 15 miles from the Polish border brought the war dangerously close to NATO territory. The attack left 35 dead and wounded 140.

MARCH 14

A senior US defense official said Russia's weekend airstrikes against a Ukrainian military base near Poland, a NATO member, have had no impact on efforts to assist Ukraine. The UN also announced that it would allocate \$40 million in additional funds to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a fourth round of talks held online between Ukraine and Russia ended without a breakthrough. Negotiations were expected to resume Tuesday, also by video.

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration said Russia was escalating attacks in the western part of the country.

MARCH 15

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had taken control of the entire Kherson region, giving Russian forces a significant foothold in southern Ukraine. Kherson was the first (and so far, only) major city to be fully taken over by Russian forces.

MARCH 16

Ukrainian forces carried out counter-offensives against Russian positions on Wednesday, seeking "maximum losses."

In Mariupol, an airstrike destroyed a theater where about 1,000 people, including children, were said to have taken shelter. Local officials said they had yet to estimate the number of casualties. The strike came as 11,000 residents evacuated Mariupol on Wednesday, where it is said there is not a single building left that has not been damaged or destroyed.

In a video address to Ukrainians early Thursday morning, President Volodymyr Zelensky called for more sanctions against Russia and said it was a "terrorist state." "Our hearts are broken by what Russia is doing to our people, to our Mariupol," he said.

The next morning, the Ukrainian Rada announced: "We finally have good news from Mariupol. The bomb shelter of the theater was able to hold. The rubble is beginning to be cleared. People are coming out alive."

The same day, Ukrainian troops tried to gain some momentum through counterattacks on Russian positions outside of Kyiv and in the Russian-occupied city of Kherson, in Ukraine's south, a senior Ukrainian military official said.

A TV tower in the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia was hit by Russian rocket fire, knocking out the city's broadcasting facilities, the latest in a series of communications towers to be hit by Russian forces, including structures in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Vynarivka, and most recently in the northwestern city of Rivne.

Authorities in Rivne say 21 people were killed in the strike.

Wednesday's TV tower strike is the second significant targeting of Vinnytsia since the war began. Ten days ago, Russian missiles destroyed the city's airport.

On Wednesday, President Volodymyr Zelensky called on US Congress to provide air defense systems to deal with Russian planes and missiles if the West does not want to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

"The talks between Russia and Ukraine are difficult, but there is hope we can reach a compromise," Russian Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov said the same day.

"Russia's negotiating position in talks with Ukraine is becoming 'more realistic,'" Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported.

THE DEATH TOLL

American intelligence officials on Wednesday said their conservative estimate of Russian losses was at least 7000. Western defense and intelligence agencies estimated that Ukraine has also suffered thousands of combatants killed.

The first and last time that the Russian Ministry of Defense spoke about the casualties among the Russian military was on March 2, when it was reported that 498 Russian soldiers had been killed.

MARCH 17

The US and its NATO allies announced they were sending several surface-to-air missile systems to Ukraine to aid in its defense.

According to a senior US official, these additional systems include the Soviet-era SA-8, SA-10, SA-12 and SA-14 mobile air defense systems, giving the Ukrainian forces the ability to hit cruise missiles.

The systems have been sourced from NATO partner nations and are "on the way," according to the same official.

To conclude, neither side can be said to have made much progress militarily. The Institute for the Study of War, which has been tracking developments closely, noted in its assessment that over the past two weeks, the Russian forces have not

been conducting the kind of extensive simultaneous attacks that might allow them to seize control of multiple areas at once, "and they are unlikely to do so in the next week," it predicted.

Yet, in the absence of significant military gains, Russian forces are continuing a campaign of terror against Ukrainian civilians.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA DRAW UP 15-POINT NEUTRALITY PLAN TO END THE WAR

Various media sources report that Ukraine and Russia have made significant progress on a tentative 15-point peace plan, including a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal if Kyiv declares neutrality and accepts limits on its armed forces.

The deal would involve Kyiv renouncing NATO ambitions in return for security guarantees, reports the Financial Times. However, Ukrainian officials remain skeptical towards Russia's fulfillment of any agreement about peace. They question whether Vladimir Putin is fully committed to peace and worry that Moscow could be buying time to regroup its forces and resume its offensive.

Mykhailo Podolyak, a senior adviser to President Zelensky, told the Financial Times that any deal would involve "the troops of the Russian Federation in any case leaving the territory of Ukraine" captured since the invasion began on February 24th, namely, southern regions along the Azov and Black seas, as well as territory to the east and north of Kyiv.



Damaged vehicles and buildings in Kharkiv city center. By Pavel Dorogoy/AP

Uncontrolled Mass Immigration and the Position of the Georgian Government

BLOG BY GIORGI BADRIDZE,
SENIOR FELLOW AT GFSIS*

The Russian war in Ukraine, among other things, has resulted in Georgia experiencing a huge influx of Russian citizens. This has served as cause for another confrontation in the country, only this time not within society, but between the majority of citizens, who view the uncontrolled mass immigration as a potential threat, and the government, which flatly refuses to deploy even a minimum level of control. One can regularly hear the top government officials accusing their critics of xenophobia and presenting their own position as “pragmatic.”

Let us look into the facts and try to appreciate how justified each of these approaches is in terms of morality and pragmatism.

According to the Georgian government's own information, in the first 13 days of war, nearly 25,000 Russian citizens crossed the Georgian border, with the numbers increasing by the day. Officials tried to argue that nothing extraordinary was taking place, as a similar number of visitors had been seen in the same period of previous years. Only, for some reason, they would not admit that the record number of visitors this year represents not tourists arriving for a few days, but potential immigrants which are likely to stay indefinitely. And the number of arrivals is growing exponentially. On March 6 alone, Georgian Airlines had a unprecedented nine flights from Yerevan, bringing hundreds more Russian citizens to Georgia.

The State Security Service of Georgia responded to the criticism by issuing a statement, in which it claims that “the allegation about the so called mass uncontrolled influx of foreign citizens, specifically citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus in recent days, was



The Russian Georgian Friendship Monument in Gudauri. Source: DestiMap

deliberate disinformation.” It promised that “security in the country is under complete control.”

That the influx uncontrolled is evident from the mere fact that Russian citizens continue to enjoy the (unilateral) visa-free regime and that the one person we know who was denied entry to Georgia was a journalist from Dozhd TV (TV Rain), a TV station persecuted and closed down by the Russian authorities. This suggests that the only control that exists applies to those undesirable to Putin's regime.

It is also hard not to call it “mass” when a stream of thousands of Russian citizens is crossing the Georgian border daily, and when their number exceeds the records of the best tourist seasons. And when, this time, these are not tourists visiting for a few days, enjoying Georgian resorts, spending money, and returning home: This time, they are migrants,

escaping the inconveniences created by the sanctions imposed in response to Putin's war.

Perhaps our citizens will make their own judgement whether they should be satisfied by the assurances of the security service that they have total control over the situation. Yet, if there is a shred of evidence to that effect, it is being kept secret, as the only “achievement” with which they have distinguished themselves in recent years is the revelations of eavesdropping of private citizens, politicians, and clergymen. I would hope that those who have crossed the Georgian border in recent weeks (and in the years before that) did not include members of the Russian intelligence services, like the ones who became infamous as a result of the murders they committed on UK and German soil, and by the acts of sabotage in Czechia and elsewhere, and I consider it as utmost irresponsibil-

ity when someone categorically rules out such a possibility.

Further, the issue of security is not limited to a hypothetical problem of saboteurs. For instance, has anyone given a thought, let alone conducted a study into what happens when, either because of blocked bank cards or exhausted funds, thousands of Russian citizens in Georgia become unable to pay their rent and find themselves left helpless amid a virtually non-existent system of social security?

Of course, the influx of Russian citizens should be considered in the humanitarian dimension as well, but we must agree that their absolute majority is not composed of refugees: unlike Ukrainians, they are not fleeing bombs raining down on their homes. Among them there are people who must be welcomed wholeheartedly and offered our full support, yes, but the actions of the Georgian government cause serious concern: as already

mentioned, there have been cases seeing them turning away those escaping Putin's persecution, not just the discomfort of the sanctions.

No, we should not slam shut our doors on Russian citizens, but we should introduce at least a minimum level of control. For instance, a system of electronic visas to help regulate the flow and prioritize those who need our support most. In the age of internet and social networks, it would not be hard to reveal those with a hostile disposition toward Georgia.

It is impossible to discuss this issue without mentioning the Georgian government's position on the international sanctions. I sincerely hope that no-one entertains the idea that the country, or they personally, could benefit financially from the conditions emerging as a result of the war. This would not just be an immoral, but also a totally foolish and dangerous position. There is evidence that Russia could try to use Georgia to soften the impact of the sanctions, as it has since 2014 with Belarus, which functioned as a stage for relabeling the sanctioned goods (though such a practice would be a direct violation of the agreements signed with the EU, even without any sanctions). Considering the pace with which the number and the severity of sanctions is increasing, no-one with even the slightest common sense would think of making any back-door deals with the Russian government or private companies.

I would strongly advise the Government of Georgia to reevaluate the new circumstances and to immediately design a new immigration system, as well as a new trade and economic policy, one which will take into account humanitarian considerations, but which would also be based on solidarity with Ukraine and the rules of the sanctions introduced by Georgia's allies, the violation of which would cost dearly not just certain individuals, but the country as a whole.

*First published by GFSIS

Congress President Condemns “Elections” Held in Occupied Abkhazia



President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Of the Council of Europe, Leendert Verbeek. Source: COE

Reacting to recent so-called “parliamentary elections” held on 12 March in the Abkhazia region in Georgia, the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Leendert Ver-

beek, made the following statement: “By organizing these ‘elections,’ the so-called “de facto” authorities of Abkhazia once again undermined the principle of the territorial integrity of Georgia, forcing this region further into isolation, to the detriment of the local

population. “The Congress has always shown its unrelenting commitment to the territorial integrity of member States within its internationally recognized borders. This principle is all the more important in the current context of the Russian

military aggression against Ukraine.

“Even before 24 February we knew that the illegal recognition of territories of other member States can be only one step ahead of further aggression and war. This is the bitter lesson we have to learn.

“All action undermining the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a member State, is to be strongly condemned. The so-called “elections” organized in Abkhazia fall under this category and fail to recognize the illegal occupation of Abkhazia by the Russian Federation. The “vote” organized in Abkhazia on 12 March, instead of strengthening, further erodes stability in this region and is, moreover, the wrong signal at the wrong time,” Verbeek noted.



Elections in Abkhazia. Source: abkhazworld.com

The “de facto” authorities of Abkhazia once again undermined the principle of the territorial integrity of Georgia, forcing this region further into isolation

Invasion Episode 3: Forever Wars and Never Peace



Civilian volunteers taking part in military exercises on the outskirts of Kyiv in Ukraine. By Valentyn Ogirenko/Reuters

ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Russia's "special operation" in Ukraine has, literally and figuratively, become stuck in the mud. What was supposed to be a rapid assault, striking a spear into Kyiv within 48 hours, has now slowed to an arduous campaign. Forced to fight a taxing war against a determined defender, Russian forces have been forced to redevelop their strategy on the fly.

Faced with the looming prospect of battling a determined and now combat experienced insurgency, the Russian force is looking for any way to gain the upper hand. From potential recruitment of foreign mercenaries from Putin's few friends, such as Bashar al-Assad, to the time-honored tradition of the Russian military pounding a city to dust, the stench of desperation is rising from the Kremlin. Like a cornered animal left with little to no prospect of survival, Putin is likely to lash out in a way unseen in most modern conflicts.

One matter is obvious: the Russian military is on borrowed time in Ukraine. Russia largely does not have the combined political, social, economic or military capital to maintain a prolonged campaign in the country. As is consistent with a litany of other military mantras, the concept that the irregular defender has all the time while the professional invader may have all the watches (read technology or troop numbers) rings true even here.

As a result, Ukraine is digging itself in for a prolonged resistance, something akin to the opposite of Russia's infamous salami-slicing technique of gaining territory without overt force. By slowly grinding the invading force to a point that they are not materially, politically, or financially able to continue, the image of victory begins to look like a stalemate. At the same time, the unrest on the

homefront will begin to chip away at the campaign from the rear.

These alternative routes to victory deserve their own examination. Firstly, the information war has largely been in the hands of Ukraine, with Russia only recently attempting to push into this

sector. However, much of Ukraine's dissemination of information has been outward to the world to garner support. While this has been highly successful, it is also a tool to be used against the Russians themselves.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelen-

sky took the first step in this arena by offering financial rewards to Russian troops who surrendered. To complement this, a large virtual bombardment via mobile, social media, and print about the futility of their mission can have an immense effect on what is reportedly fragile Russian morale.

The second phase of this tactic, aimed at the Russian public and social or political elites, would slow or halt the Kremlin propaganda machine. Platforms such as VKontakte, essentially a Russian Facebook, can be infiltrated and used to bring the reality of their military's actions to the people behind the force. Finally, as the elites begin to question Putin's actions and loyalty to the betterment of the Russian state, the popular foundation he stands on can start to give way.

There is an old military adage that states the moral material of an offensive force is far more important to their success than their physical attributes. Striking at the hearts and minds of the attacker is something Ukraine, with the support of NATO and the West, should prioritize alongside their aggressive physical resistance.

Moving into the future, there lies the inevitable horror that is already lurking in the dark for Russia: insurgency. As NATO found out in Iraq and Afghanistan, these are impossibly immense issues that large modern armies are virtually powerless to halt outright. Russia is already experiencing the early stages of these attacks, visible in the ambushes, asymmetric and irregular force buildup, and underground supply networks being implemented.

What makes Ukraine an even better petri dish for the growth of this resistance movement is that it has the ideal factors for an insurgency to flourish. Just as Iran, Syria, and others sent fighters and materials into Iraq to assist in combating NATO forces, Ukraine has the same external support structure. NATO, bordering Ukraine itself, already has the

means and motive to ship arms, technology, and even facilitate volunteer fighters into the nation. Whether it is done overtly or covertly, it will fuel a forever resistance the Kremlin's generals can never hope to win.

Nations in the past have tried to close off outside support as a component of their counterinsurgency efforts. The Americans in Vietnam, the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland, NATO in Afghanistan, have all been forced to chase proverbial ghosts supplying the resisting forces. It is highly doubtful that, even in the event of a Russian military victory, they will have the stomach to confront NATO at the Ukrainian borderlands.

The failure of Russian tactical agility, concerted strikes at morale, and deep rooted insurgent organizations, all combine to offer the invading forces little hope of the shining rays of victory and peace coming any time soon. While Russia still maintains a significant portion of its total armed forces, almost a third by some estimates, outside Ukraine it is unlikely that throwing more numbers into the fray will change what is already occurring.

With Zelensky playing with the idea of NATO exclusion, it may give Putin the energy needed to renew his push. In a recent statement, The Ukrainian leader said, "We realized that Ukraine will not become a member of NATO. We understand this, we are adequate people." This should come as an alarm for NATO and Western military leadership.

The West will need to stay the course, continuing their material support, if Ukraine is to employ its "life-support" system. It is not outside the realm of probability that Russia will continue to feed the conflict with more soldiers and equipment, thus fueling the flames further. Like the Irish Republican Army during The Troubles, a prolonged campaign aimed at all echelons of conflict can tire even the largest of adversaries.



A Ukrainian fighter examining a destroyed Russian armored personnel carrier in Kharkiv on Sunday. By Sergey Bobok/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

The Russians Are Coming!

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming is a 1966 American movie describing the confusion triggered by grounding of the Soviet submarine near a small New England island during the Cold War, but walking along Rustaveli Avenue and hearing the hurrying foreign pedestrians speak Russian as widely as never before is no laughing matter for most. Thousands of Russian escapees of every possible age can be seen and heard all over the place here, having fled their socially and economically endangered land. Who would have thought that the Russians, in the wake of the never-ending 30-year strife over our occupied lands, would dash to this particular country to seek calm, abode and help during the unex-



Image source: tbcapital

When getting ready for another invasion of another piece of land in another country, Russian authorities routinely use the classic excuse of “protecting their citizens” in said land

pected uncertainties caused by Russia’s military operation against Ukraine?

The world is changing with unbelievable speed in front of our very eyes. The migration processes of a planetary magnitude, mostly from eastern countries towards the west up till now, have lately been replenished by a huge flood of emigrants from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. If Georgia has so far avoided the influx of refugees from the east, now the pressure is coming from the west. The unilateral visa-free access to Georgia opens the gates of the country for Russians, saying nothing about the Ukrainians and Belarusians, and it is not yet clear whether they’ll be wanting to stay here temporarily or forever.

On top of that, we have no idea how good or bad the wave of new immigration might be for Georgia, considering one third of the country is still occupied, the two runaway Georgian regions having been recognized by Russia as independent states and intensely poised before the rest of the world to be considered as free independent nations, all to the chagrin

and detriment of Georgia proper, as shredded and shrunken as it is today.

One category of our population, the landlords and landladies, economically dependent on the living space they own, have, however, literally found themselves in seventh heaven thanks to that immigrating manna from the sky, pulling up apartment rental and selling prices to the utmost.

Well, wars are always bizarre, and their consequences unpredictable: some people lose their lives or the lives of their loved ones, some lose their precious domiciles, some look for shelter away from their regular habitat, and some get richer, taking advantage of the situation. And we may well be unclear how to take it: is this unexpected avalanche of immigration okay for us in terms of giving our ever-vacillating GEL some additional strength, or is the addition to our population to be too cumbersome?

One scary supposition tickles painfully at the Georgian brain. The presumption might not sound realistic right now, but could easily morph into actual fact, con-

Thousands of Russian escapees of every possible age can be seen and heard all over the place here, having fled their socially and economically endangered land

sidering the scenes of the recent past, and not necessarily that of Georgia’s alone. When getting ready for another invasion of another piece of land in another country, Russian authorities routinely use the classic excuse of “protecting their citizens” in said land. As such, the solidly substantiated suspicion is that this could happen here in Sakartvelo too, the pretext being born right in front of our noses as we watch this intense moment of demographic interaction with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus unfold. I have also heard some exclaim euphorically: “Let the new blood flow in! There’s nothing wrong with increasing our population to the level of happier soviet times: more mixed marriages and more bilingual kids, additional working hands, and growing chances to shore up the country’s budget!” OK, granted, but how does it look in real life when we see Russia and Ukraine both so beleaguered, becoming ever more depleted from the war effort, and their talent scattered to the winds, including to this country, as much at a loss at it is today?

Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Reshapes Georgia’s Position

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, whatever results there are, be they the defeat of Ukraine or Russia’s inability to impose its will on Kyiv, will have tremendous effects on the wider Black Sea region, and indeed the European security architecture as a whole. And Georgia is one to watch here, as yet another country which was promised NATO membership back in 2008 and which was mentioned in Russia’s radical demands made to the West in December last year.

Russia’s emphasis on Ukraine is understandable: it is a country the control over which will allow Moscow to dominate a large part of what once constituted the Soviet Union space. It will also allow Russia to control much of the Black Sea. Further, the invasion of Ukraine looks to signify that Russia has switched to territorial empire mode. Where, before, Moscow was cautious about which territory could be annexed or attacked, with this blatant aggression against Ukraine, a new, explicitly imperial era for Russia seems to have begun. It is highly unlikely that Moscow will be winning in the longer run, though. Even if Kyiv is defeated, the occupation of Ukraine, however short, will cost Russia billions of dollars, further international isolation, and an irreversibly antagonistic Ukrainian population. Long-term prospects for Moscow, therefore, seem pretty grim.

Yet, Russia undoubtedly also has its eye on other fronts. And Georgia could be a primary target here. The country has



Image source: llurer.am

been a topic of hot debate in terms of whether Tbilisi should be granted NATO membership. Should Russia achieve basic, however pyrrhic, success in Ukraine, Georgia could be facing Russian demands of officially reneging on its engagement with NATO and the EU. Faced with this potential challenge, Tbilisi will have little political, military or economic power to withstand such ultimatums or even military moves, with Russian occupation forces in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions serving as decapitation power against Georgia’s resolve.

This quite naturally begs the question of what the collective West, and especially the US, could do to help Georgia avoid direct military threats from Russia and build more resilient ties between Tbilisi and the West. A crucial question is whether the country is within America’s defense perimeter.

The support the West has provided to Ukraine shows astounding shifts in the

trans-Atlantic community, and all reservations about NATO’s eastward expansion can now be reconsidered. The emerging argument is that the alliance actually brings stability rather than tensions. Had the Baltic states not been admitted to the alliance in the early 2000s, the instability and Russian aggression would, to a varying degree, almost certainly have touched those states too.

This could be a breaking point for the geopolitics of the wider Black Sea region. Georgia is a close partner to the US, and much of what has been happening around Ukraine was tightly linked to Georgia. It is certain that after the war ends in Ukraine, the West’s approach to this country will no longer be the same, and action will likely prevail over hesitancy. The country might not become a NATO member straight away, or even any time soon, but the military cooperation will be raised to a qualitatively different level, especially as Ukraine proved how mili-

tarily capable it is. The country now has the single most experienced army in the world fighting the Russian war machine.

Defending and helping Ukraine will also mean that the Western approach toward Georgia will undergo critical changes. First, the argument that Georgia was to blame for the 2008 war will recede in the light of what Russia has been doing in Ukraine. This will be a huge victory for Tbilisi. The second most visible change will likely take place on the economic side, seeing the EU become ever willing to commit to economic and institutional expansion, and the fatigue with the “Eastern Enlargement” might well come to an end. For Georgian diplomacy, therefore, it is of utmost importance to tie the country’s geopolitical vector with that of Ukraine.

Yet another diplomatic thrust by Georgia should be made in its relations with the US. As America has successfully rebuilt the trans-Atlantic ties and now has Germany as an emerging central element in its European foreign policy, there is a strong possibility of a forward-looking EU and NATO backed up by American military and economic power.

Georgia might not become a NATO or even EU member state any time soon, but the reinvigoration of Western unity could create momentum behind Tbilisi’s more active engagement with Brussels and Washington, perhaps taking shape in more active military cooperation and a greater economic connection.

Threats from Russia will persist, but the level of their intensity will inherently depend on the Western unity/disunity. With wide-ranging changes in Germany’s foreign policy, Ukraine’s military persistence against the Russian invasion,

The post-invasion era in the wider Black Sea region will mark structural changes in how the West perceives its place in the region, regards Russia, and how to develop further support for aspiring democracies, Ukraine and Georgia

and America’s strong leadership, Georgia might be witnessing new breathing space for its Western aspirations, momentum that has been lacking in recent years.

Emil Avdaliani is a professor at European University and the Director of Middle East Studies at Georgian think-tank, Geocase.

Vladislav Davidzon: Insights on the War, Putin's Failures, and Ukraine's Superhero Leader



INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE FOR RFE

From Odessa - With Love is the name of journalist and author Vladislav Davidzon's recently published book. Davidzon has been researching Ukraine and the wider post-Soviet space for years, and writes for the French 'The Tablet' magazine and the Atlantic Council. Odessa was the starting point of the

The gap between the Russian capacity and the Ukrainian army has been narrowed down by the sheer stupidity and incompetence of the Russian army

Ukraine will have to make a deal, and it's going to be very unpleasant... They will lose some land in any endgame

later, Georgia.

Further, they did not expect this level of resistance. They did not in a million years expect this level of hatred from the Ukrainian people towards them. Ukraine's Russian speakers thought the Ukrainian army would run away. They did not expect there to be this many anti-tank weapons given to Ukraine by the West.

In the West, they did not expect this level of competence on the side of Ukrainians in defending their homes. They thought they would fall down and lay over.

Then factor in the Russian police officers and conscripts that have been smuggled in: they never signed up for this. The Kremlin refused to prepare those Russian boys for what they needed to do, so of course those boys are demoralized and are deserting.

And finally, bad decision-making by the civilian leadership based on delusional expectations of what the Russian Armed Forces were capable of, and the Russian generals who have stolen so much that their capacity is not what they promised their civilians.

YOU WROTE: "PUTIN HIMSELF ALSO UNDERSTANDS THAT THE WEST WANTS HIM IN THE HAGUE, OR IN PRISON, OR EXILED, OR KILLED. SO IT'S ALL OR NOTHING FOR HIM." IT'S THE ZERO-SUM GAME THAT PUTIN HAS BECOME SO ADEPT AT AND THAT WEST HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO PLAY SO FAR. WHAT CARDS DOES HE STILL HAVE IN HAND?

He has very few cards because he made an extraordinarily bad set of decisions in order to go all in. He didn't need to do this. There were other ways to get what he needed. But he decided that he was going all in, gambling everything. It was extraordinarily reckless. He had bad information. He had a delusional strategy. And he did not bring enough of the wealth that has been held abroad back to Russia. Had he known what the costs were going to be, he would never have done this. So he absolutely misread the the opponent's hand and he misread the costs.

WHAT IS THE OFFER THAT ZELENSKY COULD GIVE THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE?

With every battle that the Ukrainians survive, the level of minimum demands increases and the maximum demands decrease. And the Ukrainians are still

winning and surviving, not having lost anything major, except probably Mariupol in the coming days, Mariupol and the Sea of Azov are probably gone at this point, barring some major Ukrainian counter-attack that would be, even if successful, very costly. The Russians haven't even touched Odessa, Kharkiv stays on, and Chernihiv has yet to fall. It's entirely possible that in two-three weeks, the Russian army will be spent, and will be ineffective combat wise.

But still, at some point, Ukraine will have to make a deal, and it's going to be very unpleasant. There will be a deal sooner rather than later: in weeks, rather than months. They will lose some land in any endgame, I'm afraid. Whether it also involves neutrality, I don't know, it depends if Ukrainian society can swallow a neutrality deal. But Zelensky knows the average Ukrainian and mindset, because he is one of them, which is why we love him so much: he's a man of the people in every sense.

YOU ALSO COMPARE UKRAINE TO THE WILD WEST. YET ONE COULD ARGUE IT SEEMS MORE A SUPERHERO MOVIE, WITH ZELENSKY AS CAPTAIN UKRAINE. WHAT'S THE SECRET OF ZE PHENOMENON?

I had dinner with Zelensky when he was about to become president, and he didn't strike me as a great man. I saw him then as an actor, charismatic and bright, but way over his head. He felt like he wasn't ready for this. He knew at this point that he was going to be president, so he was excited. He was on top of the world, but also afraid, and rightly so. His was a mediocre presidency until three weeks ago, at best, but now, something deep inside of him, which I wrote about in my article, represents a deep heuristic for the deep resilience of the average Ukrainian: their better nature, their better qualities, the fight for life as opposed to a fight to the death. Russia has a death cult, and is in a death spiral, being led by a decomposing old man afraid of Covid and sitting deep in a bunker in Ural, who no longer understands reality around him and doesn't talk to the people and doesn't even talk to his own advisers, he doesn't talk to them, you know. The televised meeting of the Security Council was all about getting them trapped with him. And they all knew that it was about ending up in The Hague with Putin. It was a public move, a mafia thing, stating "You guys are with me." And meanwhile, Zelensky is hugging his men in front of the presidential palace, under the eye of Russian drones, who could bomb him easily at this point, film-

ing in front of the presidential palace as opposed to being literally entombed. With Zelensky, you have man who is literally the picture of virility. He's been preparing this for his entire life. And he knows he might die at this point. He knows that he will go down in history, one way or another, whether he wins or not. There will be statues of Zelensky. The question now is will they be in Manitoba and in Chicago and in Toronto? It's not clear whether he will survive this. And he knows it. He looked this choice in the face. He said "I could run and the country could collapse, or I could stay and I could fight and I'm going to go down." And he found deep, deep inside of himself the will to do it, to stand and fight despite the overwhelming odds, and that embodies Ukraine.

WHAT ACTOR CAN DREAM OF A BIGGER STAGE THAN THIS?

Indeed. This is the greatest role of the 21st century anyone will ever have. He is the greatest hero. Look at the elites that the West produces. Look at the paucity, the horribleness, the mediocrity, the oligarchy of Western elites. Zelensky and Ukrainians are really much healthier than Western Europeans and Americans and Canadians.

ARE THE WESTERNERS SEEING IN UKRAINIANS AND UKRAINE'S LEADERSHIP WHAT THEY WANT THEIR LEADER AND THEMSELVES TO BE?

Absolutely. There's an absolute reverence the world over, the reverence that people feel in the presence of something sacred and something which is bigger than themselves. And the Western cynicism falls away when you see Ukrainians fighting to the death, when they're outmanned, outgunned, out flown, out bombed. And they're standing with this Jewish actor who's playing Churchill, except he has much more empathy and much more charisma than Churchill ever had.

This is the greatest role of the 21st century anyone will ever have. Zelensky is a hero



Vladislav Davidzon

Radio Free Europe interview with him as he offered his insights on the war in Ukraine and the contrasting images of the leaders of Russia and Ukraine.

ODESSA - WHY IS RUSSIA NOT ATTEMPTING TO TAKE IT FROM THE SEA?

First of all, until yesterday, the weather was terrible. Now the weather is good, they might attempt to do so. Also, they are expecting their guys to take Mariupol so they can pull troops and artillery over from the other side. They are afraid of a direct assault on the beaches, because it would be very bloody and the Ukrainians have mined the beaches. They could bomb Odessa from ships at sea, but that would mean destroying the city center, and the point of Odessa is that it is both beautiful and of great historical and symbolic value. I don't think Russians want an Odessa that has been turned into a wreck.

WHY DIDN'T UKRAINE FALL IN THREE DAYS, AS US INTELLIGENCE SO HELPFULLY PREDICTED?

The gap between the Russian capacity and the Ukrainian army has been narrowed down by the sheer stupidity of the Russian army, and the corruption of the Russian army, and their own belief in their extraordinary capacity to do things that they were not capable of. And they disregarded a Russian military doctrine, which is to blow things up first with heavy firepower and only then send in troops, as they did in Chechnya and,

New Investments in Adjara Capture Interest of Chairman of the Gov't of Adjara in the Hebashi Holding Group

On March 14-16, Batumi hosted the 11th International Exhibition of Construction Materials Technologies and Real Estate, with the participation of Hebashi Holding Group companies OTI Estate and GAABU (the Georgian Arabic African Business Union). The exhibition allowed participants to present their own companies, attract more investors and introduce their own projects.

On March 14, the opening ceremony was attended by the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Tornike Rizhvadze. The companies included in the HHG introduced their projects and talked about future plans in Adjara, as well as throughout Georgia and around the world.

"It is important for us to maintain economic dynamics. The involvement of the state and companies as a private sector ensures that the development of the economy in the region and the country does not face a significant challenge," Rizhvadze said.

HHG founder Hani Hebashi said he hopes the event will help all participating companies achieve greater success in the future.

The beginning of 2022 witnessed the advancement of Hebashi Holding Group to a level that puts it at the forefront of competition with the largest international companies in Georgia. The Hebashi Holding Corporation for Real Estate Investment was launched with the efficient help of a promising founder who possesses great passion and ambition, armed with a wealth of knowledge of scientific and practical studies and policies in the real estate sector from all over the world.

The journey began with 23 real estate development projects of continued strong relationships and partnerships, and with a network of clients that support its presence and enhance its position in serving this sector by highlighting and enhancing the value of investment and extract-



ing added value and focusing on this in all its real estate business.

Honesty and sincerity, in addition to passion, science, and young, bright and open minds had a great impact in creating the imprint of the 'Hebashi Holding Group for Real Estate Investment.'

Hebashi Holding Group was able to maintain the strength and durability of its financial position during past periods through diversification of its investments locally, regionally and internationally, which contributed to the continuous growth of its financial performance and operational activity. Currently, the company's projects and real estate investments include investing in promising areas, developing office and commercial towers and residential units, in addition to investing in the hotel and entertainment sectors and others to contain many areas of investment and vast real estate ownership, as its issued and fully paid

capital amounted to \$400 million by the beginning of 2022.

By implementing new investments estimated at \$63 million in a qualitative project, the Hebashi Holding Group launched its new project, "Batumi Pearl," which is characterized by its direct view of the Black Sea and its being strategically located within the vital area of the Black Sea shore.

Mr. Hani Hebashi, CEO of Hebashi Holding Group, expressed his pride in launching the "Batumi Pearl" project, which is the first project of its kind that reflects tourism investment in a unique and distinct way, in addition to its direct view and terraces on the sea.

"We are working continuously and in clear steps to achieve the company's vision through planning and actual study of projects that are unique in excellence and innovation in serving the largest segment of society, where the passion

leads us to cover and meet this need by introducing new real estate products to become landmarks and brands that we are proud of," Hebashi notes, adding that, "We, at Hebashi Holding for Real Estate Investment, adapt, adopt and build upon changes. We have adopted Georgia's 2023 vision to be the leading institution in the field of investment management and real estate consultancy in the Caucasus region and the world."

He says he considers passion to be one of the most important ingredients for success.

"A person cannot achieve success in its dimensions and vocabulary unless passion takes a means to reach that. This moral means is something noticeable in the development of the Georgian economy, which hardly stopped growing for a single moment, leading to the openness of investment in the country," he states.

To become a fertile land for growth

and a high opportunity for investment, and in line with the renaissance of life in its various fields, the idea of establishing of the Hebashi Holding Group for Real Estate Investment appeared.

"In order to ensure the efficiency and feasibility of our consultations, we have expanded under the umbrella of Hebashi Holding group by establishing various companies, which came to complement and enhance the path of our successes that began with OTI Real Estate Investment Company," Hebashi says. "This company came to compete with real estate companies in Georgia, with its expertise and solutions, with which we aspire, with God's help, to support and serve the real estate sector in Georgia."

Hebashi Group attaches importance to the process of expanding the base of its development projects at the local and regional levels. Therefore, entering into strategic partnerships with major companies in Georgia and abroad occupies the same importance.

Mr. Hebashi notes that the launching of "Batumi Pearl" is scheduled for early 2022. The project will be the first of its kind due to the great care it has taken in developing a concept and design that combines high-end restaurants and cafes with family entertainment and investment alike.

Mr. Ayman, the company's sales director, expressed his pride in this achievement, especially in the midst of high competition and in light of the high standards that require acceptance of projects, within this competition in which major international and regional companies, active and operating in Georgia, participate. He stated that the "Batumi Pearl" project consists of 31 floors and includes a 5-star hotel, a group of selected international restaurants and a number of luxury brand stores, which in turn will benefit from the importance of the location, and the splendor of design and international standards of implementation, as the project represents a standard of modernity, elegance and beauty.



Minister of Justice of Georgia Meets with Ilham Aliyev

The Minister of Justice of Georgia, Rati Bregadze met with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

The Minister and the President discussed the role of the Ministries of Justice of Georgia and Azerbaijan in the process of developing strategic cooperation between the two countries.

The President of Azerbaijan approved a memorandum of understanding signed between the Ministries of Justice of the two countries. The document envisages strengthening relations between the Ministries of Justice of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Ilham Aliyev expressed the initiative to implement joint projects and expressed his support to the ministries.

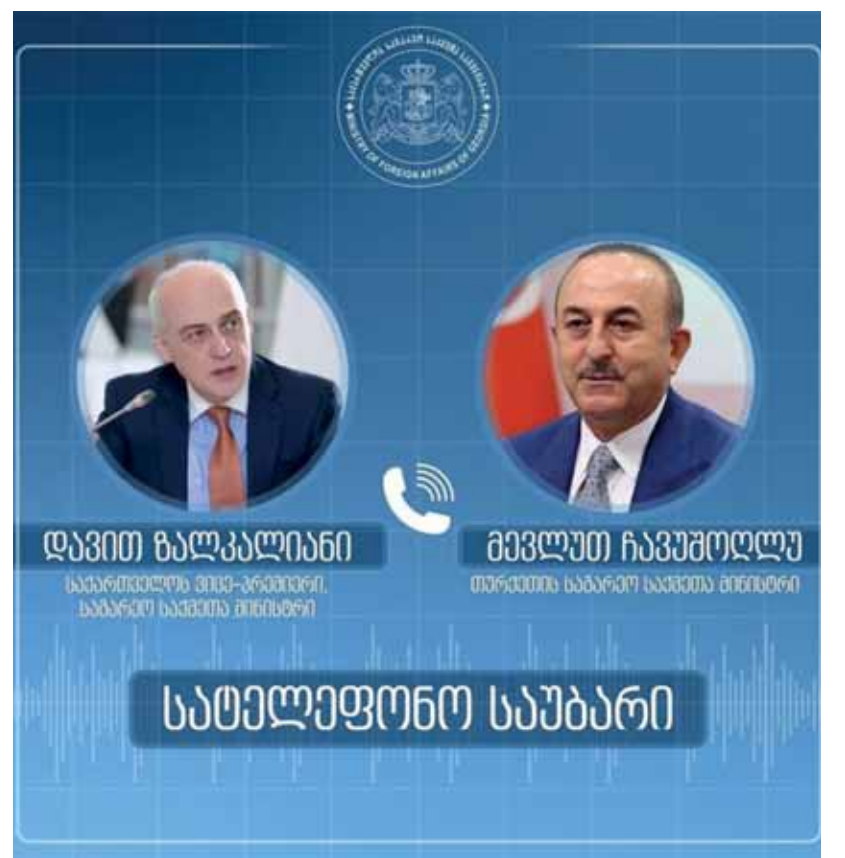
Zalkaliani Speaks to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey

The Vice Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani held a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

The two ministers spoke about the latest developments in the region, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the difficult security environment created as a result. In this context, the sides highlighted the importance of Turkey's active efforts to find ways for a ceasefire and resolve the existing conflict through diplomacy.

During the telephone conversation, the ministers discussed in detail the security challenges facing Georgia, including the situation in the occupied regions of Georgia. For his part, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu reaffirmed Turkey's unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and Euro-Atlantic aspirations and condemned the so-called illegitimate parliamentary elections in the occupied Abkhazia region.

The ministers also discussed the agenda of bilateral cooperation, including the possibility of holding a high-level strategic council. The Ministers expressed their commitment to continue the intensive dialogue and conduct bilateral visits.



EU & CENN Fostering the Green and Digital Transition of the Rural Youth in Georgia



Young and educated youth from vulnerable communities are the critical driver to accelerate the green and digital transition of societies. Their education, training, and career development shape a future where innovation brings economics and the environment closer together.

The European Union's economic prosperity and well-being is tied to the natural environment, and demand for 'green' solutions to societal challenges is both a source of jobs and an economic opportunity. This is why Europe's Green Deal calls for a "modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy" underpinned by the so-called twin 'digital and green' transition.

In practice, that means decoupling economic growth from resource use and eliminating greenhouse gases by 2050. How can Europe achieve such big ambitions?

Well-matched education and training is needed so current and future generations of entrepreneurs not only identify eco-innovation opportunities, greener ways of working, living and moving around, but also possess the skills to

make them happen.

To work towards this transition, in the last two years, CENN, within the EU-supported project "EU4Youth: Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development (SEED) for Green Growth" has introduced diverse formal and non-formal green entrepreneurship education opportunities, covering university curricula as well as educational courses. Within the project, two university curricula were prepared and implemented in Georgia and Armenia. Both courses covered more than 10 different subject areas, among them circular economy, waste management, climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable development. In terms of non-formal education, six Rural Innovation Knowledge Hubs were established in Georgia and Armenia, in regions that are located close to the borders, playing a key role in developing and delivering green and social entrepreneurship education as well as practical skills.

The Rural Innovation Knowledge Hubs aim to empower rural youth, encouraging them to become active citizens and agents of positive change for their communities by providing them with an

inclusive and safe working and educational space, and ensuring their access to the internet and technologies. The hubs offer various opportunities for skills development, employment, youth work, social and environmental activism, education, and so on. Active hub members are able to participate in different educational courses such as social entrepreneurship, circular economy, sustainable development, climate change, etc.

The EU has developed an EU Youth Strategy and wants young people to engage and become active citizens involved in democracy and society. EU youth cooperation will make the most of the youth policy's potential, fostering youth participation in democratic life and supporting social and civic engagement with the aim of ensuring that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

"Every young person deserves the chance to fulfil their potential and be part of a modern, interconnected society," says Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia.

"The EU supports young people to become active citizens, to drive positive change in their communities and to act

as agents of solidarity. This cannot be done without equipping youth with the necessary skills and knowledge to get connected with companies, communities, and other sectors beyond borders. Digital literacy and critical thinking are key components in this respect.

"Another key priority for the European Union is to act in respect of the environment and assist in finding paths to sustainable development," Hartzell notes. "The EU Green Deal is a testament to this, further stepping up our actions to combat the threat of climate change, and reaffirming our commitment to assist in a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The younger generation are key actors in promoting and bringing about the required change in mind-set and political priorities.

"Against this background, I am very pleased that our actions in Georgia reflect the EU Youth Strategy to connect, engage and empower youth through a digital and green transition," he says.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

EU-supported regional project "EU4Youth: Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development (SEED) for Green Growth" has been implemented by CENN in partnership with KRDF and Green Lane (Armenia) since November 2019. The aim of the project is to discover the entrepreneurial potential in the most vulnerable municipalities and to promote entrepreneurship opportunities among rural youth.

The following important education initiatives have been implemented within the project:

A GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BA COURSE AT ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY

A Green Entrepreneurship course was added to the Bachelor program of the Business and Technology faculty of Ilia State University (Iliani), a leading educational institution in Georgia. It was an important step towards creating an educational and academic basis for green social entrepreneurship, which acts as a major contribution to establishing and defining this sector.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPS

The project saw three streams of education camps for Gori, Akhmeta and Ninotsminda youth. The GREENovators Youth Camps were focused on the introduction of entrepreneurial skills to participants with no prior experience in the field of entrepreneurship or environmental protection. The participants also met famous entrepreneurs and

other important representatives from the sector.

CERTIFICATE COURSE

Between February 1-25, 2022, CENN implemented the Green and Social Entrepreneurship Certificate Course. 116 young people completed the course and acquired a certificate.

The students were able to learn more about entrepreneurship, social and green entrepreneurship, the circular economy, climate change, and sustainable management of forest resources, and were also able to master basic project management principles and get acquainted with international best practices.

"Investing in human capital and, in particular, in youth, is one of the main objectives of CENN to foster a just, inclusive and green transition towards a net-zero future in the region," says Nana Janashia, CENN executive director. "We believe that educated youth can be a great catalyst for positive change and a voice for our environment. To work towards this transition, we invest a great deal in educating young people and making them part of the modern global society. Access to information and technologies, digital skills, and green and democratic values are now an integral part of our education initiatives."

Sustainable development is a fundamental basis for present and future generations, which implies a rigorous transition to a green economy and renewable energy. We now see more than ever the importance of sustainable energy and efficiency and digital technologies that promote interconnectedness and solidarity.

Investing in Georgia's digital transition is key to stimulating jobs and growth and bringing about prosperity. This flagship project will reduce digital inequalities and will contribute to the country's economic development and recovery while promoting digital inclusion in line with its national broadband strategy.

Education and awareness-raising are fundamental to achieving sustainable development by future generations, who, through the right combination of skills, business, career and leadership-training, will be in a strong position to make eco-innovation the standard in an enlightened economy.



Simple Heroes around Us Protecting Wildlife: Stories from Rangers in the Field

Continued from page 1

One of the most important projects being implemented by SABUKO is 'Restoring Gallery Forest and Grasslands in the Iori River Valley,' which aims to revitalize this steppe-riverine ecosystem while enabling local pastoralists to manage the land sustainably in the long-term. They also work to preserve the biodiversity of the Chachuna Managed Reserve, which has faced a severe problem of degradation due to unregulated grazing. SABUKO and its partner organizations are actively working to preserve endangered rare species of wildlife existing on the ground.

Zura Gurgendze, Conservation Studies Officer at SABUKO, is responsible for the study and monitoring of species using camera traps.

He notes that along with other illegal activities which are harmful to nature, overgrazing can also create a difficult ecological situation for the natural reserves, as land degradation may destroy the unique biodiversity. Zura and his colleagues work hard to prevent such cases and develop new sustainable resources management skills among the population.

"I have to work in the field, which is a direct ranger activity. This also includes installing camera traps and monitoring the animals and birds. Through this and other means, including GPS, we watch the locations and living conditions of rare wildlife species. This also helps us to plan future conservation activities and change methods if there is a need to do so. We also cooperate with the Environmental Supervision Service to prevent cases of poaching and other illegal activities.

"For this, rangers and the Department of Conservation play a very important and irreplaceable role. Our team and rangers spare no efforts to monitor the wildlife and then draw up relevant action



plans. Of course, this important job is also hard and risky at the same time, because they have to walk kilometers while monitoring in wild nature. However, the most pleasant part of this job for me personally is seeing the results and progress achieved; seeing how many things have changed for the better. Since 2015, I've spent months in a row at the Chachuna Reserve, and I can easily see the progress. These changes are so good for the nature that it makes me happy and motivates me."

Giorgi Chikorashvili, Conservation Studies Officer at SABUKO, emphasizes the close collaboration between the rangers and the team of SABUKO, noting that sharing experience is a very important issue for the sustainable development of the protected areas in general.

"We're actively working through joint forces to improve the environmental situation. We share with the rangers our experience of pasture management, because overgrazing and land degradation poses serious risks to the reserves and their surrounding areas. Without the rangers' daily activities and moni-

toring, it would be unimaginable to control and monitor processes in protected areas and forests. Both the state and society should appreciate their contribution and assist them as much as possible, because it's a common job and goal," Giorgi notes.

Marinus Gebhardt, Natural Resources Manager at SABUKO, has been actively communicating with rangers and farmers and contributing to the development of new skills.

Marinus highlights the difficulties rangers have to face daily, and emphasizes the common problem of the low salaries they are paid for their hard and risky job, which itself decreases motivation among both rangers currently employed and the young generation who are to work in the field in the future. The state should take responsibility and care more about this issue, he says, as these people deserve to be paid accordingly for their heroic job.

"For our part, we're very actively involved in pasture management. This is what rangers were not really focused on until now. They really did a great job

in terms of preventing cases of illegal hunting, etc., but concerning pasture management, we're trying to train them, teaching what they should do and where. As such, we're giving them new skills. We often have informative talks, where we clarify the situation and existing problems. For us, rangers are really an important source of knowledge.

"Alongside other risks related to their duties, there are also cases when rangers come into conflict with shepherds who do not follow the rules. Further, their job can be very monotonous due to the strict daily routine.

"Considering all the above, they definitely deserve more appreciation and increased pay from the state, as, compared to their work, their salaries are significantly low. This would also motivate the younger generation to get involved and do this important job to preserve their country's rich natural heritage and resources," Marinus says.

Ranger of Protected Areas of Georgia Giorgi Abramishvili has been named among the Top 10 rangers worldwide. He was awarded the International Ranger Award by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Commission on Protected Areas. Abramishvili has been protecting the

unique natural heritage in the protected areas of Georgia for 18 years. With dedicated work, ability to deal with challenges and risks, the Georgian ranger, distinguished by leadership skills in crisis management, won a well-deserved victory.

He notes that there are many risks related to working in wildlife daily, including the prospect of meeting with animals while patrolling routes and controlling poaching.

Control and monitoring are essential, says Giorgi, despite the fact that awareness among the population has risen over the years.

"The Agency of Protected Areas representatives train us, helping us to better understand, and the situation has improved. There is no transportation problem either, which is very important to us. We go to schools, conduct eco lessons, we meet the population. The population also helps us, as they see that enforcing the law and taking care of the environment is crucial."

On being asked what it means to him to be named among the 10 best rangers in the world, Giorgi's answer is short and simple: "I just work as an ordinary ranger, though the title is an honor, course."



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Enough war talk from me for a while; others can continue that vital reporting. The below is dedicated to JS, who suggested it upon seeing my photos of Stage I. Nature inspires my photos, which inspire the writing... feels like completion.

Now he saw them everywhere; and was only glad to have had his eyes opened.

It began innocently though amazingly enough. Young Anzor of Isk'ari was walking back from the barn to the house one sparkling late winter afternoon, glanced up and saw... icicles hanging from the roof. Common enough. But while he had noticed long ago that sometimes weather conditions caused these to curve instead of pointing straight down, this set were unlike anything he had ever seen before. They looked like nothing more than foot-long winged dragons of ice, each unique but all perfect, dependent by the ends of their tails, slowly dripping in the day's sunshine. He could hardly believe his eyes.

His father's ladder, of light but strong wood, was conveniently propped against the roof, not far away. Anzor struggled a bit but managed to push it sideways, near the end icicle, and, holding his

breath for their fragility, shimmied up the rungs as carefully as he could. Then, one arm around the ladder, he reached out with the other and delicately snapped off the dragon just where it left the roof edge. Holding it in one gentle hand, he slowly descended. Then he walked around to the doorless lean-to shed on the side of the house which never got any sun in winter, and slowly put his miraculous find down, whole, in a corner, on the shadowed snow. Now he could hardly believe his luck.

And he could afford the time to examine the thing more closely. The head a mix of equine and reptilian, somewhat lizard-like body, a pair of wings stretched up, tail circling around. He shivered with delight, hugged himself, looked some more. Every detail of an animal he had never seen before except on frescoes or illuminated parchments was there. He dared not touch it further, though, but once his curiosity was satisfied covered it with a wooden box to keep it to himself, and went back to the barn to continue his more mundane chores of mucking out and hay-raking for the family's small herd of milk cows. Finally, his timing was also revealed to have been perfect, as he noticed that all the other icicles had fallen and shattered on the ice-covered snow beneath them. Such short lives!

The rest of the evening conspired to

Ice Dragons. Part I

keep a frustrated Anzor from revisiting the lone surviving Ice Dragon until bedtime: supper with his parents and younger brother, firewood, to the barn once more to check that the cattle his mother had milked were all in their stalls for the night. Once this last item was accomplished, though, he took his oil lamp and glanced again at the little creature in the lean-to, which had not moved the tiniest bit in his absence. Why should he expect, except in a world of magic, that it would have come to life? Sighing, he said a goodnight to his mother and father and turned in to the bed he and Pavle shared.

It was not to be an easy night, however. Merely getting to sleep took hours, it seemed, enthralled as he was with the frozen marvel. And apparently it was determined to follow him even into slumber, as his dreams were all one long conversation with it.

—I have never seen the like of you before! he began.

—We are that rare, young human. But it was time to show one of you what and who we are. You are old enough to understand; and have not lost that sense of wonder which too many of your kind discard unthinking as they mature.

—You... are actually alive, not just accidental shapes of pure ice made by the caprices of weather?

—Indeed. But our lives are stranger than you could imagine, like nothing else in this world. For most of our existence we are completely still, except for growth and shrinkage. And yet, we live. You are not just dreaming: I am actually talking to you, but I can only do this while you sleep. Another of our limitations.

—What is your purpose?

—To live, induce joyful surprise in those who notice us, and perform a certain amount of mischief which also serves to hold back far more malevolent forces. Finally, to multiply, as all life does.

—The rest of you lived an hour or so, and then were gone—

—So it must seem. But spiraling little icicles are only the very first stage of our many-layered lives. When the combination of snow melt, roof, air moisture, warmth and cold, and absence of wind is just right, we emerge and wait.

—So then you shatter onto the ground, and then what? Uncountable tiny fragments in a little heap.

—You have seen how a caterpillar makes itself a cocoon, slowly performs some unknown transformation hidden inside, and emerges with only six legs and... wings? So it is with us. Tinkling to pieces, we become free not to fly—yet—but to move through the snow all around us, unobserved. As we go, we accrete and add that material to ourselves and thus grow.

—Where do you appear next? How can I find you?

—We favor your wooden or stone fences, along which to drape or coil our larger forms, joined as we are to the elements of the earth. It may seem merely that the wind has blown snow into such fantastic shapes. People also curse the effect, which may indeed bend or outright knock the otherwise straight fences down by its con-

siderable weight. Here we may lie for some hours or even days, depending on the weather's vagaries. A stretch of hide here, its scales made of smaller scales on several levels, the name for which structures will not be invented for some centuries yet, so I will not speak it now (1). A fang or two, a claw, of straight icicle there. The spines of a whole back. An eye staring at you unblinking. Hints only of the whole magnificent being. This is our life's second stage. (He saw it, and believed.)

(1) The word is fractal. To be concluded in next week's GT and online at georgiatoday.ge.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with nearly 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti



Signs of Gentrification with the Example of Gudiashvili Square

BY KETEVAN SKHIRTLDZE

Changes in social, economic, and political processes are accompanied by the emergence of new terms, one of which is “gentrification.” This term is quite new for Georgian society.

The term gentrification originated in England in the 1960s and was used to describe current events. The classical gentrification process described such real estate conditions where the rental market was dominant over the owning of property. This aspect has great importance in understanding the phenomenon of gentrification, both in England and in Central Europe, where a huge part of the population lives mainly on rent and does not own property.

Gentrification implies a process when in the city center or near the center, historic neighborhoods are undergoing renovation, where such places are otherwise uninhabited and less attractive for living in. In Tbilisi, the first renovation started in the 1970s, but it was a very slight process; in the Soviet Union, the focus was on building new residential areas rather than renovating the old historic city, and the only renovation done at the time was on balconies built out on buildings in the old Kala district. The classical renovation of the city in Tbilisi began only in the mid-2000s.

In order to better analyze the gentrification processes, GEORGIA TODAY sat down with architect Luka Bakradze.

“Gentrification processes in Europe began in the following way: in districts that were not renewed and were in a complex condition, the rental price of an apartment was low; however, these districts had two attractive components, one – a low rental price, and two – a downtown location,” Bakradze tells us. “Because of these two components,

these neighborhoods were taken up by the low-income creative class: students and artists. In urban sociology, they are called pioneers; finding such neighborhoods and moving in, which itself leads to the revitalization of these neighborhoods. As students and creative people move there, social contacts take place, attractive activities emerge, cheap cafes open, public life comes to flourish. This process is usually followed by the first steps of development: cultural destinations, galleries are opened. Public life is revived there and development brings changes to the community, hence the attractiveness of these neighborhoods increases. As a result, those places become subject of interest for other social classes, and the financially strong part of the population begins to become interested in such neighborhoods itself,” he says.

“With the increase in demand, apartment rent increases, and the financially lower class, the creative class, can no longer afford to stay in this area, and the financially strong class takes over the neighborhood. Moreover, landlords seek to oust old tenants in favor of those with better finances. This process is more difficult in Europe than in Georgia, but there is still a lot of leverage to force them to leave these places.”

IN GEORGIA, THE SITUATION IS A BIT DIFFERENT, RIGHT? THOSE WHO ARE EVICTED, IN MOST CASES, ARE THE OWNERS OF THESE HOUSES.

“Yes. Classic gentrification is precisely a rent-based phenomenon. In the case of private property, slightly different processes take place. Consequently, we cannot classically call the ongoing processes in Tbilisi ‘gentrification,’ because there are private apartment owners in Tbilisi. It is their decision whether to leave this apartment or not; therefore, the classic European gentrification in sociological terms cannot be applied to the inhabitants of Tbilisi,” Bakradze says.



He highlights that European urban renewal implies the renovation of public infrastructure and not the renovation of houses and flats. The process of urban renewal makes these neighborhoods even more attractive to the financially affluent. First, the creative class makes these neighborhoods interesting, and on top of that, the renewal of infrastructure makes those places more attractive.

“For example, where I live in Berlin, in Prenzlauer Berg, first, when I got here, in the early 2000s, the neighborhood was in a very poor condition and financially low, but the creative community found this place and it became a very attractive destination. There was always something going on, nightlife was very active, there were cafes, clubs, and in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the city even carried out renovation activities there and the public infrastructure was significantly upgraded and improved. As a result, Prenzlauer Berg has become the most expensive district in Berlin, and today the population here has completely changed and only the wealthiest people live here. It can be said that the change of population has had repercussions in public life, as nowadays the place is a dead district. At 8 o'clock, it is hard to find people on the street because there live wealthy people who work during the day and have to go to bed early in

the evening,” Bakradze notes.

“It was a very clear example following the intervention of the state, and this is one of the first urban renewals carried out in the early period where the state and city did not think about what the process of urban renewal might lead to.

“This case turned out to be a great lesson; the government added a lot of leverage to limit and hinder the gentrification wave, to keep the local population from flowing out of such neighborhoods.”

BACK TO GEORGIA-HOW ARE THE RENEWAL PROCESSES GOING?

Consider, for example, Gudiashvili Square. The rehabilitation began with the evacuation of the population. Renovation of the city cannot be started by pulling the population out. As result, those buildings have been empty for years and still are empty to this day. When these processes started, I asked the governor a question that we can ask now too: Why is the city being renovated and for whom are we renovating the city? What do we want to achieve? You want to have a beautiful building, but who is it for? What do the city and the community gain from one beautiful building? Classically, the understanding of European city renewal lies in improving the living conditions of the people living in the area. The living environment should improve so people feel better and become more productive and so on.

Returning to the Gudiashvili example, we can say that we got an ugly, inverted situation: They did not do the renovation for the people of the city, but on the contrary, they got rid of them altogether.

SO THESE PLACES ARE BEING RENOVATED FOR TOURISTS?

Maybe, but why do we do it for tourists? How does it benefit me, as a resident of Tbilisi, if a tourist likes a house? I should gain something, right? Since the government is doing the renovation, that means I'm paying my taxes so that house looks beautiful for tourists? All this leads to the fact that I am renovating the house so that the source of income is tourism. Let's follow this logic. If we follow this to the end, we may want tourists to like it all, to come and eventually go to the point where we want to earn more revenue from tourism. But then what are we saying? That our stated policy is to make Tbilisi attractive for tourism and people should gain income from tourism? The economic direction of the city should focus on tourism? In other words, we must come to the conclusion that

Tbilisi is a city that lives on tourism.

We also know from the European example that tourism harms cities far more than it benefits them. For example, when I arrived in Berlin, it was a very attractive place because it was not yet damaged by tourism.

“Due to tourism, many Berliners, and me too, avoid going out. That part of the city is ruined by tourism. Take the example of Amsterdam, a famous tourist destination which any Dutchman will tell you is not a place worth living in anymore. Tourism is ruining cities, and European society has realized that. There are many more negative than positive developments in tourism. Therefore, it is wrong from the beginning that we should renovate Gudiashvili Square for tourists. It is wrong to renew Tbilisi for tourists.”

Bakradze suggests that instead, Tbilisi should be renewed for the residents of Tbilisi, for local society, so that people can live in dignified conditions. To live, work, rest, raise children in a proper environment. This is the first goal of renovating the city and, consequently, the district, the building, will be good for tourists as well. The starting point should be that this district, city, or square is a healthy living environment for the population of Tbilisi.

“Consequently, to go back to the conversation on the emptying of the Gudiashvili population, this process was wrong from the very beginning,” Bakradze says.

DOES THE OUTFLOW OF THE POPULATION AND ENTERING ONLY THE FINANCIALLY STRONG PART OF SOCIETY LEAD TO THE SEGREGATION OF CITY RESIDENTS?

The direct result of gentrification is precisely the segregation of the population. When an indigenous, low-income population is replaced by a financially strong population, on the one hand, only the financially strong population remains in the area, and this distressed population has to move somewhere, to an area where the real estate price is low. In the suburbs, therefore, is a classic example of how the city is segregated, where the rich live in one place and the poor in another. A socially divided city is an unequivocally negative phenomenon where ghettos form, often resulting in crime.

Tbilisi was and still is a rather mixed city compared to European cities. Segregation did not take place in Tbilisi during the 19th-20th centuries and it was a positive city in this respect. One way or another, it is still like that, but cases like Gudiashvili, supported by the government, will sooner or later see Tbilisi becoming like other European cities: a segregated place, and this will be a highly negative event. Every city government is trying and should try to avoid segregation and consequently the problems of gentrification, not only in those areas where it is carrying out urban renewal, but also in areas where the government does not participate, so that replacing the existing population with another part of society that is homogeneous, does not occur.



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