



Source: NATO

FOCUS ON EUROPEAN SECURITY

European countries up spending on their national defense budgets despite threats from Russia

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Israeli House: We Create Reality!

At the invitation of the Israeli House, an Israeli delegation led by David Bitan, Head of the Friendship Group with the Georgian Parliament in the Knesset, visited Tbilisi. The delegation, which includes the mayor of Rishon LeZion, a leading city in Israel, will take part in the events of the Israeli House on May 13-15. In particular, on May 13, in the Varketili district of Tbilisi, a joint event of the Tbilisi City Assembly and Israeli House is planned - the opening of the "Georgian Schindlers" Memorial. The memorial was placed in the newly built park on the initiative of Revaz Sokhadze, a majoritarian MP. The park will soon be named after the Georgian Schindlers based on the appeal of Israeli House. Contribution of AEPJ (The European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage) is noteworthy, since there is ongoing support for these types of events from their side.

At the initiative of Israeli House, a picture of Anne Frank was painted on a 30-meter wall in the park with Georgian and Israeli flags, as a background. A few months ago, the guests of Israeli House - Israeli parliamentarians - took part in the planting of the park.

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BONDS		Price	w/w	m/m	STOCKS		Price	w/w	m/m
GRAIL 07/28	85.28 (YTM 7.01%)	-0.1%	-0.9%		Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 11.60	-5.5%	-4.9%	
GEBGG 07/23	99.63 (YTM 6.31%)	-1.9%	-0.9%		Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 5.79	-4.8%	-10.2%	
GEOCAP 03/24	96.55 (YTM 8.19%)	+0.0%	+0.2%		TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 11.82	-6.3%	+3.0%	
SILNET 01/27	97.65 (YTM 8.99%)	-0.1%	-0.2%						
TBC 06/24	100.86 (YTM 5.31%)	-0.4%	-2.4%						
GGU 07/25	100.89 (YTM 7.43%)	+0.2%	-0.1%						
COMMODITIES		Price	w/w	m/m	CURRENCIES		Price	w/w	m/m
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	105.94	-1.5%	+3.1%		GEL / USD	3.0262	-0.6%	-1.3%	
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 854.17	-0.5%	-8.8%		GEL / EUR	3.1953	-0.1%	-4.2%	
					GEL / GBP	3.7307	-1.8%	-6.6%	
					GEL / CHF	3.0470	-2.2%	-7.2%	
					GEL / RUB	0.0436	+1.4%	+14.4%	
					GEL / TRY	0.2004	-2.0%	-3.5%	
INDICES		Price	w/w	m/m	GEL / AZN	1.7852	-0.7%	-1.4%	
FTSE 100	7 216.58	-4.3%	-5.9%		GEL / AMD	0.0064	-5.9%	-1.2%	
FTSE 250	19 306.72	-6.8%	-8.8%		GEL / UAH	0.1001	-3.0%	-3.7%	
DAX	13 380.67	-4.0%	-6.3%		EUR / USD	0.9471	-0.5%	+3.0%	
DOW JONES	32 245.70	-2.5%	-7.1%		GBP / USD	0.8110	+1.3%	+5.7%	
NASDAQ	11 623.25	-7.3%	-15.2%		CHF / USD	0.9939	+1.6%	+6.4%	
MSCI EM EE	31.29	-4.3%	-17.0%		RUB / USD	na	na	na	
MSCI EM	1 014.68	-5.4%	-10.0%		TRY / USD	15.0829	+1.3%	+2.3%	
SP 500	3 991.24	-4.0%	-11.1%		AZN / USD	1.6951	-	-0.0%	
MSCI FM	2 386.70	-2.9%	-8.7%		AMD / USD	474.0000	+5.5%	-0.1%	



Teaching Agriculture for High Standards

Swiss Ambassador to Georgia Heidi Grau, Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus, Embassy of Switzerland Danielle Meuwly and UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia Nick Beresford visited Dmanisi Municipality on 7 May to see the progress of the Swiss and UNDP-supported educational initiatives at the Swiss Agricultural School 'Caucasus' (SASC).

During the visit, UNDP and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) signed an extended cooperation agreement ensuring continued support for the SASC.

"Switzerland and Georgia celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations. The Swiss Agricultural School, which serves quality education and business success is a great example of our collaboration. We welcome the achievements of the school and feel proud that Switzerland's experience contributes to the development of agricultural training in Georgia and to improving the lives of Georgian farmers," said Swiss Ambassador Grau.

"UNDP helps retrain teachers and create new educational programs. Our support for the Swiss Agricultural School and other educational institutions contributes to reforming and developing vocational education and training in Georgia," said Beresford.

"Our college aims to be a benchmark for agricultural vocational education in the region. The high-quality Swiss curricula and modern infrastructure enable us to achieve that," said the SASC founder Mikheil Svimonishvili.

Since its launch in the fall of 2021, the Swiss Agricultural School 'Caucasus' has enrolled its first 10 students on the two-year training course in the fields of farming and cheese-making. Over 200 farmers have benefitted from agricultural extension services.

Modelled on the historic Plantahof agricultural school in Switzerland, the SASC serves as an exemplary training facility for cattle breeding and Swiss cheesemaking, aiming to graduate 300 professional farmers in the next 10 years.

The SASC is one of the largest private initiatives in the field of vocational education in Georgia. The school is funded by Swiss and Georgian private sources, including the Swiss South Caucasus Foundation / Gebert Rüt Stiftung.

The SDC and UNDP support draws on \$560,000 in Swiss funding and is focused on developing theoretical and practical training programs, training teachers and promoting agriculture extension services. In the future, this assistance will extend to internship programs for students and teachers and business consultations for graduates.

FIBA Praises Successful Construction of New Sports Palace for Eurobasket in Tbilisi

BY ANA DUMBADZE

FIBA calls progress in the construction of Sports Palace for Eurobasket "impressive"

A 15-member delegation of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) headed by FIBA Europe Executive Director Kamil Novak is visiting Tbilisi.

FIBA representatives together with the Deputy Ministers of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia Soso Giorgadze and Ioseb Baghaturia, as well as the President of the Georgian Basketball Federation Viktor Sanikidze and the Secretary General of the Federation Giorgi Kartvelishvili visited the multifunctional sports facilities.

Kamil Novak praised the ongoing work and noted that great progress has been made since his last visit.

"I will start by saying that I was last here in early December 2021 and I am impressed with the progress I have seen. Not only because any arena construction is a big deal, we are also well aware that we are going through a post-pandemic period that is truly unique in history. Its economic and general impacts are great and when I see that even in such circumstances, such progress is achieved, I am really happy. I can only congratulate the Government of Georgia, as well as the Basketball Federation and the Local

Organizing Committee, that the greatest effort has been made and the construction of the arena is a big deal. If we look at the last two years, the whole world, the whole of Europe is facing special challenges. I hope that the last phase will be very soon and the qualifying match against Spain scheduled for the beginning of July will be a great celebration of this opportunity because as far as I know, this palace will be used for other events as well. I will say once again that I am impressed," said Kamil Novak.

Soso Giorgadze, the Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia, said that the newly established Ministry had a rather heavy commitment in terms of the sports palace a year ago, but today, progress is visible and this is evidenced by the positive assessments made by the International Federation.

The President of the Georgian Basketball Federation, Viktor Sanikidze, highlighted the fact that the works are at the last stage, probably by the end of the month, and everything will be ready for the qualifying match of the World Cup.

It is noteworthy that in recent months, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has been actively involved in the monitoring process of construction works. On January 26 of the current year, Minister Tea Tsulukiani held the first working meeting at the Multifunctional Sports Palace and got acquainted with the works on the spot. Reports were sent once a week to the International Basketball Federation.

PM Hands Over 2nd Part of EU Questionnaire to EU Amb



The Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili handed over the second part of the European Commission questionnaire to the Head of the EU Delegation to the EU Administration, Carl Hartzell.

"I am pleased to present the answers to the questionnaire. We have completed the filling, a total of 7 books have been published, and I am happy to give them to you. We look forward to understanding the decision of the European Commission and its member states," he said.

The Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister of Georgia and noted that the questionnaire will greatly assist the

European Commission in its assessment.

"Mr. Prime Minister, I am grateful to be here and to receive the results of your and many other people's hard work in the second and final process of the questionnaire. It will help the European Commission determine the outcome," Hartzell noted.

The second, sectoral part of the European Commission questionnaire includes 33 chapters, up to 2300 questions in all sectoral directions, and its delivery date was set by the European Union as 13 May. In order to fill the volume of the questionnaire effectively and in the shortest possible time, all relevant state agencies were involved, and the process was

personally supervised by the Head of Government.

As the Prime Minister noted, the European choice of Georgia is the choice not only of the government, but also of the Georgian people.

The first part of the questionnaire was handed to the Ambassador of the European Union by the Georgian PM on May 2, at the Government Administration. Following the submission of the second part of the questionnaire, the European Commission will start preparing its own evaluation report, which will be submitted to the Council of the European Union. The relevant decision is expected by the end of June.

MFA Condemns Presidential Elections in Russian-Occupied Tskhinvali Region



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia refers to the so-called second tour of presidential elections held on 8 May 2022 in Tskhinvali region occupied by the Russian Federation and condemns this illegal action that contradicts the fundamental principles and norms of international law and blatantly violates Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

As the statement notes, under the Russian occupation and effective control,

any so-called elections will not have legal consequences, in the circumstance when hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees are expelled from their homes as a result of the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions are still hampered to safely and in dignity return home, and fundamental rights and freedoms of people on the ground are blatantly violated. Effective control of the Russian Federation over Georgia's occupied regions and its responsibility for the violations of human rights on the ground are clearly attested

in the Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 21 January 2021.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia calls on the Russian Federation to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and implement its international obligations, inter alia the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community to duly assess and react to the actions directed against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Russia-Ukraine War: Week 10



BY ANA DUMBADZE

In his Victory Day address, an annual event celebrating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, Russian President Vladimir Putin defended the decision to invade Ukraine and falsely depicted his country's actions as an "extension of the struggle against Nazism in Europe."

Western and Ukrainian officials earlier assumed that Putin might use the May 9 ceremony to officially declare Russia in a state of war and expand military conscription.

However, speaking in Moscow's Red Square on Monday, he made no call for new sacrifice or mobilization, no threat of a nuclear strike, and no stark pronouncement about an existential war with the West. Overall, Putin did not make any new attempt to prepare his people for a wider conflict.

Instead, he promised that the military would keep fighting to "liberate" Ukraine from "torturers, death squads and Nazis."

The choreography of the parade itself was traditional: troops and vehicles marched and rolled through Red Square as they had in previous years and did not show the "Z" symbol that has come to represent support for the Ukraine war. The traditional aerial flyover of the Victory Day parade was canceled "due to the bad weather," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. In total, 77 aircraft were to take part in the ceremony, including eight MiG-29 fighter jets, which were



On May 9, Putin made no call for new sacrifice or mobilization, no threat of a nuclear strike, and no stark pronouncement about an existential war with the West

to form the letter "Z" in the sky above the Red Square.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky rejected Putin's claim of purging Nazism to justify the invasion, saying in a video released on Monday that it was the Russian leader who was "repeating the horrific crimes of Hitler's regime today."

"On the day of victory over Nazism, we are fighting for a new victory," Zelensky said.

From both leaders' speeches, it can be concluded that the end of the war is not yet close. Currently, Ukrainian troops, armed with heavy weapons supplied by the West, are fighting Russian forces along a 300-mile front in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. After weeks of intense combat, Russia has made only sporadic gains.

The Ukrainian military said that the Russian army had deployed 19 battalion tactical groups, each with as many as 1,000 troops, to the Russian border town of Belgorod in preparation for an assault to slow a Ukrainian counteroffensive around Kharkiv and to break through Ukrainian defensive lines elsewhere in the region.

BIDEN SIGNS LEND-LEASE ACT FOR UKRAINE

In parallel with the May 9 celebrations in Russia, US President Joe Biden signed the Ukraine democracy defense Lend-Lease act.

The signing ceremony was held at the White House.

Biden's signature on the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022 will make it easier for the US to lend or lease military aid to allies affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Under the measure, Ukraine can request streamlined transfers of US weapons and other security assistance. The US will get guarantees that the country will replace or reimburse the assets at a later date.

The Lend-Lease program was used during World War II.

The act signed to help Ukraine is a historic step, Zelensky said.

"I am grateful to US President Biden and the American people for their support of Ukraine's fight for our freedom and our future. The signing of the Lend-Lease Act is a historic step. I am confident we will win together again and we will defend democracy in Ukraine and Europe as we did 77 years ago," Zelensky wrote.

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES APPROVES ADDITIONAL \$40 BILLION FOR UKRAINE

The US House of Representatives has approved more than \$40 billion in aid

to Ukraine.

As Reuters reported, Biden asked Congress to approve an additional \$33 billion in aid to Ukraine, while as a result of a lawmakers' decision, military and humanitarian funding was increased.

The bill was supported by 368 members of the House, with 57 against.

Democratic Representative Rosa DeLauro stated: "this bill will protect democracy, limit Russian aggression, and strengthen our own national security, while, most importantly, supporting Ukraine."

UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS WOUNDED INSIDE MARIUPOL'S AZOVSTAL STEEL PLANT CALL FOR HELP

Attacks and shelling of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Ukraine, continue. The troops holed up at the plant are denying Russia total control of the Ukrainian port city, but their situation is desperate, as soldiers with open wounds are left without any medical care in insanitary conditions.

Speaking in an online press conference on Sunday, an intelligence officer of the Azov regiment holed up in Azovstal said surrender "would amount to suicide."

Describing their increasingly grim, and likely ultimately hopeless, circumstances, Illia Samoilenko also made clear his bitterness with the Ukrainian government in Kyiv. It had, he said, failed in its defense of southern Ukraine, where Russia made much faster progress than in the north, and had abandoned Mariupol's garrison to its fate.

"Surrender is not an option because Russia is not interested in our lives," said Samoilenko, arguing that Moscow could



not allow them to live because of the war crimes they had witnessed. "We are basically dead men here. Most of us know this and it's why we fight so fearlessly."

Speaking after the Zoom briefing, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said "every presidential conversation with foreign leaders and international organizations starts and ends with Azovstal."

Mariupol's defense has been hard contested, in part because the city is critical to Russia's ability to supply the reconstruction of the eastern Donbas region it is now fighting to secure, and to establish a land corridor between the Russian mainland and Crimea, annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

All of the women and children who were huddled in bunkers at the site for weeks have been evacuated.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE: WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN FORCES FROM KHARKIV REGION IS A SILENT ADMISSION THAT THEY CANNOT TAKE KEY UKRAINIAN CITIES

Russia is withdrawing troops from the Kharkiv region to replenish its forces after reorganization and heavy losses, the UK Defense Department said this week.

"Ukrainian forces continue to counterattack north of Kharkiv, retaking several towns and villages along the Russian border. The fact that the Russian Federation has given priority to Donbas has made its units stationed in the Kharkiv region vulnerable to mobile and highly motivated counterattack groups in Ukraine," the statement said.

"The withdrawal of Russian forces from the Kharkiv region is a tacit acknowledgment that they cannot take key cities in Ukraine," the statement said.

ZELENSKY EXPECTS A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO EU CANDIDATE STATUS IN JUNE

Ukraine may obtain EU candidate status in June, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video address on Facebook on

May 9.

The Ukrainian leader noted that Ukraine had submitted the second part of the completed questionnaire required to become a candidate for membership on May 9, a process which normally takes many months.

"We have done everything in a matter of weeks... In June, I expect to receive an affirmative response regarding our country's candidate status for EU membership," the President said.

On February 28, Zelensky signed an application for Ukraine's accession to the EU. He said that after the full-scale invasion of Russia, Ukraine will apply to the EU for immediate accession under a new special procedure.

On March 21, it was announced the European Commission had begun work on a conclusion on Ukraine's potential membership in the EU. According to Zelensky, this will be prepared within a few months and will act as a recommendation for the EU Council to decide on the next steps.



In June, I expect to receive an affirmative response regarding our country's candidate status for EU membership – Zelensky



Once Again of Our Ex

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Telling the story of Georgia's third president, there is always a chance doubletalk might follow, because he has truly become the subject of the most controversial discourse this nation has had in the last 30 years. Fate would have it that this talented but extraordinarily conceited and self-centered young man, having confidently controlled even the slightest rustle in the air during his term of office, is now doing time as a trivial wrongdoer.

A culprit is a culprit, but because he ruled the nation for nine years, his dedicated aficionados are doing their nervous utmost to persuade our society that he should get special treatment, including immediate release from confinement, thus saving his health and rescuing his prestige. This is why even a word about him can trigger an outpouring of talk of any content and magnitude.

On the other hand, things about the still politically-active and sharp-tongued Ex need to be put straight. The strident motley opposition to the current government of Georgia are saying that the distinguished prisoner is very sick, and the jail infirmary cannot serve as an appropriate spot for improving his health, given his current medical condition, so he "has to be moved to one of the best European healing centers without delay,"

otherwise, they say, the nation will be faced with the enforced death of its third chief executive and compelled to carry the weight of the ensuing embarrassment forever. In turn, the government tells the discomfited public that the man is doing well enough to continue with his imprisonment and should listen well to his dieticians and accept the new living conditions he has, not very accidentally, found himself in.

Meanwhile, there are myriad convicts in Georgia's penitentiaries that are sicker than the Ex, but requests to set them free due to illness are few and far between. The question pops up here as to whether the former president of the country should be entitled to any special treatment while incarcerated, or not? How much freedom does the functioning law give the authorities to act in cases like this? There must be some international experience dictating to the Georgian government the way it should behave when it comes to former heads of the nation. There are, after all, hundreds of former 'Number Ones' out there, who are doing time, like our own Ex, in their respective lands.

Even if the transfer of our Ex to one of the best European clinics became feasible, how would it be handled? Should Georgia find enough financial resource to let a convoy go with him? If yes, how many of them will have to accompany the Ex to make a round-the-clock service available to him? How about their board and lodging? And most importantly, how long should the treatment last? Could some



Mikheil Saakashvili (December 2021). Image source: euronews.com

kind of an agreement be made between Georgia and the recipient country on the issue? It all seems totally absurd.

Let's have a quick look at a different version of possible action: if the famous Ex is granted amnesty by the president of the country, how many people of Georgia's four million population would go for it? The situation is more than plainly complicated: you keep the guy

in jail, the opposition will continue barking at the government until it becomes hoarse; you free him, and the governmental electorate will dwindle away in a twinkle of an eye.

Who on earth could have predicted how much of a nuisance the hapless Ex's return home would trigger? But the mess has to be fixed. It can't go on like this forever. It's all very complicated, but it

is simple too: let the pertinent international organizations come up with a reasonable proposal, so that keeping up the national legislation and the law enforcement system of the country are guaranteed to remain intact. Anything other than this might bring the republic to another collapse with all its expected consequences. This is all déjà vu though, and we need that like a hole in the head.

A Much-Needed Strategy toward the Wider Black Sea Region



Joint exercises of the Northern and Black Sea fleets. With Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Nikolai Yevmenov, center, and Commander of the Southern Military District Forces Alexander Dvornikov. Source: Kremlin

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

As trivial as it might sound, a critical problem the collective West is experiencing in the wider Black Sea region is low soft power capabilities. Money is being spent, but either not enough, not run efficiently or

both at the same time.

In Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, the countries that aspire to join Western institutions, the support for being pro-Western is genuine and has been fairly high amid Russia's aggressive foreign policy over the past twenty years. But a certain fatigue, the realization that the West is not doing enough, has been growing. And this is the most dangerous development for NATO/EU enlargement

plans. As Russia is likely to achieve at least some of its aims, it will double down on pressuring Georgia and Moldova into renouncing NATO and perhaps even EU aspirations.

If the thinking in the West is that Russian coercion would be causing popular pushback, there are caveats to this logic. First, there are many in Georgia and Moldova who argue the West has been unable and simply not been

active enough to compete with authoritarian trends in the wider Black Sea region. And there is truth to this thinking. The West has been largely absent from the developments leading up to and after the second Nagorno-Karabakh War. It also did not limit cooperation let alone punish Russia for invading Georgia and six years later for annexing Crimea.

These are the facts that are resonating far and wide among the nations around the Black Sea. Another problem is that there is also nearly absent Western interaction with the separatist regions. To be sure, significant limits on the cooperation between with the separatist entities are imposed by the sovereign states themselves. But it is more so because of the lack of strategic vision and most of all soft power outreach from the West that would help detach those territories from Russian influence. No long-term vision exists which would aim at winning the hearts and minds of the Abkhaz, Ossetians, or residents of Transnistria and increasingly so, Donbas.

The West is still in the middle of processing what is taking place in the wider Black Sea region. Only with Russia's invasion of Ukraine do shifts appear to be happening. Moscow's belligerence led to the soothing of tensions within the trans-Atlantic community. Even in the EU itself, some sort of wider understanding is emerging, whereby Russia is viewed not only as an acute threat to the liberal order, but actually capable of upending the system altogether.

There is now a growing momentum to lay building blocks for an overarching Western strategy in the Black Sea. This is the space which should be increasingly seen as a battlefield between the two systems: the Western and the Russian authoritarian one. Whoever manages to dominate this theater also manages to set the rules for how international relations will play out.

Yet, little evidence suggests that there are discussions on how to address the

separatist territories. Donbas, Crimea, Abkhazia, and Transnistria are either close or have direct access to the Black Sea. Formulating a region-wide vision without factoring in the role of those territories would be futile. The measures should include economic mechanisms, an increased emphasis on the inviolability of sovereign territories, and a set of tough sanctions imposed on those who decide to recognize separatist regions as independent.

A geopolitical component to a long-term strategy is winning back Turkey. Wary of Russian military moves, Ankara looks at and needs the West. Divorcing it from Russia will be difficult and perhaps no hopes should be placed upon Ankara's total disengagement with Moscow. But what should be worked toward is constructing a space where, along with Turkey, the West will be able to project significant military power to at least prevent future military escalations.

The alternative is a bleak international security situation. With such small steps as in Abkhazia and Donbas before 2022 and now more globally in the whole of Ukraine, Russia has been gradually laying the ground for a final assault on the present world order. And it includes diluting the West's ability to project itself as a viable soft power. After all, much of attraction to the liberal democracy depends on its softer side.

Russia now serves as a catalyzer behind the radical changes within the trans-Atlantic community. As the trust in NATO and other multilateral institutions grows, so should the momentum behind the search for a long-term vision for separatist regions around the Black Sea. Russia's sprawling separatist empire is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, both financially and militarily. In the longer run, this presents geopolitical opportunities.

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

Essence of Economic Sanction: A Few Opinions against the Backdrop of the War. Part I



In parallel to imposing sanctions, we need a correct understanding of the gradual exit from sanctions, because speed, delay, or any spontaneity in the exit will harm the functional aspect of the mentioned economic weapon

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
CHAIRMAN OF GEOCASE

The ongoing war in Ukraine has firmly introduced a few words into our vernacular. One of them is “sanction.” In response to Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, renewed on 24 February, several waves of sanctions imposed by the collective West on Russia have attracted the attention of media, analytical and government circles. Hardly a day passes without various media, domestic and foreign, discussing the essence, as well as a particular scope of application of this or that package of sanctions. Hence, the key question, we think, can be formulated as follows: what is the actual impact of sanctions on deterring the aggressor, stopping military actions and stimulating the process of negotiations to end the war?

It must be noted that despite frequent use of the word, a common opinion about the essence, effectiveness and desired outcome of sanctions has not been formed not only in our country but also abroad. Even more, the tone and scope of such discussions is rather diverse and often, contradictory: from emphasizing a mythologized power of sanctions down to underscoring their practical uselessness in the effort to achieve the set aim.

It would not be correct to say that the practice of using sanctions is a “new science,” because it counts 2,400 years, dating back to the Peloponnesian War. However, such a mechanical count of years for drawing valid conclusions is not appropriate: evolution of conflict and war has its stages. Each such stage is distinguished for its authenticity – be it a degree of codification or execution of international relations or, say, technologies for waging a war available at that time. Furthermore, when talking about international relations on a global



Image source: REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration/File Photo

scale, it is also important to consider how tempting, in a given historic context, it is for a revisionist and aggressor country to infringe another country, and what means it has for that, and on the other hand, whether a political will and material resources exist to confront and stop such infringement.

From the perspective of history, the use of sanctions as a universal recipe for deciding the fate of war and peace evokes a number of conflicting facts, parallels and observations. It has become topical today to generalize them against the backdrop of the largest military confrontation since the Second World War, going on in the center of Europe – the war between Russia and Ukraine. Any aspect related to this war is absolutely decisive because there is a plan to adjust European security rules to the brutal force on the one side of the war, while on the other side, the necessity to thwart this plan and along with it, to remodel the European order so as to adequately contain modern challenges.

In such a serious process, the phenomenon of sanction, its role and purpose, along with other measures of containment, require constant observation, comprehension and revision of conclusions. The aim of this article is to share some observations or views with the readers. Towards this end, we will first refer to so-called “sanction theory” and recall several aspects. We believe that without these, talks about the effectiveness of Western sanctions in the prevention of Russian aggression in Ukraine would be one-sided and incomplete.

THE REALISTIC (NON-CELEBRATORY) SIDE OF THEORIZATION

An economic sanction is a midway “stop” between unsuccessful diplomatic efforts and armed intervention, in order to solve a problem. In other words, by enacting sanctions, the initiator or group of initiators of sanctions admit that political efforts have largely failed; however, it does not mean that the initiators have a desire, intention and readiness to resort to military methods in order to put things to rights.

We need to recall that the modern history of using sanctions is not distinguished for continuity and consistency. For example, sanctions to deter the war were used at various frequencies – and often unsuccessfully – between the first and second world wars. At those times, the essence of sanction differed from the modern understanding, and mainly meant an economic blockade. Such a blockade, expressed primarily in restricting international trade relations, was viewed as the most optimal economic tool for the punishment of the aggressor or accused,

or to put it in modern military terminology, it was the “nuclear” weapon of that time. Although applied, that tool failed to achieve its universal aim of deterring military interventions and spare Mankind from the devastating Second World War.

A relatively more robust sanctions policy emerged and was adopted into world practice in the 1980s.

With regard to realistic expectations of “miraculous” results from sanctions, a general comment is that the impact of sanctions is rather “mixed” and is not always strong and conspicuous. Judging by the achievement of set goals, only one third of various measures enacted to sanction and punish in the past decades proved fully effective. A broad use of sanctions instead of armed forces gives a civil and political leadership a lever to manage crises in a better way in a less explosive situation. At the same time, compared to engagement in military actions, the use of sanctions involves fewer physical and political risks.

And still, what are those necessary theoretical nuances that make a package of sanctions more targeted and tailored to a specific situation and hence more likely to meet people’s expectations of the results?

GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE AIM

It is one thing to timely and correctly assess a breach of norms of international law and behavior, condemn it, and call on the violator to rectify it, though it is still political-declarative evaluation of the breach. A significantly more difficult thing, however, is to develop, alongside assessment and condemnation, effective countermeasures envisaging, inter alia, an economically “lethal” weapon – sanctions.

We have mentioned economic “lethality” – the deadly effect of sanctions in an economic sense, intentionally, because a general purpose of any sanction is to undermine a country’s economic and social resources in conditions of nominal peace.

Despite a rather clearly formulated purpose, a precise tailoring of sanctions to a concrete situation is, as practice and reality show, an extremely difficult task. This, in fact, is not surprising considering the political-economic-military overlapping of different actors in the modern world.

In any case, the initiator of sanctions should understand perfectly well: what is the aim of punishment measures? What result does it expect from these measures? A sanctions-oriented response requires that there are clear answers to these fundamental questions from the very start, because ambiguity about the

key aims and objectives of sanctions, as well as the revision of aims and objectives after the imposition of sanctions, will damage the reputation of the initiator and undermine the effectiveness of the sanctions.

A common opinion is that the motive for imposing a sanction is to inflict that amount of harm – pain, on a target country that will discourage it from undertaking a certain short-term action or pursuing a long-term policy. Hence, a proper understanding of aims and objectives of sanctioning measures from the very start is one thing, while another is a proper and impartial monitoring of their management. To put it in other words, equally important in the process is the management of sanctions.

The process of proper management is related to a few essential aspects.

One is the largest possible coalition of participants around a relevant political decision, and the firmness and unity of those coalition members for ensuring a higher degree of effectiveness of large-scale sanctions. Otherwise, the target of sanctions will find loopholes to continue its harmful political-military line of action, which, over time, will minimize the effectiveness of sanctions to almost zero. When talking about coalition unity, it must also be noted that various participants in the package of sanctions, especially if they are many, may hold different attitudes and motives. Therefore, the effectiveness of large-scale sanctions depends not only on the number of participants, but also on the identities of participants.

Another issue to be considered is the perception and attitude of a target country and its population towards the expected sanctions. This also needs few comments. First, sanctions are likely to be more effective in a more open target country than in an authoritarian country. Even more: the tougher the control of public opinion and perception of events by the authoritative regime, the higher the likelihood of society to rally around the regime. Thus, a correct selection of target is of particular importance.

Another aspect with regard to the management of sanctions is a constant assessment of implementation of sanctions for the aim of modifying the existing measures or adding new ones. At the same time, an opinion that the effectiveness of sanctions depends on the increase in their severity and amount is faulty. Consequently, the word “management” is not limited to its semantic meaning alone, it acquires a rather specific functional connotation. Therefore, the management needs to be constantly monitored and assessed because with such complex approach the “pain” inflicted by sanc-

tions will be neither less nor more severe than intended by this political decision.

With regard to the management process, we should also note that in order to achieve set goals and objectives, it is necessary to adequately match the escalation and de-escalation measures determined in the sanctions policy, which allow communication with the target country and its government by applying a carrot and stick approach. This is a necessary flexibility that serves a result-oriented use of a sanction.

A recent practice shows problems of legal nature in terms of management. For example, the regulators and courts do not have an entirely clear position about secondary sanctions or individually sanctioned persons acting under a “corporate guise,” etc. All this is a very specific issue and goes beyond the scope of the discussion in this article.

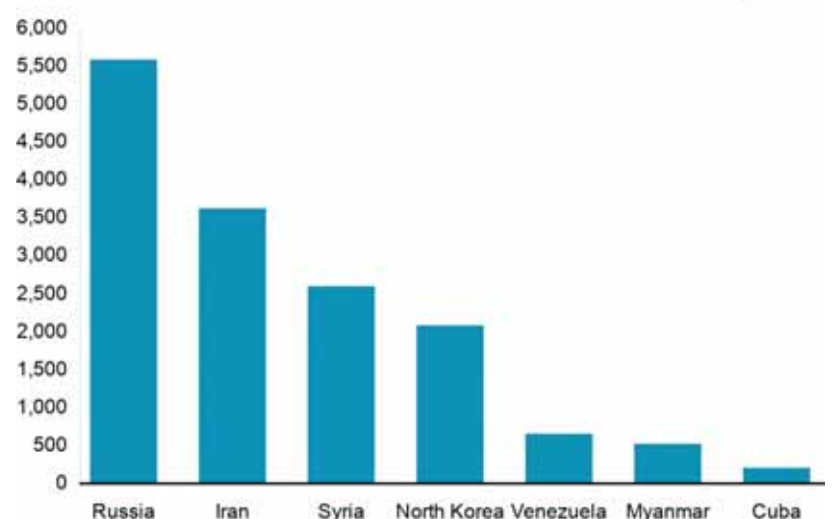
However, one should note the topic of so-called “smart” sanctions, especially with regard to management demand. The main point here is that the initiators of sanctions must avoid unexpected outcome (for example, a humanitarian disaster, damaging of partner country’s economy) and choose a correct package of sanctioning measures in order to determine a “sanction pain” that is commensurate to goals and objectives. Let us add here that in parallel with the decision to impose sanctions, it is necessary to have a correct understanding of gradual exit from sanctions, because speed or delay as well as any spontaneity in the exit will harm the functional aspect of the mentioned economic weapon.

It is a fact that in the implementation of modern sanctions, the aforementioned and other issues discussed in this section require practical knowledge, depoliticized analysis and technocratic assessment. Otherwise, the effectiveness of “economic war” will be questionable because the word “sanction” does not automatically mean success.



Sanctions are likely to be more effective in a more open target country than in an authoritarian country: the tougher the control of public opinion and perception of events by the regime, the higher the likelihood of society to rally around that regime

Russia is now the world’s most sanctioned country



Source: Castellum.AI



A NATO Soldier's Thoughts On Russian Experiences



Russian airborne troops advance past a hangar containing the Antonov An-225 Mriya at Antonov (Hostomel) Airport. Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

In a recent video of a Russian paratrooper, a member of their famous VDV Airborne force, discusses his predicament in battle with his Ukrainian captors. His experiences during the battle at the airport in Hostomel outside Kyiv paint an interesting tactical picture. We will compare this with the methods NATO forces have used in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), spoken about by a member who served.

While it's certainly true that the captured soldier is inclined to change the story of events in the presence of his captors, there still lies within a marble of truth. Referred to herein as Nikita, the captured paratrooper describes the operation as more of a training operation that turned wrong. While many have called this a falsity, there is some credibility to his story, as sporadic such claims of Russian soldiers protesting their ser-

vice in Ukraine have surfaced.

According to Nikita's testimony, his air assault operation was doomed from the start. Much of the planning for the operation may have led to fellow paratroopers being confused and disoriented when they landed on the ground. Despite being an elite unit, their fate may have been sealed before they even engaged the enemy. We discussed this with a former soldier with combat service and experience in fighting determined foes abroad.

The former NATO soldier we spoke to, who served with the British Army as an infantryman, told us that the captured soldier seems wholly confused about the operation. He explains that the soldier seemed not to have been briefed on the mission and had little to no confidence in his platoon-level leadership. He attributes this to a relic of the Soviet view of warfare.

"I think the Soviet military imagination has been their biggest failing here," the Brit notes. He says he sees similarities to the Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan. "The most

surprising aspect of this [Ukraine] war has been their apparent inability to learn the lessons of the 2020 conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan," he explains, "which is very ironic considering that it was a war that Russia helped to end." Armenia, being largely trained and supported by Russia, is a microcosm of the larger problem Russia has in Ukraine, despite new equipment.

The British infantryman explains that this soldier is an example of the failure to modernize the warfare ideology, and not just the gear. He says that many in the West, Ukraine included, "seemed to take note of the effectiveness of drones in conventional war, and the fact that conscription-based systems will fail when confronted with trained, briefed, and determined professionals." He closes by stating succinctly, "Russia's tactics - like Armenia's - are demonstrably outdated."

Many have written critiques about Russian tactics and their usefulness in modern warfare. However, it is particularly interesting to see this from a participant from the Russian side. While it

is true that a soldier's statements in captivity should be taken carefully, there seems to be little reason to doubt the veracity of his statement. This is largely due to the outpouring of after-action reports that came to surface in the wake of the fighting around Kyiv.

Analysis shows that the operation was largely an overambitious attempt at airfield seizure, already a delicate task. In addition to the unpredicted Ukrainian defense strength, it was reported that the CIA alerted Ukraine prior to the invasion of the deep strike Russia was planning. This allowed those defenses to construct barriers and establish fighting positions. This caused the initial air assault to fail, and only when Russian forces could bring armored support from Belarus could the airport be seized.

However, the airfield had been so heavily damaged that it could not be used for its desired purpose of a forward support base. The Atlantic Council, an American think tank, even stated that the defense of the airport and its denied use as a forward supply and operations base caused the mission to take Kyiv to fail.

Others have gone on to state that this battle, along with many of the other actions in other parts of the country, have shattered the old image of Russia as a modern and deadly fighting force.

The Russian airborne forces, known in English as the VDV, have historically been a highly prestigious component of the armed forces. Being a paratrooper, even in the Soviet Red Army, held a unique career-critical mention for those members. Their alleged high training standards, specialized equipment, and selective recruitment process all painted this image.

During the fighting in Ukraine now, particularly the VDV action in and around Hostomel, defense experts and analysts are beginning to question their prowess as simple propaganda. While Russian forces are learning from these early faults and engaging with new leadership at the helm, it has yet to see if this is the correction they need.

Authors note: The Video can be found at YouTube via this URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TStvOgp4ow&t=177s>



A closer look at the remains of the An-225, the largest airplane in the world prior to its destruction. By Oleksandr Ratushniak

Saakashvili Transferred to Medical Center Vivamed

BY KETEVA SKHIRTADZE

On May 3, Davit Saakashvili, the brother of Mikheil Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia announced a series of rallies after the deadline given by the family to the government to transfer him abroad for treatment expired.

The ex-president's family and lawyers say that his condition after his extended hunger strike last autumn-winter, and "inhumane treatment" in prison, is critical, and he needs treatment abroad to survive.

"We have very little time," Davit Saakashvili said. "We will start actively talking to doctors, we should talk to the Patriarchate about the health of our brother, our President."

"We will continue to hold meetings with the non-governmental sector and civil society and, moreover, we will announce continuous rallies, which we will start very actively after these meetings, across the country. We will start in Adjara, go to Samegrelo, we will go every direction and we will meet people. If necessary, we will also call for a large-scale rally."

On April 22, a team of doctors set up by the ombudsman assessed Saakashvili's health and noted that his condition

had deteriorated significantly due to anorexia and depression.

On May 6, The United National Movement (UNM) held a rally demanding the transfer of former President Saakashvili abroad for medical treatment. A procession was held near the 12th penitentiary institution in Rustavi.

"After the full consolidation of the international community, the United States, the European Parliament, and individual MEPs regarding Mikheil Saakashvili's condition, it is now important to organize a public and civil protest. Today, the United National Movement is starting rallies in Batumi and Tbilisi. These will be permanent and continuous rallies until the fundamental rights of Mikheil Saakashvili are secured," said Nugzar Tsiklauri, a member of the United National Movement.

The US Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan, stated that they have full confidence in the ombudsman's office, which is monitoring Saakashvili's health. She urged the Georgian government to take the ombudsman's recommendations very seriously.

"We have full confidence in the Public Defender's Office, which monitors Mr. Saakashvili's health, and we call on the Georgian government to heed the ombudsman's recommendations very carefully. This is a person who has a constitutional mandate to protect the human rights of every citizen of Georgia.



Rallies are to be held countrywide, the UNM and Saakashvili's family claim. Source: Reuters

The ombudsman's office is doing a very good and responsible job and we have full confidence in her recommendations," Degnan said.

Koba Nakopia, a member of the United National Movement, said Saakashvili consented to be transferred to "Vivamed Clinic" for examination and he was moved

there on May 12.

"The Ministry of Justice offered the third President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili the opportunity to be examined at clinic Vivamed," Minister of Justice Rati Bregadze stated.

Chairman of the Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, on Wednesday commented

on Saakashvili, and noted everything is "becoming very comical." Kobakhidze said that when Saakashvili went to prison voluntarily, they expected there would be acting-out, self-harm, and more from him.

"This scenario is simple: the prisoner is responsible for harm himself. The penitentiary institutions are responsible for offering services, including medical care. All agencies act with responsibility, and this acting out, these speculations, and claims of injuries that Saakashvili puts out, naturally, will not succeed. Otherwise, any prisoner would give it a try. No agency should allow this," Kobakhidze said.

He noted that 150 prisoners used to die in prison each year, a figure that has been reduced by 12 times under the previous ruling team. The average is now 10 to 15 per year under the current government, he claimed, adding that all prisoners are provided with proper medical care.

"If you take a look at the penitentiary system, you will see hundreds of prisoners who have more difficult health conditions than Saakashvili, but the Public Defender is only interested in the one prisoner right now. There is political interest in this man. The main interest behind this is to involve the country in the war. Those who demand Saakashvili's release have the only goal - to get Georgia involved in the war, which we will not allow," Kobakhidze said.

The Future of European Security



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg addresses NATO soldiers in Bardufoss, Norway, during the training exercise Cold Response 2022. Source: NATO



Eight European NATO members reached the Alliance's target of spending 2% or more of GDP on their armed forces in 2021. This is one fewer than in 2020, but up from two in 2014

ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL GODWIN

As the war in Ukraine continues towards its third month, with little hope of coming to a peaceful close soon, the rest of Europe is in a unique position. A post-Cold War defense dip has allowed many countries to enjoy a more open budget. Investment in industry and social programs have swelled while military technology and expansions leveled off or reduced. Now, Europe's collective military and political leadership is looking east and rethinking their budget allocation.

Russia's largely unexpected invasion of Ukraine shifted opinions. This shift potentially happened more rapidly than almost any other world event in recent decades. Along with the massive transfer of arms, money, and equipment from both public and private entities to the Ukrainian military, national defense budgets are being reconsidered.

Germany may have been one of the most prolific examples of this shift. The country has long been exceptionally frugal with its defense budget when compared with nations of similar size. However, recent statements and actions from the top display that they are beginning to pivot in a large way.

German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said in reference to the change in budgetary considerations, "Vladimir Putin's attack has changed the security situation in Europe." The Federal Government of Germany has set aside €100

billion for national defense, in addition to two billion being sent to Ukraine. Berlin has openly expressed an interest in new air force fighter planes and anti-missile defense systems.

France has also begun to advance their defense budget. Emmanuel Macron defeated far-right rival Marine Le Pen to be re-elected president of France on April 24. Following this, he committed to raise the defense budget to €50 billion from €41 billion by 2025. The French Ministry of Defense has said they are seeking both battlefield technology advancements as well as additional hardware.

Finland and Sweden have been signaling serious interest in NATO membership. Additionally, they too have joined the budget rally. Finland's government has agreed to a €2 billion boost into the coffers of the Defense Ministry. Their neighbor, Sweden, also agreed to a defense budget increase.

Their Ministry of Defense said in a statement that they would begin increasing the budget: Aiming for NATO's 2% guideline of a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) going towards defense, they said they will achieve this level by 2028. They continued, stating, "Signifi-

cant increases in capacity will happen every year up to then." Nordic neighbor Denmark agreed to reach the 2% threshold by 2033.

Poland has pledged to go above the NATO-recommended investment in defense. During a visit to the United States, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said they would be raising their defense spending to 3% of their GDP. During his visit on April 20, he also signed an agreement to acquire 250 M1A2 Abrams tanks from the United States. This follows the shipment of over 240 Soviet-style tanks to Ukraine.

While these nations are not alone in their increased defense investment, it demonstrates that NATO is taking its defense seriously. This united spending effort has notably raised the global defense expenditure numbers. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) noted in late April that the world had passed the \$2 trillion mark for the first time. In their report they stated, "Eight European North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members reached the Alliance's target of spending 2% or more of GDP on their armed forces in 2021.

This is one fewer than in 2020, but up from two in 2014."

With so much investment in the European defense markets, NATO may have to make these budgetary numbers a "new normal." In addition to the ongoing war in Ukraine, Moscow has leveled threats at other European nations. After expressing interest in joining NATO, Russia threatened Finland and Sweden when both nations announced the move together.

The Kremlin's top diplomat stated that the results would trigger a response from Russia, but did not expand on what that would be. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov continued, saying, "the risk is serious, real. It should not be underestimated." NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that both countries could be added to the alliance quickly, with many speculating about an accelerated pathway option.

These threats only serve to cement the decisions of NATO's otherwise reluctant members to continue their "shopping spree" of arms and technologies. As with Poland, this frees up surplus to be sent to the front in Ukraine as a part of the continuing military aid packages. While

much of this is outdated by modern standards, an old tank is better than no tank. Ukraine also has plenty of willing volunteers, as has been demonstrated.

The Russian military has lost almost a quarter of its total fighting power to casualties (including killed, wounded, missing, and otherwise unavailable), according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This makes many of Moscow's threats seem hollow to many senior NATO leaders. The added benefit of the upgrades and increases in spending mean that any conflict between NATO and Russia will be costly, but short.

Indeed, herein lies the core advantage of NATO. Its increased and massed defense allows for simultaneous development internally for European countries. A safe country makes a safe place for investment, growth, and business. Russia, and its henchman Belarus, will continue to suffer internally. From both international sanctions to internal mismanagement, the duo will have to face the fact that they will more likely be at the mercy of NATO rather than in a position of strength, because of their own decisions.



The Russian military has lost almost a quarter of its total fighting power to casualties, according to the CSIS. This makes many of Moscow's threats seem hollow to many senior NATO leaders



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola. Source: NATO Photo

Gulf Georgia: Leading Oil Company's Team on Current Activities & their Success Story

Gulf Georgia is one of the leading oil companies on the Georgian market, its success driven by high quality fuel and exceptional customer service. This international brand has been represented officially in Georgia by "Sun Petroleum Georgia" LLC since March 2010.

Established in the US in 1901, Gulf Oil International today distributes high quality oil products to more than 100 countries globally, and is one of the major players in the world market.

Gulf Georgia currently successfully operates more than 141 refueling stations nationwide, 43 of which are located in Tbilisi. The company imports fuel from the best oil refineries in Europe, whose quality controls comply with world class standards.

Gulf refueling stations are distinguished with modern equipment and western state of the art innovative technologies.

The company is oriented on and always tries to capture opportunities for growth and development. It constantly focuses on the marketplace and its consumers; this being properly reflected in its success on the Georgian market and in the international arena.

To find out more about the company's current operational activities, promotions and future plans, GEORGIA TODAY spoke to the staff members of Gulf Georgia: Sofi Katamidze, Head of the Sales Unit, and Khatia Chagelishvili, Head of Operational Unit.

"Gulf -the global brand has been in Georgia for 12 years. During this time, we have gained the status of a local market leader by consistently offering the

best quality products and services, introducing modern ideas and an innovative vision." Katamidze tells us.

"Many changes have taken place over the years. The company has grown significantly and has become one of the largest employers in Georgia. Gulf currently has the widest network of 141 service stations and currently 72 Gulf Stores serve customers," she says. "There are 14 service centers for business customers where they will be able to receive corporate services. We offer individuals and companies a wide selection of high quality Belgian oils as well as 5 locations for oil replacement services throughout Georgia. The company owns four oil depots in Georgia, which ensures timely and safe delivery of fuel anywhere. The technological and infrastructural development in our network is constant, and we already offer our customers a fully automated, unique experience at our Gulf 6 Self Service.

"The high-quality standard has remained among our constant and strategically important priorities for years. Consistently delivering the best, Euro-5 standard fuel to end users; receiving exceptionally high quality service at the station - these are the two promises that our brand makes.

"I feel honored to be a member of a company that is actively involved in charitable activities, is the initiator of many important projects, cares for the environment, and takes care of homeless animals," Katamidze notes, speaking of the company's CSR direction.

GULF IS ONE OF THE LARGEST EMPLOYERS IN GEORGIA.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED HERE?

I represent the Gulf business. There are 30 people employed in this field in Gulf Georgia, and the company has a total of 1300 employees. Gulf is one of the largest employers in Georgia and the company continues to grow and develop. In general, Gulf has always played an active role in the development and strengthening of human capital. Employees in the company have equal opportunities for knowledge and career advancement. Clearly, raising the qualification of employees is important and in this direction the employees are trained every year. We have many success stories within the company which further strengthens our team and makes it attractive to work in Gulf. Gulf, with its steadily growing business, is making a significant contribution to Georgia's economic development.

TELL US ABOUT THE COMPANY'S PRIORITIES IN CUSTOMER RELATIONS.

Gulf, as a brand and business, is driven by one goal: to create the best experience for our customers. To meet the diverse needs of our customers, we are constantly evolving and developing products and services, introducing digital technologies. Our cooperation is built on two-way development which is based on reliability, accuracy and efficiency. Currently, the Gulf Business Portfolio includes more than 4,000 large, medium and small organizations from all fields.

A unique offer which arose from the growing interest of consumers and was introduced in Gulf, gives customers a gas station in their area equipped with modern monitoring and accounting systems, for which the Gulf itself provides fuel with its own fuel carriers. This is one of our successful projects that has been developed as a result of careful study of the needs of partner organizations.

It is the responsibility of our team to create more comfort for the customer than they normally get, by which I mean outsourcing the full cycle of fuel procurement to help companies optimize costs and free up resources.

I believe any success is largely due to the team. I am very lucky to have an outstanding team. Because of a lot of hard work and dedication Gulf business is so successful.

WHAT SPECIAL PRODUCTS DO YOU OFFER YOUR BUSINESS CUSTOMERS?

"Gulf Business offers Coupon and Business Card services to Gulf Business customers," Chagelishvili tells us. "Customers can purchase coupons in our service centers, a service which is still in demand in small companies. Business card is the most important product of our company, offering customers the most flexible, comfortable and fast service tailored to their needs. When using a business card, the customer purchases fuel for the card system quickly and is 100% protected from unintentional fuel consumption, having maximum control through software and also having the opportunity to communicate with our team, and participate in program refinement and perfection process. Business cards can be used at almost all Gulf gas stations throughout Georgia. Given the size of the network, this is another added convenience for users," she says.



THE COMPANY OFTEN MAKES CUSTOMERS HAPPY WITH EXCITING NEWS. WHAT OFFERS DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE?

Gulf Oil Company is constantly focused on introducing innovations and offering even more comfort and superior quality service to its customers. In summer 2021, we offered Gulf Business customers the chance to accumulate points when purchasing fuel with a Gulf Card. Accumulated points can be transferred to the Gulf Club card, which they can use in our Gulf Stores to buy any product. This project is unique and has no analogue in the Georgian market.

From 2022, we are offering Gulf Business customers a GPS service that is integrated with our card system and enables them to enjoy exclusive tailored terms with our partner organization.

And we have another important news: along with coupons and business cards,

we are offering our customers chips (vehicle identification system). This project was also implemented in 2022 in our organization, which means even more comfort at the gas station and, of course, more control.

TELL US ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FUTURE PLANS.

We strive to constantly evolve and refine our service and offer more flexibility to Gulf customers. Our team is always focused on constant communication with customers, which helps us to boost product quality and make them more customizable. I will not talk about specific future plans at the moment, but I can boldly say that our priority is constant progress, technological development and innovation, and this is the goal we strive to achieve from year to year, and each member of our team puts a lot of effort and energy into it.



Israeli House: We Create Reality!

Continued from page 1

The presentation of the book "Zionism Against All Odds" will be held on May 14 at the Wyndham Grand Tbilisi Five Star Hotel in Tbilisi. The book, published by Israeli House, is based on documentary material. It tells the story of a great Aliyah of historical significance to Israel, Georgia's role in the process, and hitherto unknown details of the World Jewish Agency's and its representatives' mission in the Soviet Union. The event will be attended by the Israeli delegation, Georgian politicians, prominent members of the public, and Israeli and Georgian media.

On May 15, the Israeli delegation will visit Akhmeta, where the Mayor of Rishon LeZion, Raz Kinstlich, will sign a

friendship agreement with Mayor of Akhmeta Municipality (Kakheti region).

The Israeli delegation held its first meeting at Israeli House yesterday and got acquainted with the latest activities of the organization. At the meeting, Itsik Moshe, the head of Israeli House said that most of the organization's initiatives are aimed at deepening Israeli-Georgian relations.

"Against the background of challenges, we do not have the luxury of being on standby. The non-governmental sector sees the needs in relations in all areas even better, so in our initiatives, we try to precisely define the interests of the parties. There can be no ideal environment until you create it. Therefore, in

parallel with our initiatives and activities, I expect the activity of various agencies to be able to resolve various issues. I believe it is possible," Moshe said, adding that the head of the friendship group with the Georgian parliament is paying a visit today, who has made a significant contribution to strengthening connections. At the same meeting, David Bitan spoke about the importance of the planned events - "Teaching the history of the Holocaust in Georgian universities, launching Israeli cabinets, opening a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust and the Georgian Schindlers is a very positive signal from a friendly country, not only for Judaism, but also for the state of Israel". He also noted - "Thanks to Revaz Sokhadze, member of the Tbilisi



lisi City Council, for supporting the Israeli House initiative to open a memorial to the Georgian Schindlers. I personally planted a few trees in this park. I know that a similar memorial was erected in Oni two years ago under the leadership of Israeli House. Everyone who visits these places will become Georgian ambassadors to the world," and added: "I am proud of my connection to this country and I am confident that future generations will continue to have such a connection too."

David Bitan spoke about the importance of the book "Zionism Against All Odds". According to him, this is a publication based on historical facts, which emphasizes the importance of Aliyah and Zionism, the first ties with Georgia and hitherto unknown remarkable events. He also noted that the presentation of the Jewish edition of the book was a success in Jerusalem, on Mount Herzl, and today it is a table book for many Jews. This book teaches both Israelis and Georgians a lesson in patriotism.

According to the Israeli parliamentarian, it is gratifying to see the friendship made between the Israeli city of Rishon Lezion and the city of Akhmeta in the most beautiful part of Georgia, Kakheti. "We are ready to contribute to the popularization of this city's potential," he said.

According to Raz Kinstlich, Mayor of Rishon LeZion, what is being done in the context of relations with Israel at the initiative of Israeli House proves once again that this is a friendly country to Israel. "David Bitan, who was the deputy mayor of our city before becoming an MP, assured me that we are coming to a friendly country and we should help strengthen ties with the cities through brotherhood. Akhmeta, like our city, is a city of vines and wine, so we decided to make friends with it. Our relations will be multifaceted - culture, tourism ... we will introduce the history of our city, we will popularize the potential of Akhmeta municipality in Israel," Kinstlich said, and expressed readiness to invite the Mayor of Akhmeta to Israel. "We will present to him the technologies available at Rishon LeZion, which will serve the advancement of the city. I am confident that this cooperation will be fruitful," he noted.

At the end of the meeting, Itsik Moshe said that the organization also has international plans. In particular, in July, the organization plans to organize an event, about anti-Semitism, in Jerusalem; in November, Israeli House will participate in a meeting of Israeli lobbying organizations; and in January 2023, at the initiative of Israeli House, a memorial for Babi Yar victims will be erected in Rishon LeZion.

Trendy Wooden Houses by Kohi.ge

The construction company of wooden houses and cottages, kohi.ge, today offers economical, ecologically clean and low-cost wooden houses in any region of Georgia, built using centuries-old technology spread throughout North America and Europe.

Special benefits are available for the population of the regions of Georgia who want to return to the land of their ancestors or arrange a tourist complex and introduce the beautiful places of Georgia to more foreigners.

There is probably no person alive who has not dreamed of owning a beautiful wooden cabin on the edge of the forest, or their own wooden home in a village.

Kohi.ge is the company that will fulfill this dream and, most importantly, fulfill it quickly, with quality, and at low cost,

in any part of Georgia. Kohi.ge will give you a house that needs no renovation and is ready to move into.

Houses built with kohi.ge technology are warm in winter and cool in summer. Most importantly, it is cheaper than a traditional concrete house and gets built quickly.

You can order 1 square meter from 750 GEL within the summer campaign of kohi.ge, but the final price depends on the wall thickness and the materials used. The average price is 1000 GEL per square meter. However, there are also higher-priced projects available within the recently launched special product Kohi.ge Premium.

Kohi.ge houses are economical, ecological and fast to build, they are energy efficient, because they require much less money to heat or cool.

Houses include high-quality plastic doors and windows (black or brown), thermal insulation in the walls, ceiling and floor, electricity, and communications.

WHY CHOOSE KOHI.GE?

According to Levan Pirtskhalava, company director: "This is our standard, one that sets us apart from everyone else. In general, our main challenge is to develop the wooden house construction industry. Unfortunately, there are no official standards in Georgia to assess the durability and quality of wooden house construction. Therefore, our company is developing its own standard, which will be developed according to the standards of construction of the most successful Canadian wooden houses in the world.

"Our houses are suitable not only for Georgian but also for European markets, which we are going to achieve from 2022. Therefore, the choice is simple - choosing Kohi.ge means choosing European quality," he says.

595808024 is the Kohi.ge hotline. The company consultants will help you select the project you want.

Given that prices for building materials and real estate are rising, if you order a house before the end of May, you will keep the old price and this summer you will already have your new dream home ready.

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Home Again Home Again

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Now that I've been driving the new car for a week or so, I can say what works for me and what doesn't. It's so much younger than my last one, a whole decade newer, and there have been many things added within the Toyota brand since then.

This camera which shows you what you're moving towards when you back up... delightful. What took them so long to get this? Maybe it's been around, in higher-end vehicles in general, a lot longer than I realize. I'm using it for the very first time and enjoying the help.

The warnings when you slip out of your lane without a turn indicator, or the ones when something right in front of you changes velocity suddenly, are interesting. The former are a bit erratic or inconsistent, perhaps especially on the very twisty roads of Svaneti, less so on straighter ones. The latter have not yet drawn my immediate attention to something of which I was not already aware, but it's also nice to know it's there just in case something happens without my noticing it first.

Cruise control I have not yet played with, though I suspect that on long highway trips I will try it out and see how I like it. Fuel efficiency, distance remaining from the fuel used and average speed updates in real-time are also something I could get used to. This car, while feeling the bumps more, is also much more efficient with petrol than my last big beast was. I shall adjust as necessary.

As my wife and I return from Tbilisi to our mountain village home in Upper Svaneti, we notice the incremental

changes to the long project to double Georgia's main east-west road even since we were here a week ago, especially the Rikoti pass bit of 60 km, currently a major bottleneck, with its huge set of new tunnels and highway bridges. This Chinese production will be a game-changer for the whole country's transport system. Here, an oncoming car sprays us with thick construction mud from headlights to tailgate, totally obliterating the whole windshield view until my wipers and water spray can scrape through it. This decoration will all dry onto the white car before I have a chance to get to a car wash in Zugdidi a couple of hours later, but never mind.

While shopping in Zugdidi, last big market opportunity before Svaneti, we are devastated to hear that one of our faithful and generous fruit sellers committed suicide in the two-month period that we had no transport of our own. Found hung up by his mother. His ormotsi (40-day memorial feast) is tomorrow. At least he had no wife or children to mourn and rage at his loss; but he was young, and his parents have to deal with this.

Then, between Zugdidi and the start of the climb to Svaneti, we come across some cars stopped opposite a body on the road, freshly hit. No blood, as we drive within a meter or so, but as the police car arrives, we see he is quite still and his eyes are open, so, probably dead. More tears to come for someone, family, friends, the one who ran into him. We'll never know the story, but it strikes us hard even as total strangers, imagining all the grief.

There was snow while we were away from Svaneti, in MAY, but thankfully all trace of it is gone from our village as we arrive, with multi-toned green hues exploding everywhere as spring's advance



proves unstoppable. The news does remind me, however, of the absolute blizzard which Edmonton and its surroundings, in Canada, experienced at the very end of May 1986 when I was still there. All snow-moving equipment had been put away until the coming winter. People mostly decided to stay home for three days instead of struggling to get to work, unless they were classified essential. I stayed put too, at my bosses' insistence. Weather is technically a chaotic system. Svaneti's rain in December

2021 and February 2022, along of course with plenty of snow, are unheard of in living memory. The road up from Lentekhi to Ushguli, supposed to reopen from May sometime through October or so, might not be navigable until July this year, some friends of mine were told. They had driven up as high as they could, but at its high points it is still firmly blocked by snow and avalanches.

We return to a cold house, outside temperature only a few degrees above freezing, and quickly plug in the heaters

and water tank. I put on long underwear under my jeans. May? May not? Maybe!

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

CULTURE

Davit Gareji: Ancient History Only a Short Drive from Modernity



View from the monastery buildings in the ancient enclave of Davit Gareji.
By Mike Godwin

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Georgia is filled with ancient historical places, so much that it is difficult for many visitors to truly see everything. It encompasses such a wide variety of terrain and climate zones. One can go from swimming on a beach surrounded by palm trees to skiing in immense snow-covered mountain ranges, only to be followed by dining at a caravanserai in an arid valley. With this broad buffet of options, many find themselves spending much of their time in transportation across the country.

For a more local delight just outside the capital, there lies a curiosity steeped in the socio-cultural and religious history of the region. The monastic complex built into the side of a mountain is an awe-inspiring experience, even for the casual visitor. As it still maintains relative popularity in the litany of places to see, travel and touring the complex is

easier than some other more hidden gems.

Travel to the complex, as with many of the sights across the country, is easy. Via the infamous marshrutka minivans, arrangements are inexpensive, though require a certain level of sacrifice of comfort. The journey typically ranges between one to two hours depending on the confidence of the driver.

The view along the way is incredibly impressive. Rolling brown and green hills that have clearly been windswept for a millennia cover the vast expanse of virtually uninhabited land. Much of the exposed rock on the windward side of these hills has beautiful variations in the rock colors. The jagged streaks of this rock gives it the impression of having been painted by a colossal brush.

Only the occasional herder, with his accompanying livestock of choice, traverses the area. A large salt-lake, and the occasional small pool of isolated water provide a rare alternative to the wild and almost treeless grassland.

Arriving at the complex, there are usu-

ally tour guides willing to translate and help with the experience. Despite this, there are opportunities to explore most of the complex unaccompanied. There are however some areas restricted to visitors, as the monks who care for the complex do indeed live on the site. The small chapels and hovels hewn into the rock of Mount Gareji are adorned with ancient Christian symbols.

The history behind the complex goes back farther than even some of the oldest locations on tourist's visit list. Constructed in the 6th century AD, Assyrian monks traveled to reinforce the expansion of a growing Christian movement in the region. St. Davit Garejeli, the leader of the thirteen monks that founded the complex, oversaw its expansion. More, smaller chapels were built on the mountainside.

At the height of medieval Georgia, the complex was the site of an accompanying village and agricultural lands. Many of the Georgian royalty made pilgrimages to the site, with one king even choosing it as his residence following his abdication from the throne. Davit Gareji survived many of the wars and violence that racked the region, including the Mongolian and Persian invasions. Despite damage to the complex and the killings of many of the clergy, it was continually rebuilt and preserved.

With the Bolshevik invasion of the country in 1921, the monastery was forced to close. The negative Soviet opinions toward religion left the complex unattended and virtually abandoned.

Given the area's arid climate and vaguely perceived similarity to the terrain experienced by Soviet forces in Afghanistan, it was used as a training area. The monastery was further damaged during these exercises, though, after much protest at the site and in the capital, the area was vacated by military forces. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union and restoration of Georgian sovereignty, the monastery complex was restored and re-inhabited by the monks.

The complex today is still a minor point of contention between Georgia and Azerbaijan. As a number of the buildings fall along the shared border, there have been several terse statements made between Azerbaijani and Georgian government officials. Despite this, the monks see this as post-Soviet undermining of the relationship between Christian Georgians and Muslim Azerbaijanis.

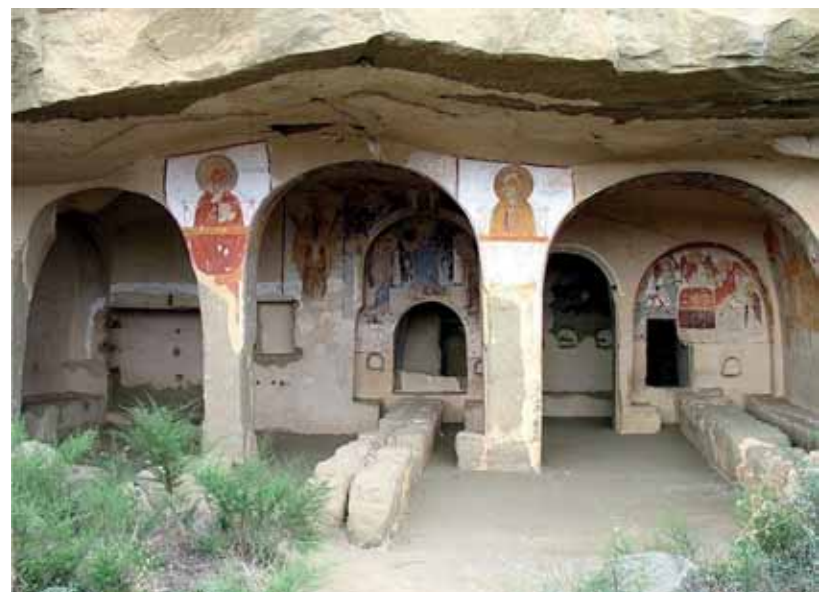
While the Georgian side has long claimed this has always been their territory, the Azerbaijani authorities propose another viewpoint. To them, the area is historically home to supposed "Caucasian Albanians," who are only some of the ancient inhabitants of what is now Azerbaijan. However, much of this history is disputed by many scholars. This is due to the numerous Georgian artworks and markings that cover the complex's structures and walls.

Despite this disagreement, the majority of the conversations regarding the complex today are agreeable. Both sides have border security positions near the

complex, but little heed is paid to them as the beauty of the preserved interior frescos and ancient cave works pull visitors' attention away. The complex is complete with its own dining area, irrigation system, and additional housing areas in the surrounding hillsides.

Upon preparation for leaving the complex, the church operates a small shop of ecclesiastical goods, religious icons, and even some wine made by the monks. Returning from the area is a reverse of the incredible landscapes seen on the initial journey. For the traveler feeling fortuitously famished, the aforementioned town of Udabno has a selection of small family restaurants and guest houses.

The total experience can be only a day, or even a few with a short stay in the quaint and comfortable Udabno. It is one that should not be missed, and can easily fit into any travel itinerary. As an unassuming but important piece of Georgian history and culture, it can satiate and impress even the most experienced globetrotter.



Georgian artwork depicting the saints, angels and history of the region in the Refectory. By Lidia Ilona

Solomon Arts Gallery Presents Budu Sirbiladze, A Versatile Creator



Budu Sirbiladze belongs to the generation of Georgian artists who confronted the official Soviet art of the late 1950s and early 1960s and has brought forward national themes in their works, as well as mastered the painting style of Western European modernist art.

Budu Sirbiladze was born in Kutaisi on January 8, 1937. In 1938, the family moved to Tbilisi. In 1952-1958, Budu Sirbiladze studied at the I. Nikoladze Art School in Tbilisi, where his teachers were Kote Kiknadze, Grand Maestro Valentin Sherpilov, and Gibson Khundadze. From 1958, he continued his studies at Tbilisi State Academy of Arts in the Faculty of Painting. There, he studied in the studio of the famous artist Korneli Sanadze, and his painting teacher was the famous artist Vasil Shukhaev. Budu Sirbiladze graduated from the Art Academy in 1964. His dissertation theme was "The Granite Quarry".

Since 1964, Sirbiladze has participated in various exhibitions: In 1965, in the Decade of Georgian Art in Hungary, and in 1966 in the Decade of Georgian Art in Montreal (Canada).

Budu Sirbiladze's work reflects the history of Georgia. The artist dedicated a painting series to the Georgian alphabet, which is one of the oldest among the 14 alphabets in the world. In particular, he created a separate pictorial composition for each letter, a painting series that is unique and inimitable in Georgian painting. Graphic series depicting the Georgian alphabet, of course, have been created by many graphic artists who have worked on the font or design of the

"Mother Tongue" - a guide to learning the Georgian alphabet. But Sirbiladze's paintings present a unique geometrical outlines of Georgian "Asomtavruli" script, which are distinguished by great accuracy.

In addition to easel painting, Sirbiladze worked in cinematography from the very beginning. In 1965, he was the art director of a short feature film by O. Abesadze.

In 1966, the 800th anniversary of Shota Rustaveli was celebrated in Georgia. Budu Sirbiladze took part in the exhibition dedicated to this anniversary. In 1967, the first personal exhibition of the artist was held at the House of Art Workers in Tbilisi. In 1968, the second such

exhibition was organized in the exhibition hall of the Georgian Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

In 1968, he became a member of the Georgian Artists' Union.

In 1970, the third personal exhibition of the artist was held in the exhibition hall of the Publishing House of the magazine "Smena" in Moscow.

In 1970, Budu Sirbiladze was invited by movie director Soso Chkhaidze as an art director for the film "Georgian Hymns". The film was a great success both in Georgia and abroad and became a laureate of many film festivals. The artist also contributed to this success.

In 1971, Budu Sirbiladze was art director of the film "The 15th Spring" by Soso Chkhaidze. The creative tandem of director Soso Chkhaidze and artist Budu Sirbiladze continued. In 1973, Chkhaidze invited Sirbiladze as an art director for the film "Shepherds of Tusheti". Sirbiladze was the artist of the first series of the film, then Givi Vashakidze and Vakh-tang Rurua worked as the artists of this film due to Budu Sirbiladze needing to work as the main artist of the Georgian Central Television in the 1970s and being short of time.

In 1973-74, Sirbiladze worked fruitfully in Borjomi. In the foyer of the Borjomi Administrative House, he created a panel on the theme "Man -the Creator". In addition, a medal of an honorary citizen of Borjomi was created based on the artist's sketch. The relief sculpture of Borjomi mineral waters "Borjomi Water" was built in Borjomi.

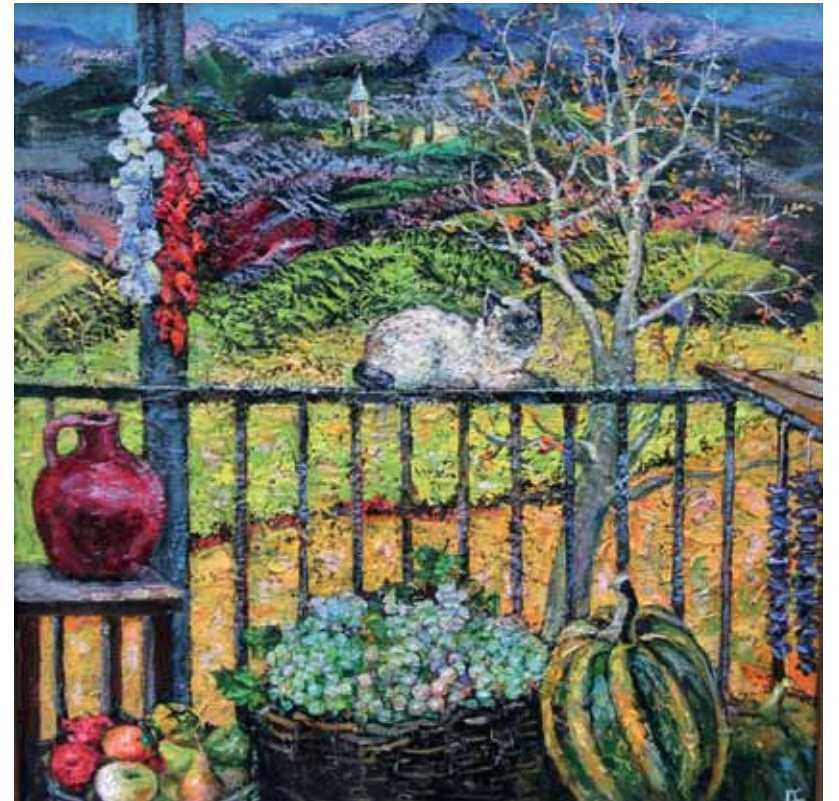
Budu Sirbiladze's fourth personal exhibition was held in 1981 in the "Artist's House" in Tbilisi. In 1985, an album of the artist's works was released.

In 1988, his fifth personal exhibition was organized in the "Artist's House" in Tbilisi.

Landscapes depicting the views of Tbilisi and the regions of Georgia are created with special skill in Budu Sirbiladze's work, illuminated by colors saturated with the scorching southern sun.

Budu Sirbiladze's sixth personal exhibition was held at the exhibition hall of the Georgian representation "Mziuri" in Moscow in 1990.

The artist participated in the April 9th



Memorial Competition as well as an exhibition dedicated to the April 9th tragedy.

Portrait genre holds a special part in Budu Sirbiladze's work. The artist created portraits of historical figures as well as pictorial compositions of artefacts related to their names, such as: the image of King Parnavaz in the series dedicated to the Georgian "Asomtavruli" alphabet, the image of Queen Tamar's magnificent golden cross (The world's oldest "living" pearls as well as natural emeralds and rubies are used in Queen Tamar's cross); a portrait of Iakob Gogebashvili, the creator of the Georgian "Mother Tongue" textbook; a portrait of the famous Georgian poet Akaki Tsereteli; a portrait of Prince Niko Buri-Bagratioti-Mukhraneli; He also painted portraits of his contemporary (deceased) public figures: Merab Kostava, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Alexander (Lali) Javakhishvili, Chabua Amirejibi, and Sergo Nadimashvili.

The gallery of the artist's portraits includes portraits of the Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, princess Ia Bagration-

Mukhraneli, the artist's wife- the artist Manana Gigineishvili and the portraits of other famous people. All these portraits are characterized by a deep psychological access to the nature and a rich, pictorial manner of depiction. Sirbiladze paints children's portraits with special love and skill.

In 1991, Sirbiladze took part in the exhibition of Georgian artists held in Austria.

In 1996, the seventh personal exhibition of the artist's works was organized at the State Art Gallery of Georgia (now The National Gallery of Georgia).

Budu Sirbiladze created models of memorials of Georgian public figures: Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava, Platon Gigineishvili, and Sergo Nadimashvili, which have not been realized yet.

In 2019, the publishing house "Griffon" published the album of the artist's works.

In 2021, an album of the artist's works "Search for Color, Line, Shape and Architecture" was published.

The depiction of the universe, space, celestial lights and their dynamics took a particular part in the artist's work. The works of these series are characterized by the variety of colors and pastoral nature.

From 1991 to date, Sirbiladze has been a member of the board of the Georgian Noble Council and the chairman of the "Royal Palette Association of Artists", under whose auspices many exhibitions of Georgian artists' works have been organized throughout Georgia.

Budu Sirbiladze is an Honored Artist of Georgia and continues his creative work with his usual devotion with his wife- artist Manana Gigineishvili in their apartment-workshop. The elderly artist works with the youthful inspiration every day from 6 am and keeps creating new masterpieces of Georgian painting.

Budu Sirbiladze's works are kept in Georgian museums, as well as in private collections in Georgia and abroad.

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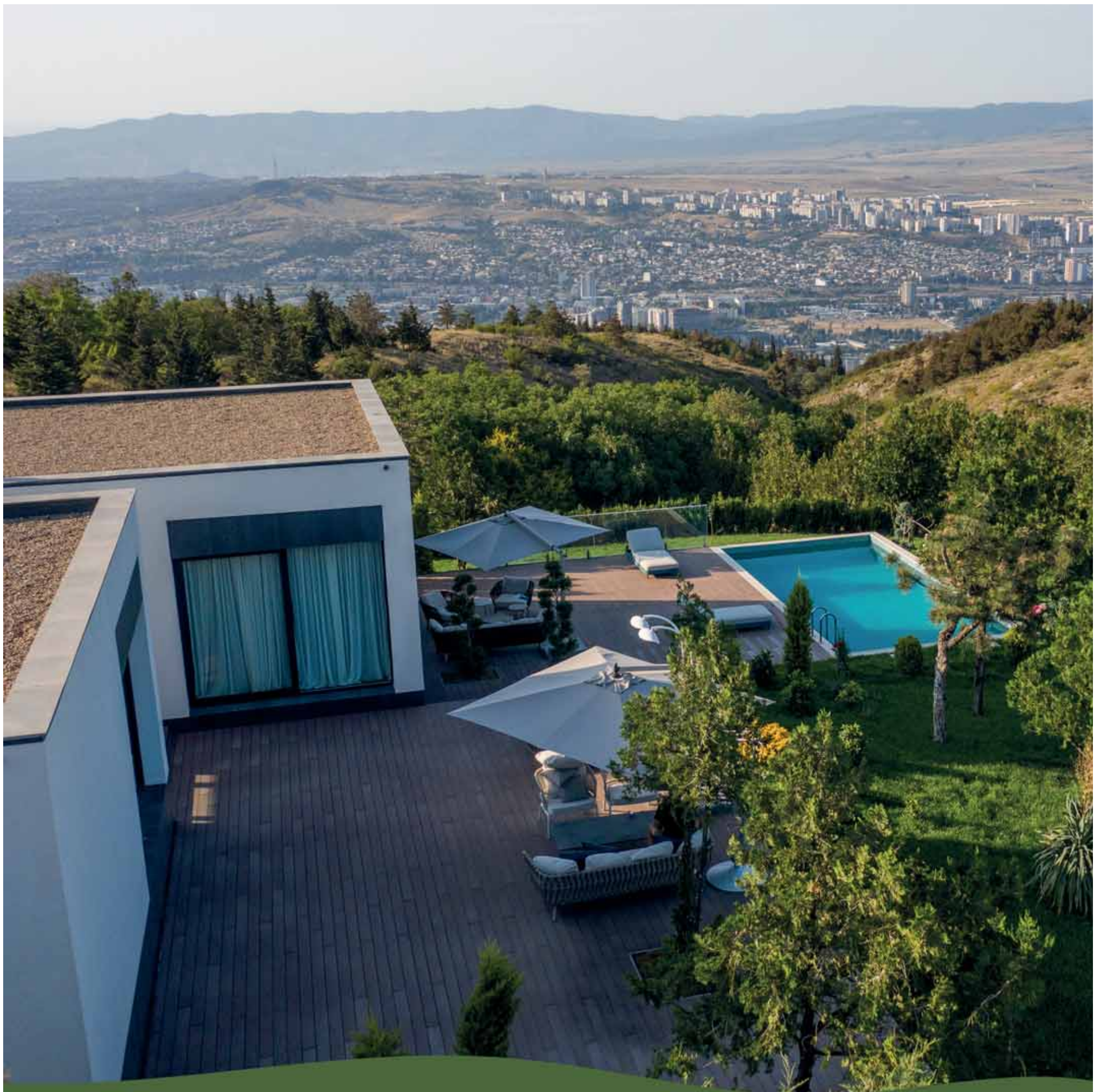
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