



FOCUS

ON DETERRING PUTIN

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Ian Brzezinski, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy

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Tbilisi Pride Week 2022 Reviewed

BY TEAM GT

Tbilisi Pride Week took place in Georgia once again, despite violent groups trying to disrupt it, and ended successfully with a festival. Tbilisi Pride members this year decided, in order to avoid public polarization and tensions during the process of European integration, not to hold the March of Dignity, and all events of Pride Week took place indoors. Tbilisi Pride Week opened with the premiere of Georgian director Elene Naveriani's film "Wet Sand."

EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell, Ran Gidor the Israeli Ambassador to Georgia, US Ambassador Kelly Degnan, and French Ambassador Diego Colas attended the presentation of the film.

Meanwhile, supporters of the far-right extremist group Alt Info gathered on Rustaveli Avenue, as well as near the offices of Georgian Dream and the European Union, where they burned the flags of NATO and the European Union and tore apart rainbow flags.

Police were mobilized on the spot. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA) released a statement condemning vio-



Photo source: Tata Shoshiashvili/OC Media

lence of any kind and calling on the groups opposing Pride Week to adhere to the law, follow the rightful demands of the police, and not to exceed the limits of the right to assembly and manifestation permitted by law. They noted that the police would act in accordance with its mandate, and each case of violation would be imme-

diately prevented and followed by a strict legal response.

On July 1, the MIA reported that opponents of Tbilisi Pride had gathered and paralyzed the access routes leading to the festival site, artificially obstructing traffic.

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Markets									
As of 04 Jul 2022									
BONDS					STOCKS				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
GRAIL 07/28	84.65 (YTM 7.22%)	+0.0%	-0.7%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 13.50	-7.0%	-16.7%		
GEBGG 07/23	98.74 (YTM 7.26%)	-0.4%	-1.7%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 6.01	+4.9%	-9.8%		
GEOPAP 03/24	95.76 (YTM 8.89%)	+0.1%	-0.9%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 12.70	-3.8%	-11.2%		
SILNET 01/27	97.41 (YTM 9.08%)	-0.2%	+0.0%						
TBC 06/24	98.70 (YTM 6.47%)	-0.0%	-0.1%						
TBC 07/25	100.74 (YTM 7.47%)	+0.1%	+0.2%						
COMMODITIES					CURRENCIES				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	113.50	-1.4%	-5.2%	GEL / USD	2.8661	-2.2%	-3.3%		
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 808.15	-0.8%	-2.3%	GEL / EUR	2.9876	-3.7%	-5.9%		
				GEL / GBP	3.4686	-3.5%	-6.2%		
				GEL / CHF	2.9869	-2.6%	-3.1%		
				GEL / RUB	0.0509	-5.7%	+8.8%		
				GEL / TRY	0.1704	-3.7%	-5.3%		
				GEL / AZN	1.7299	+0.1%	-0.9%		
				GEL / AMD	0.0071	-1.6%	+4.3%		
				GEL / UAH	0.0974	-1.6%	-4.5%		
				EUR / USD	0.9594	-1.5%	+2.8%		
				GBP / USD	0.8262	+1.3%	+3.2%		
				CHF / USD	0.9612	+0.5%	-0.1%		
				RUB / USD	56.2721	+3.7%	-12.2%		
				TRY / USD	16.8113	+1.5%	+2.2%		
				AZN / USD	1.6930	-0.1%	-0.2%		
				AMD / USD	405.7500	-0.6%	-7.1%		

Tengiz Tsertsvadze: Peak of Covid Cases Expected by Fall, Let's Get Vaccinated & Wear Masks

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Director of the Tbilisi Infectious Disease Hospital, Tengiz Tsertsvadze, says that the peak of the latest increase in coronavirus cases is expected by autumn.

Tengiz Tsertsvadze calls on the public to be careful, get vaccinated and actively use masks. He stated:

"Despite the low vaccination coverage in Georgia and the increase in new cases of Covid over the last three months, the number of Covid deaths per million inhabitants (22) is much lower than in America (98), Canada (108), and Great Britain (205), practically all, apart from single exceptions in Europe and even in countries that have traditionally had low rates of Covid cases and deaths – South Korea (135), Taiwan (262), Australia (140), New Zealand (230), Hong Kong (136), Japan (24), Israel (46), etc.

"In addition, the country has a so-called percentage of deaths among confirmed cases of Covid CFR (case fatality rate) lower than 112 countries of the world (1.01%). All this is primarily due to good management of the pandemic in Georgia,



Image: Netgazeti

including good clinical management. Georgia was the first in the region and one of the first in the world to introduce and put into practice the latest and currently the most effective medicine Paxlovid. It is in the arsenal of doctors and available to all Covid patients, along with other life-saving drugs: Remdesivir, etc. We successfully use the so-called Proactive treatment, which allowed us to minimize the number of cases of hospitalization and death among patients," he said.

"Recently, in Georgia, as well as throughout the world, there has been a significant increase in new cases of Covid. Where earlier, on average, 100 new cases were recorded per day, now 600-700 new cases are being recorded. New cases are especially common among people who have traveled abroad. Summer is ahead, an active tourist season, and we expect to see the peak of the increase in Covid cases in the autumn.

"Therefore, if we want to maintain today's good epidemic situation, we must be careful, continue active vaccination, including booster doses, and, although regulations no longer oblige us, to wear face masks in public transport, medical facilities and crowded places. Even if we cannot prevent an increase in the num-

ber of Covid cases, it is vitally important to keep the death rate at the current minimum. Everyone should take into account that with timely referral, it is practically guaranteed that the patient will not be at high risk, and, moreover, there will not be a lethal outcome. We must all learn to live and work safely in the conditions of Covid. I would like to advise all Covid clinics and "online" clinics to use Remdesivir and/or Paxlovid in a timely manner. By doing so, we will save the lives of thousands of Covid patients."

Head of the National Center for Disease Control, Amiran Gamkrelidze, said Thursday that he recommends wearing a face mask indoors. He noted that the increase in cases of coronavirus is not only happening in Georgia, but globally, and in most European countries.

"This is mainly due to the circulation of new substrains of Omicron, BE-4, and BE-5, which are characterized by higher transmissibility than their predecessors but are not more severe. Yesterday, there were 631 new cases in Georgia, today we have 756," Gamkrelidze noted.

He added that there has been an increase in new cases for 2-3 weeks. As today's data shows, 7-8% of Covid-infected people need hospitalization.



Image source: Netgazeti

PM: 14 Sanatoriums Worth GEL 50 mln on Sale in Tskaltubo

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili has announced that the government will auction 14 sanatoriums in Tskaltubo, the total value of which is 50 million GEL.

On July 5, during his visit to Tskaltubo, at the presentation of the 'New Life of Tskaltubo' project, Garibashvili stated that there were two hindering factors in the development plan of Tskaltubo for the government so far:

"The main problem was the question of ownership of water resources – the investor was a private person. On our decision to renovate them, the government officially became the owner of this resource.

"The second issue was the approval of the master plan. The plan is complete. We took into account the uniqueness of Tskaltubo as much as possible. After the 1930s, the development of Tskaltubo was carried out according to a scientifically based plan, and 22 sanatoriums were built, many of which can be said to be works of architectural art."

He noted that the government plans to start "the process of restoring Tskaltubo": "All issues have been resolved – water, general planning... Now we have 14 san-

atoriums for sale, the value of which, according to today's estimation, is about 50 million GEL, and we expect that 500 million GEL will be invested," he said, adding that 500 million GEL will be a private investment, in addition to which, "the state undertakes to invest tens of additional GEL in order to make Tskaltubo a world-class modern spa-resort, like Baden-Baden and others, as Tskaltubo has the potential for it."

He noted that 25,000 visitors visited Tskaltubo in 2019 and "this figure will increase in a few years".

The government believes that the Tskaltubo project will create more than 3,200 new jobs.

"Tskaltubo will offer its guests not only unique thermal waters, but also top-notch vacationing opportunities, an eco-friendly and healthy environment, and natural monuments distinguishing not only Tskaltubo and Imereti, but also all of Georgia," the government claims.

In 2019, billionaire ex-PM Bidzina Ivanishvili launched an initiative to "revive" the Tskaltubo resort, however, he did not purchase any buildings himself.

The construction of sanatoriums in Tskaltubo began in the 1920s, and, over time, it became a place of vacation for the working class. However, with the collapse of the USSR, the resort was abandoned. Most of the buildings are now almost completely destroyed.

Russia's Invasion Week 18: Luhansk Region almost 'Fully Occupied' by Russian Forces

BY ANA DUMBADZE

After sweeping through Luhansk, Russian forces are gaining ground in the neighboring Donetsk region. Both are part of the industrial Donbas heartland of eastern Ukraine that Moscow is seeking to control. Donetsk's regional governor is urging the area's 350,000 residents to evacuate as Russia intensifies its bombardment campaign. "The destiny of the whole country will be decided by the Donetsk region," he said.

Russian forces are about 10 miles north of the strategic city of Sloviansk in Donetsk, making it likely to be the next key battleground, according to Britain's Defense Ministry.

Luhansk regional governor Serhiy Haidai said the recently captured cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk are still reeling, with thousands of civilians now living under Russia occupation. "Overall, over 300,000 people have left the Luhansk region" since Russia's February 24 invasion, he said Wednesday. He vowed: "We will return. We will rebuild everything."

In the recently captured city of Severodonetsk, "around 8,000" residents remain, while "up to 15,000" are still in the nearby city of Lysychansk, which fell to Russia over the weekend, Haidai said.

But he added that evacuating the front lines in Luhansk was the right decision and said Ukrainian troops did a "good job." He added that the robust defense of Luhansk for more than four months also bought time for those defending Donetsk and slowed Russia's campaign in the strategic region.

Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Bakhmut are now Russia's key targets.

The latest developments include:

- The French government plans to nationalize its nuclear giant EDF amid an energy crisis exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Latvia's Defense Ministry has pro-



posed a return of mandatory military service for young men, citing the Russian threat as among the motivating factors.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to Indonesia for a gathering of the Group of 20 Foreign Ministers (G-20) this week that will focus on food and energy security. A traditional one-on-one meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is not on the agenda, according to the State Department.

BLINKEN SPEAKS TO UKRAINE'S KULEBA AHEAD OF G-20 MEETING

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba ahead of the G-20 foreign minister meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

"The Secretary condemned Russia's atrocities in Ukraine and provided updates on multilateral efforts to resolve Russia's military blockade of agricultural exports from Ukraine's ports," the State

Department announced.

Blinken also updated his Ukrainian counterpart on additional US security assistance and previewed further financial support for Ukraine.

UNICEF: NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF UKRAINE'S CHILDREN HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY WAR

The UN says that nearly two-thirds of Ukraine's children have been displaced since the start of Russia's war in late February.

"With two-thirds of the children in the country on the move, I would say every single child in Ukraine, has had their lives touched by this war. They've either lost a family member or they have witnessed trauma themselves," Afshan Khan, the regional director for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), told reporters.

Khan also said that the staggering number of schools destroyed by Russian strikes in Ukraine presents another grim challenge for child development.



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Czech Ambassador Sets Priorities for EU Council



Diego Colas (left), Ambassador of France to Georgia, and Petr Mikyska (right), Ambassador of the Czech Republic at the Czech Embassy in Tbilisi. Photo by Mike Godwin

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

As the Czech Republic, also known as Czechia, begins its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the ambassador of the country presented an outline of the Council's priorities. Czechia's second turn at the helm of the EU Council began on July 1, and is a part of the so-called "trio program." This program consists of France, Czechia, and Sweden, and was developed to deal with the aftermath of Covid effects on society and the economy of Europe.

However, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 changed many of those priorities and necessitated a fundamental reassessment of Europe's future. The incoming Czech Presidency of the Council has European security and stability at the core of its initiatives. While a "green and digital transition" of the Union's economy is still imperative, addressing the threat that Moscow poses

to the Union and the side effects of the ongoing war take center stage.

The incoming presidency has adopted a motto from Former President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel. The former statesman's vision of "Europe is a task - rethink, rebuild, repower" frames the idea that Europe is a leader in elevating values for the individual. Embracing this vision, the Czech Presidency divides its priorities into five pillars that support both the immediate concerns as well as the ongoing long-term mission of the European Union.

The first pillar is based on managing the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the future plans of rebuilding the war-torn country. Similar to the post-WWII Marshall Plan, the reconstruction of Ukraine's infrastructure and potential for European Union membership will all have to be reckoned with when the hostilities cease. This is also tied to the commitment of strengthening EU solidarity in the face of Russian aggression.

A crucial component of this is the second pillar: energy security. With much

of the Union being dependent on Russian oil and gas imports, a shift towards partnerships with more friendly and non-authoritarian nations will take place. An important cornerstone of this is the "REPowerEU" aimed at mitigating the economic and social impact of exceedingly high energy costs.

Next, the new Czech Presidency will build upon the collaborative EU and NATO efforts to fortify a holistic approach to European security. Sharing of resources and working together on enhanced cybersecurity initiatives, this will be coupled with strengthening EU industrial capabilities and implementation of NATO's Strategic Compass program.

This leads to their fourth pillar of economic resilience. A focus on deepening internal EU markets and promotion of the free market in member and partner states lies at the core of this pillar. This is amplified by accelerating the rate of economic digitization in outlying sectors of the European markets.

Finally, the last pillar aims at strengthening European democratic institutions. According to the Czech Embassy, this is about "safeguarding values of democracy, Rule of Law, media freedom, transparency, and open dialogue with citizens." The reinforcement of these pillars and the principles Petr Mikyska, the Czech Ambassador to Georgia, outlined will define the Presidency through the rest of 2022.

Geographically, the incoming Presidency will be focusing on several regions. While the development of the transatlantic partnership and ongoing defense cooperation with NATO focuses on Europe and the United States, other regions still remain within their scope. Ukraine and Eastern Europe, particularly, as Moldova and Georgia assume new guidance regarding EU membership, will likely be at the top of the Presidency's agenda.

Other regions of the Indo-Pacific and

the Sahel of Western Africa remain priorities. This is particularly important with ongoing NATO and American security concerns in these areas, and as the EU has paused their operations in the Sahel after difficulties with an alleged Russian mercenary presence complicating relations with the host nations.

The decision by the Union regarding the membership pathways for Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia will sit with the Czech Presidency as well. This mission with the Eastern Neighborhood partnership will begin with building a concrete enlargement plan for the EU. The Czech Ambassador also ensured he elaborates on the other potential member countries in the Western Balkans.

The Czech Presidency has already announced over 2,000 working groups and ambassadorial meetings that have been planned, with a significant portion of events taking place in Czechia. Additionally, already 50 meetings with other EU member states and partners with the

Presidency's leadership and 320 political events are scheduled in the Czech Republic to promote unity, partnerships, and the mission enshrined in the five pillars. In the capital of Prague, 14 ministerial informal Councils are set to take place to reflect the aforementioned priorities.

The geopolitical, economic, and security environment for Europeans has become significantly more complicated since the beginning of 2022. The incoming Czech Presidency, while they admit that their priorities are broad, remains committed to the five pillars they have laid out. During a speech at the European Parliament, Czech President Petr Fiala summed up this commitment by stating, "the six-month presidency is indeed a short time. However, I can assure you that the Czech Presidency is ready to play its role actively. We are ready to focus on an open dialogue, to seek compromises and functional solutions in cooperation with other EU institutions."



Petr Fiala (right), the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, and Ursula von der Leyen (left), President of the European Commission, after speaking in Brussels. Source: Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union

How to Get Rich: Shout about It or Work for It?

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The other day, just lazing around, the idea for a very entertaining mathematical exercise popped into my mind. I went back to all public protests and demonstrations that had taken place in this country since the soviet breakup. I added them up and multiplied the average number of participants in all the various kinds of manifestations by the average hours each person had spent there on the street. Guess what? The computed figure went up into the tens of trillions of wasted work-hours. Then, having hypothetically ruminated over the time lost, I concluded that the same protesting men and women could have sent an unimaginable amount of money into the state budget had they



Protesters waving flags in front of Georgian Parliament. Photo by Sharon De Graeve (2019)

used the wasted man-hours on building the national economy, or running their own businesses and educating themselves accordingly. Just imagine, folks, the chance for a better quality of life that has been wasted by giving preference to screams and screeches in the street instead of dedicating time to a good life and money-making fun.

Yet, it clearly feels that the people of Georgia are getting tired of this outdated model of political activity and want something new to believe in and follow. The voice of any politician, no matter how smart and experienced he or she might be, is beginning to lose its force and charisma. People are think-

ing better today than they did in the past. It has become difficult to make them believe in what was taken as truth a couple of decades ago. Internet, modern education, intensive exchange of information and accumulated political experience have had an effective toll on mass psychology and on individual public behavior. Screaming at street meetings has become so funny that it sooner entertains the public than has an effect on their hearts and minds.

The only thing that amazes me so tremendously is that active politicians don't want to understand this simple truth. People have turned from actors into viewers: They would rather watch

the circus than take part in it. Why? Because the public who has been watching the vain political jumps-out-of-skin for several decades, doesn't want to be that gullible any longer, especially because they have already been through this political thick and thin numerous times already, having followed their favorite orators for many years in hopes of being led by those glib speakers to a better future.

And if we still see the crowds of moderate size in our streets, that happens only because the generations are changing and new spokespersons are being born into the national political realm who can always earn some listeners of

their age who will naively believe that the most outspoken among them have the ability to lead, although with little awareness of the final destination. The newly born big mouths are ardent career builders in exactly the same way their predecessors were thirty years ago.

And yet not even one among those leaders with vociferous speeches tells their listeners to go and work and bring home some bacon. They only teach the younger generations how to fill the streets with hundreds of makeshift slogans and unlikely demands expressed in the vocabulary, heard by this nation thousands of times in the last three decades.

Generations have come of age in Georgia, preferring to be seen and heard in the streets and on the television rather than in their work places and the arenas of fruitful labor. Nobody points out to them that the polit-economical havens like the European family of nations has to be reached not via interminable shouting under the open skies, but through unending and tireless work, permanently heightening the productivity of labor, improving social behavior, communicating with each other in the western ethical fashion, ceaselessly imbibing the European culture and education, honestly working away on a daily basis as the job demands, by learning the manners of modern political interaction, and by recognizing once and for all that the genuine western life is within us, not somewhere beyond our talents and abilities. And conclusively, even if the Georgian government bends all the way backwards to do the assigned homework, our western dream will never come true unless we the people undertake our fair share of action, and do this before it is too late.



Our western dream will never come true unless we the people undertake our fair share of action before it is too late

Brzezinski: NATO Has Got to Start Acting Decisively

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Ian Brzezinski, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy, spoke to RFE / RL on US and EU military aid, deterring Putin, and Georgia's chances of joining NATO.

PRESIDENT BIDEN ANNOUNCED NEW US MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS TO EUROPE, WHICH INCLUDES A PERMANENT HQ FOR THE US 5TH ARMY CORPS IN POLAND, AN ADDITIONAL ROTATIONAL BRIGADE TO ROMANIA, AND "ENHANCING" ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS IN THE BALTICS. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE?

It's significant but not necessarily sufficient. What it is is a significant step forward. And certainly a major reversal of what has been the post-Cold War trend of withdrawing forces from Europe. It is still primarily a tripwire defense that they have. Those of us advocating for a posture of deterrence by denial may be a little bit disappointed with this outcome, but we have to recognize it as a step forward. I would want to know more about what the Europeans are deploying and if these forces are being complemented.

Secretary Stoltenberg declared that they're going to expand the size of the NATO Response Force. I was involved in the creation of that Force back in 2002-2004. They're increasing the size of it from 40,000 personnel to 300,000, which is a good move, adding muscle to the Alliance's deterrent posture. But there's a big difference between declarations and delivery. For decades, NATO has been questioning whether the Response Force was really ready for the full spectrum of operations to which it was committed. And that was underscored by the fact there was never a full scale exercise of the Response Force. So one thing I'll be looking for is how they are going to be monitoring the readiness levels of those forces.

I would like to have seen a permanent presence in Poland (beyond the HQ) and the Baltics. And at minimum by some West European allied forces- German, French, British, Pole, Romanian, etc. It's very important that these structural adjustments not be predominantly American contributions, but truly Transatlantic contributions for the defense of NATO's Eastern frontier.

THE NATO DECLARATION SAYS "RUSSIA IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE ALLIES' SECURITY AND PEACE". IS THAT REALIZATION COMING A BIT TOO LATE?

Late, but better late than never. If we'd this Strategic Concept five or six years earlier, we might have been better positioned in the region. And that might have actually prevented us from entering the current situation we face today, the war in Ukraine.

WE SAW A GREENLIGHTING OF SWEDEN AND FINLAND'S NATO MEMBERSHIP. HOW DOES THIS TIE IN WITH THE KREMLIN NARRATIVE THAT THEY'RE STOPPING NATO EXPANSION?

It destroys that narrative. What Putin has done is deepened the West's ties to Ukraine, which is his primary target. His second invasion of Ukraine, and particularly the brutality of the way he's applied force against Ukraine, was a profound wake-up call for the Finns and the Swedes and shaped their application for NATO membership. And it's caused a significant shift in the geopolitical landscape of Europe by taking two countries whose cumulative territories amount to almost two Germanys. It's expanded the border

between NATO and Russia by another 1000 miles. Even though the Western community controlled 95% of the Baltic Sea, because Sweden and Finland were not aligned, that sea could still be contested by Russia. Now the Baltic Sea has become a de facto NATO Lake, and it has significantly grown the Alliance's ability to defend and enhance the security of the three Baltic states.

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN STRONG-ARMED SWEDEN AND FINLAND INTO ACCEPTING HIS CONDITIONS IN EXCHANGE FOR TURKEY'S GREENLIGHT. WERE STOCKHOLM AND HELSINKI FORCED TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN VALUES AND HARD SECURITY?

No, I think it was a fairly reasonable exchange and negotiation between the two parties. Turkey is a member of NATO. NATO allies export weapons to Turkey. The US has been selling F16 and other equipment to Turkey, we were ready to sell them the Patriot system. So I can understand the Turks coming in asking, "why are we going to admit somebody into our special community with an arms ban on us?" It's a very legitimate issue for the Turks to raise. It's a little bit more complex when it comes down to Turkey's, or rather, Erdogan's relationship with the Kurds.

But it sounds like the Finns and Swedes got a reasonable compromise pounded out on this trilateral statement they've made. It's a significant step forward, bringing the accession process of Sweden, Finland into a new phase, which is potentially the ratification process. That said, Turkey still has to go through the process of ratifying and that will give it more room for further negotiations. I hope the Turks won't exploit that opportunity. But, based on Erdogan's track record, I wouldn't be surprised if he tries. In the end, I think Turkey will stand by NATO and facilitate this accession, because it's in Turkey's interests too.

THIS CONFIRMS NATO'S LONG STANDING NARRATIVE THAT THE DOOR REMAINS OPEN, THOUGH IT SEEMS MORE OPEN TO SOME THAN OTHERS.

I'm not comfortable saying that Sweden and Finland's NATO accession shows that NATO's doors are open. In fact, it raises concerns for me when these two countries, who only in the last three months applied for NATO membership, all of a sudden get fast-tracked into the Alliance when a country like Ukraine, which is a democracy and has been acting as a de facto NATO ally, as well as Georgia, don't. I remember the photographs of Georgian soldiers sitting on a rooftop under fire defending the US Embassy in Kabul- it underscored how seriously committed Georgia was to NATO and the Transatlantic community. This all also shows that the door isn't fully open, and it's a mixed signal to the Ukrainians that that their aspirations aren't as warmly embraced, particularly when they're shedding blood in defense of the West, in defense of NATO's own interests.

The right thing for the Alliance to have done this Summit would have been putting Ukraine on the membership track. Russia can't be allowed to knock a country off the NATO accession track by simply invading or attacking it. We cannot afford to give Russia that sort of veto.

As to how far down the agenda the war has plunged Ukraine and Georgia's NATO membership bids, I'm trying to balance my hopes and desire to see these countries join NATO against reality. I've been a long standing supporter of the aspirations of these two democracies. But it's clear that the conflict has made it harder for many in the West to seriously consider the aspirations of the two because they don't want to bring an ongoing war into the Alliance which would essentially trigger an Article Five commitment to war. Because this is against Russia, it comes

What we should be doing is creating an international force to go in and secure the uncontested territory of Western Ukraine

with dangerous escalatory dynamics.

In some ways, Russia's aggression has been a direct hit against or serious impediment to the aspirations of both countries to join the Alliance. In the eyes of some, would moving forward these requests further provoke Russia? I think that's a mistaken conclusion. I think our failure to respond decisively to the aspirations of these two countries has actually been provocative to the Putin ambiguity.

Putin walked away from the Bucharest Summit in 2008 feeling the West was not committed to Ukraine or Georgia, that it was an opportunity for him and his territorial ambitions. But the West has been highly animated over the last three months by the courage and tenacity of the Ukrainians. You can't turn on the news and not be moved by the sacrifices, the courage, the determination, the commitment of the Ukrainians in their battle against the Russians. Those are the fighters, people, nation you want to have in your ranks. It's underscored the validity of the aspirations of these two countries, and the benefits they would bring to the Alliance. But I have to ask, has this helped more or hurt more? In the geopolitics of today, I'd have to say it hurts more.

FOREIGN MINISTER KULEBA, AT THE DAVOS SUMMIT, SAID NATO IS "DOING PRACTICALLY NOTHING TO HELP UKRAINE." IS THAT A DESERVED CHASTISING?

Yes. NATO was not formally involved in helping Ukraine. Its engagement in Ukraine has served as a forum for very important and very useful discussions on how the West can help Ukraine, but the assistance itself has come through member countries, because some governments of NATO falsely believe adding a NATO dimension to the assistance to Ukraine would be provocative to Putin and feed his narrative. I don't know why we're worried about Putin's narrative. When the Alliance doesn't participate, formally, in support of Ukraine, it signals weakness and division. It emboldens Putin. The Alliance cannot afford to look like it's intimidated by him.

HOW DOES THE WESTERN MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMPARE WITH WHAT RUSSIA HAS?

These are systems that should have been delivered long time ago. Incrementalism has defined the West's support to Ukraine. Our economic sanctions have been incremental; our security assistance has been incremental. This stuff should have been flowing, these actions should have been taken when the Russians were marching their forces against Ukraine back in March, April, May of last year. Every so often, we add another economic sanction, but Russia is still sucking in billions of dollars every week from the sale of its commodities abroad. The EU alone has spent some \$90 billion on Russian oil and gas since the war started. That's not cutting off an economy, that's financ-



NATO Madrid Summit 2022. Source: NATO

ing the invasion of a neighbor that you're providing security assistance to. It is morally wrong and strategically short sighted. And it's perpetuating this war at the cost hundreds of Ukrainian lives every day: soldiers, civilians who are killed, maimed or displaced. And that incrementalism is characteristic of the Western strategy against Putin's hegemonic aspirations. It communicates a lack of commitment, lack of determination. It communicates a lack of unity. As a result, it emboldens Putin on to pursue his objectives even more aggressively. We've got to start acting decisively, we owe it to the Ukrainians.

IN FEBRUARY, YOU ARGUED THAT PRESIDENT BIDEN SHOULD CONSIDER SENDING TROOPS TO WESTERN UKRAINE AS A DETERRENT. WHAT WOULD HAVE THAT BROUGHT ABOUT?

It would have demonstrated the West is committed to Ukraine's security, in sharp contrast to having our ambassador, staff and military pack their bags and hustle out of Western Ukraine, a signal that showed a total lack of confidence in Ukraine, in the viability Ukraine's armed forces. It served almost like a red flag in front of a bull, encouraging Putin to move forward with his attack. If we had deployed forces to Western Ukraine, it would have demonstrated resolve and determination, and it would have complicated Putin's military planning, because he wouldn't know what those forces would really be doing. It would have helped deter that invasion. We did the opposite. We signaled fear in the face of a threatened or impending invasion.

What we should be doing is creating an international force to go in and secure the uncontested territory of Western Ukraine, making a humanitarian no conflict zone, not to fight in, but to provide a safe haven for the refugees the invasion created. The Ukrainians would rather be in Ukraine than abroad. That way, we'd ensure the territorial perpetuation of the Ukrainian state, not flirt with the idea of a captive nation, which we definitely are right now, which would be the end of Ukraine, Ukraine would be overrun by a state intent on exterminating the existence of not only the Ukrainian state, but the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian history and Ukrainian culture - that is Putin's trademark. Ask the Chechens.

Such a humanitarian safe-zone would allow the Ukrainians to more effectively concentrate their forces against the Russians. Right now, they're spread around almost the entirety of their country, and that spreading reduces their effectiveness at the fulcrum of Russia's invasion, which today is in the east.

Our failure to respond decisively to the aspirations of these two countries has been provocative to the Putin ambiguity

The West's response to Putin's nuclear threats has actually been destabilizing to international security

DETRACTORS WOULD SAY THIS WOULD BRING THE WEST INTO A DIRECT MILITARY CONFLICT WITH RUSSIA.

There is no option without risk. And the option we're pursuing today has risks, because it's allowing the Russians to grind down the Ukrainians. Even with all the assistance we provide, time is not on the side of the Ukrainians; the Russians have so much mass, and the brutality of their leader, his willingness to sacrifice his own forces, makes me concerned about what will be the long-term consequences of a continued conflict. The idea I'm proposing wouldn't involve attacking Russian forces. The decision for a Russian engagement with Western forces would be entirely Putin's. And he'd have to decide whether or not he wants to take on a far more capable force than the Ukrainians. My guess is that if he's struggling as badly as his forces are against the Ukrainians, the last thing he wants to do is start a firefight with Allied forces.

THE WEST SAYS IT DOESN'T WANT A MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH A NUCLEAR POWER.

It's not in Putin's interest to have a nuclear war. He'd be very worried about how the West will respond to that, and it would be severe, the minimum probably resulting in a significant degradation of Russia's capabilities in Ukraine. Putin could not eliminate from his calculus the possibility that the West will respond with a counterstrike against Russian territory. And why would you want to detonate a nuclear weapon in a neighboring country when the winds would just bring the fallout back into Russia? There are many reasons why such an escalation is not in Putin's interest.

The West's response to Putin's nuclear threats has actually been destabilizing to international security. This is the first time I know of where NATO and the US have decided not to engage in a particular conflict because they've been threatened by nuclear weapons. What are the lessons Putin is learning from this? He's escalated his rhetoric, and when that happens, that actually increases the likelihood of such weapons being used; we're conditioning him to believe he can get what he wants through such threats. Others, like China, are also learning of the utility of nuclear threats when it comes to the pursuit of territory. They will be watching carefully, particularly those flirting with the idea of acquiring nuclear weapons themselves.

Geo link:
<https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31931607.html?fbclid=IwAR3D50TRFoOgNXlql2BqfwGg3rLn3laVwXoRQpW02dxJeR36G6USqL2EwQ>

The War in Ukraine and Evolving Georgian-Russian Relations



Source: Civil.ge

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

Russia's war on Ukraine upended the regional balance of power. Vulnerable states bordering on Russia now seek greater support from the West to balance the Russian threat, efforts which have borne some tangible results, with Ukraine and Moldova being offered significant economic support and granted EU candidate status.

At the same time, third of the trio, pro-Western actor Georgia, has been a critical player in the EU's expanding influence in the wider Black Sea region, but as of late, the country has slipped to last place in the trio pursuing the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy course. This was evidenced by the EU's decision not to grant Tbilisi candidate status, only "European perspective," a move thought by many to be sending a negative signal to Russia. Many compared it with 2008, when Georgia was denied a Membership Action Plan at the NATO summit in Bucharest, which led to the Russian invasion in August of the same year. Credible comparisons could be drawn, but the situation presently is much more critical for Moscow, and engaging in a military and aggressive diplomatic campaign

against Georgia would bring little benefit to Russia while it is occupied in Ukraine.

Since the war in Ukraine, Georgia has maintained a rather careful position. It has not joined anti-Russian sanctions and has supported Ukraine in international fora. Tbilisi has also abstained from openly criticizing the Russian military aggression, but has shown support for the Ukrainian population through sending immense humanitarian aid and accepting Ukrainian refugees. This careful, though often criticized, position has helped Tbilisi maintain a stable economic position. It could also be seen as a signal to Russia that Georgia should not be regarded as an enemy.

Tbilisi is engaged in a classic realpolitik when, amid the shifting balance of power, it faces a revanchist Russia which could either win or be defeated. Small and unprotected states are also playing their game as the period of uncertainty continues. From Tbilisi's perspective, what would the region look like if Russia achieved its strategic aim in Ukraine? It would surely pursue its agenda in the South Caucasus, where it will try to squeeze the West out by forcing Tbilisi to abandon an openly pro-Western political course.

Georgia is also worried that there are no concrete Western military guarantees

that would cover the country's security. Thence comes Tbilisi's "dance" when it occasionally criticizes the West and wants to present itself as a sovereign state capable of defending its national interests.

Georgia's "dance" was rather well received by politicians in Russia. No public criticism against Tbilisi has been made since the war started, and a series of public statements and policy moves indicate that the Kremlin has carefully measured Georgia's position. When Anatoly Bibilov, the former leader of the separatist South Ossetia, announced that the occupied region would be aiming to join Russia, the Kremlin abstained. Similar hesitancy was reflected more recently when Alan Gagloev, the new leader, also hinted at becoming part of Russia - Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, nearly ridiculed the idea.

It is still far from calling it a tangible rapprochement, but there clearly is an emerging understanding between Tbilisi and Moscow as to what the limit to Russia's behavior is beyond which Georgia would strongly lean toward NATO and the EU. Therefore, any move toward annexing Abkhazia and South Ossetia would result in greater cooperation between Georgia and the Western alliances.

Yet, there are no illusions in Tbilisi

that Russia will be ready to make major concessions in order to widen the divide between Georgia and the West. The recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia will remain in place, and the Kremlin will try to further increase its influence in the two regions. "Borderization" will also continue, as will occasional kidnappings of Georgian nationals by separatist forces. All of this shows that the limited understanding is more of a tactical nature than a concrete long-term process. The occupation of nearly 20% of the Georgian territory will remain a major dividing point which would constrain any serious attempt to improve bilateral relations.

RUSSIA'S BIGGEST ALLY - GEORGIA'S INTERNAL POLARIZATION

Russia also sees that Georgia is not in a position to maintain the initiative in the bilateral relations for long. Internal weaknesses hamper Tbilisi's more robust foreign policy. The political parties fail to bridge the differences on critical questions of national importance. Beyond the intra-party clashes about the legitimacy of elections, there is a growing chasm between political elites and the challenges faced by ordinary people in their daily lives.

Both the ruling party and the opposition have been facing declining support from the public at large. Long-term economic problems, which have been greatly exacerbated by the pandemic, have not been credibly addressed by either side. Instead of solutions, both sides have engaged in political theatrics. For many voters, the current crisis is more about a struggle for political power than about democracy and the economic development of the country. No wonder that most people consider their social and economic human rights to have been violated for decades, no matter which party is in power. These attitudes help explain high abstention rates during the most recent election.

At the end of the day, democracy is about a lot more than finding an intra-party consensus or even securing a modus vivendi in a deeply polarized society. It is about moving beyond the push-and-

Beyond the intra-party clashes about the legitimacy of elections, there is a growing chasm between political elites and the challenges faced by ordinary people in their daily lives

pull of everyday politics and addressing the everyday needs of the people. No party has yet risen to the occasion. Georgia's NATO and EU aspirations remain a touchstone for Georgian voters, and both parties lay claim to fully representing those aspirations. But only through credibly addressing Georgia's internal economic problems can these aspirations ever be fully realized. The party that manages to articulate this fact would triumph.

Given Georgia's vulnerabilities, the Russian perspective is quite straightforward: Tbilisi is unlikely to become a NATO or EU member state any time soon. The need for rapprochement is not critical either, though, and some understanding of this is indeed emerging. The two sides are carefully measuring each other's red lines, which has led to more predictable bilateral relations over the past several months.

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

BUSINESS

Economic Council Meeting, Chaired by PM, Discusses Economic Growth

The country's economic growth in double digits, increasing export, and scaling up tourism revival dynamics were the key topics discussed on Wednesday's Economic Council meeting chaired by Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili.

The meeting underlined the country's economic situation, with focus on the continuous economic growth in double digits. In particular, May 2022 saw an 11.6% economic growth, with the growth in January-May reaching 11.2% on average.

The meeting also discussed factors contributing to the economic growth, including positive trends in local export and continuous tourism revival. The meeting pointed out that, in May 2022, export grew by 54.3%, with local export up 63.3%. In terms of tourism, the revenues from travelers in January-May were up 75.3% to make up 840.9

million USD.

While discussing tourism revival, the meeting underscored that 445,894 international guests visited Georgia in June 2022, with their numbers up 185.5% year-on-year. Also, in the first six months of 2022, the number of international tourist visits made up 1,209,272, a 186.3% increase compared to the same period last year.

The meeting at the Government Administration also discussed the positive trends in budget fulfillment in the first half of 2022, with overall revenues and tax revenues over-performed, similar to state budget earnings that made up a total of 9.1 billion GEL. Special focus was put on the fact that the combined budget deficit made up as little as 0.3%, showing that planned fiscal consolidation is well underway, with its annual statistics expected to decrease significantly by the end of this year to make up only 3.5% instead of initially forecasted 4.4%.



HeidelbergCement's New Platform BETON.Ge to Simplify Construction Process for Individuals

BY ANA DUMBADZE

According to the post-pandemic trend, construction of private houses in the suburbs and surrounding areas of Tbilisi has accelerated.

In response, HeidelbergCement, the leading construction materials producer on the Georgian market, set up an interesting platform for its potential customers: beton.ge, an online tool that allows customers to calculate concrete prices, get basic information on concrete and relevant services, chat with the sales department, and generate an invoice and start buying. The main idea is to simplify the process of concrete ordering, saving customers time and energy.

HeidelbergCement has been a trusted construction partner for Georgian customers for years. It is one of the world's largest building materials companies, the core activities of which include the production and distribution of cement and aggregates, the two essential raw materials for concrete. Their downstream activities include the production of ready-mixed concrete, and other building products in other countries.

HeidelbergCement has been active in



By launching this website, we show customers that they no longer require intermediaries to buy the concrete needed to build their homes



Georgia since 2006 and is the leader on the local cement and concrete markets.

To find out more about its new platform, GEORGIA TODAY spoke to Davit Jughashvili, Building Materials Director at HeidelbergCement Georgia, who elaborated on the platform's main idea and features.

"There is a stereotype that concrete must always be ordered by a specialist," Jughashvili tells us. "By launching this website, we show customers that they do not need 'intermediaries' in the process, and that they can find all concrete related information, calculate prices and even order directly on our website. They no longer require intermediaries to buy concrete needed to build their homes, as the website is fully tailored to their needs. The company is further setting up a dedicated team to make the interaction between potential customers and the company even faster.

"The targeted segment for the platform are individuals who plan to build a house," he notes. "With this initiative we want to show that we are focused not only on big and medium size projects, but are here to serve individuals as well. There is a misconception that HeidelbergCement is only busy with large scale projects and will not bother with individuals, which is not right. We offer high quality building materials and our services to everyone, including individuals.

"Apart from working with large, medium-sized and small companies, we've collaborated with numerous private individuals over the years; however, we only now decided to establish a separate platform to make it easier to communicate with them. beton.ge is a very simple tool. Our first goal is to let customers calculate concrete related costs themselves, which was relatively complicated in the past: a perception prevailed that the process of concrete ordering is rather complicated and special knowledge is required. As a result, they had to deal with us through their foremen or builders," Jughashvili says.

Through www.beton.ge, customers can:

- Get an overview on concrete classes and applications

- Calculate the price of concrete and delivery service

- Generate an invoice and send it to the sales department

- Get instant feedback from the sales team via chat or hotline

"It's a great tool for customers to have control over one of the main components of construction and be sure that they get high quality materials and services," Jughashvili notes.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CUSTOMER CALCULATES THEIR EXPENSES?

Once costs are calculated, customers can generate an invoice, which they can download, send to their email or have forwarded to the sales department.

Customers can choose between chat or Hotmail to communicate with the sales team. The 5-digit number 16101 is easy to dial from a cellphone. In parallel, an online chat is always available for better feedback. Our main goal is to make our products more available and easier to order. It is also important that through this new platform, customers will discover basic information about concrete that they might find useful during construction.

WHAT OTHER NOVELTIES DOES THE COMPANY PLAN?

We're expanding our geographic coverage, both for companies and individuals. Last year, we opened a new plant in Telavi, Kakheti region. This year, we added two more plants in Kakheti and Kvareli. As concrete is a very local product, those who didn't have an opportunity to buy our products can already rely on us in Kakheti.

We constantly strive to expand our network in other regions of Georgia. Currently, our plants operate in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kakheti, Borjomi, Kutaisi, Poti and Batumi. In addition, we try to align our footprint to the ongoing infrastructural projects.

To provide maximum comfort, we offer delivery, pump and laboratory services – a full system of concrete-related activities. In future, will try to improve further, while remaining as customer oriented as we have always been.

EU Lawmakers Officially Label Gas and Nuclear Energy as Sustainable

BY ANA DUMBADZE

European lawmakers voted Wednesday to move ahead with a plan to label some nuclear and natural gas power as "green" energy, a closely watched decision that could shape climate policy for years to come.

At issue is a European Union framework known as the "EU taxonomy" that is intended to guide investment toward projects that are in line with the bloc's goal to be climate neutral by 2050.

In February, weeks before Russia's attack on Ukraine, the EU's executive arm presented a plan to classify some natural gas and nuclear power as "transitional" green investments in some circumstances, spurring a furious backlash.

Five months later, as Russia wields natural gas as a weapon and the global energy crisis intensifies, legislators at the European Parliament rejected an objection to the proposal in a 328-to-

278 vote.

An absolute majority of 353 was needed to veto the proposal. If the European Parliament and member countries don't object to the proposal by July 11, it will enter into force and apply as of next year.

Greenpeace immediately said it will submit a formal request for internal review to the European Commission, and then take legal action at the European Court of Justice if the result isn't conclusive.

The green labeling system from the European Commission defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy. Under certain conditions, gas and nuclear energy will now be part of the mix, making it easier for private investors to inject money into both.

With the EU aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the commission says the classification system is crucial to direct investments into sustainable energy. It estimates that about 350 billion euros of investment per year will be needed to meet the 2030 targets.



Climate activists demonstrate outside the European Parliament. Source: AP Photo/Jean-Francois Badias

Electionville - Educational Game to Raise Civic Awareness & Participation among Students

A new educational game – Electionville – was presented by the Europe-Georgia Institute. The game, originally developed by the Swedish Institute and localized by the EGI, is a combination of innovative methods of non-formal education to raise civic awareness and participation among school students.

Electionville is an educational game allowing participants to play roles of council members and get involved in a simulated decision-making process regarding the development and well-being of their town. With support from the Swedish and the US Embassies in Georgia, the game was presented to 9 schools in Tbilisi, Guria and Shida Kartli.

The game urges students to think about important issues for their community, support their views with arguments, build consensus and find compromises. Students learn how to create political alliances and seek consensus to find solutions for the benefit of their own community.

Electionville allows school students an opportunity to easily understand how politics and self-government work, and gain an in-depth understanding of the ongoing processes in their communities.

To learn more about Electionville, GEORGIA TODAY sat down with Shalva Chkheidze, the Executive Director of the Europe-Georgia Institute.

WHY DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN THE GAME ELECTIONVILLE?

The idea to localize Electionville was born in 2021, when our Swedish friends and colleagues, Lena Andersson and Tom Nilsson, told us about the game and suggested that introducing it to Georgian public might have been a good idea. We have already been implementing the Public Sector Innovation Programme, a joint project by the Swedish Institute and Malmo University, and Electionville is an unexpected, but very welcome result of this project. The EGI also enjoys very close ties with Sweden, and our President, George Melashvili, was even selected by the Swedish Institute one of 10 SI Changemakers among more than 15 000 Swedish Institute alumni. As soon as we learnt about the game, we got in touch with the Swedish Institute and the Embassy of Sweden in Georgia, and the work to translate and localize “Archevneti” – that’s how



we call the game in Georgian – began.

WHAT DOES ELECTIONVILLE INVOLVE?

“Electionville implies simulating the activities of the city council,” he says. “While playing the game, students are split in fractions in simulated city council. During the game they make decisions on issues crucial for the city and also manage the city budget. The most important part of the game is that students spend about two hours learning and understanding self-government and local budgeting, learn how to compromise with each other and how to seek consensus for the benefit of their community. At the end of the game students have a much deeper understanding of the processes behind the city than they would have through traditional lessons, and tend to like the game much more than traditional study process.”

Electionville is a Swedish board and floor game created by the Swedish Institute (SI) to make civic education focusing on local government issues learning process more fun for students.

“The process of working on adapting and translating the game was very interesting and time-consuming. In addition to the translation, it was necessary to adjust the scenarios and vocabulary of the game to Georgian reality,” Chkheidze notes. “Another issue was how to pilot a game in a way that would be successful in school environment and our willingness to turn the game into a good resource for teachers in the future. I think that was achieved quite well because after playing with all the pilot schools

once, the game received great approval from both students and teachers.”

HOW DO YOU THINK ELECTIONVILLE WILL BENEFIT SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS?

“Modern education must respond to the relevant issues and skills of the era,” he says. “Electionville as an educational activity responding to challenges of education in modern Georgia. First of all, it teaches students in a simple way how the local council works and how the municipal budget is planned. Students understand the essence of the necessary and important issues for the city during the game and it also helps to develop critical thinking, debate, and speaking skills.”

Chkheidze believes that the most important outcome of the game is that students are left with the feeling that their place of municipality belongs to them and they should be involved in its self-government.

“I believe that with such educational resources, it is possible to create a modern educational system – which simultaneously promotes important solutions and skills and at the same time is fun for students,” noted Chkheidze.

The game pilot has been tested in nine schools so far, including schools in two regions.

Chibata Public School was the first to try it out. As Chkheidze emphasized, Lado Abkhazava (winner of the Global Teacher Prize) contributed a lot the first pilot game. Students from four schools in Tbilisi and two schools in Kaspi Municipality also tested the game.

“We are grateful to everybody who

supported the Electionville project. First of all, the Swedish Institute and the Swedish Embassy, and Swedish Ambassador Ulrik Tideström together with Tamar Datuashvili were personally and deeply involved in the project. Their contribution was immensely in the translation and adaptation of the game. The US Embassy Alumni Grants program gave us an opportunity to acquaint more schools with the game, and I would like to mention the Civic Education Teachers Forum. The Forum actively helped us in communicating with the pilot schools.

“In the future, we definitely plan to pilot the game with even more schools and provide schools with their own copies. At this stage, by the end of the summer, the game will be available to more than 15 schools and educational institutions, which in turn will help to spread the word,” said Chkheidze.

TELL US ABOUT THE EVENT THAT WILL BE HELD IN BAKURIANI.

Within the framework of Electionville, we have organized a small competition, and we are going to take the winners of the competition, about 30 students, to an EGI-organized summer camp in early July where students will learn many exciting things about engaging in civic life through a program we have created, including about 19th-century civil activists. Throughout the camp, students will also participate in many cognitive and entertaining activities. Teachers of civic education in selected schools will also be able to come to Bakuriani. EGI education specialists will show and teach

them many modern methods and activities required in the classroom.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS? HOW DO YOU SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTIONVILLE?

The EGI is involved in many different projects, but education is one of our main priorities. I am sure that Electionville will become an important and interesting educational resource to teach civic education in schools. In addition to Electionville, EGI also conducted a Social Audit pilot program at 2 schools in Tbilisi, where high-school students researched and audited municipal programs and projects. Both Social Audit and Electionville are activities focused on civic engagement and democratic skills development among students, and we will continue to work in this direction in the future.

As the President of EGI, George Melashvili, noted “Electionville teaches students to build consensus and find compromises, and these skills are crucial for Georgia’s European future. The first point of the European Commission’s Memo is that Georgia should address the issue of political polarisation, through ensuring cooperation across political parties; and when we talk about political polarization and ways how to ensure cooperation across political spectrum, games like Electionville are good not only for students, but for Georgia’s political elites as well. We consider this game as our contribution to this process, and a way to demonstrate how institutions and politicians should and can behave”.



Personnel Development and Training Programs in Today's Organization

BY SALOME KEKELIDZE

Change, growth, and development are essential requirements of organizational life. No matter how many qualified personnel are hired, no matter how accurate and optimal the selection and placement decision may be, changes in technology, economics, law, or in the social or political environment demand personnel training and organizational development from the organization.

The purpose of the training and development programs is to achieve continuous growth of employees' knowledge and qualifications, changing attitudes and social behavior to match organizational goals. Training is widely used as a coping strategy for change. These changes imply a dual responsibility: the organization must provide an atmosphere that supports and encourages change; the personnel are obliged to get the maximum benefit from the change and from the opportunities offered by the training.

If we look at training and development practices, we see that the companies with the most effective training practices are distinguished by four features: Training

and development programs are implemented with the active support of senior management; the training is part of the corporate culture; the training is related to the business strategy and goals and merges with the results; there is a comprehensive and systematic approach to training and training and retraining is carried out at all levels on a regular basis.

The potential for training and development as a means of change is quite impressive. However, the full realization of this potential rarely happens. The main reason for this is that we often pay more attention to teaching techniques than to their content. The training and development process consists of several steps, each of which will be discussed in more detail in the following section: A thorough analysis of their interaction with training and development subsystems and other systems; determining the need for training; clearly and unambiguously formulate training objectives; breaking down the training task into structural components (dividing the learning task into component components); determining the optimal sequence of constituent components; discuss alternative ways of teaching;

All existing models of planned changes include three main phases: the planning (data collection) phase, the implementa-

tion phase, and the evaluation phase. The planning phase involves identifying the necessary changes; the implementation phase is the evaluation, selection, and actual implementation of change strategies; the evaluation phase involves the systematic recording of the results of the changes; the planning phase involves identifying the necessary changes; the implementation phase is the evaluation, selection, and actual implementation of change strategies; the evaluation phase involves the systematic recording of the results of the changes; the planning phase involves identifying the necessary changes.

A further task of goal-setting is to select adequate teaching principles and environment. In the next phase, training measures and job performance criteria are established to determine what changes will occur during the implementation of the training program. The main goal of the training is to develop the desired work habits – This should never be overlooked!

The need for and importance of training should be defined concerning general organizational goals. For training and development to be as productive as possible, it must complement the rest of the organizational process: Selection, placement, work planning, and performance

appraisal. When the goals of the training are not clearly defined and the content of the training is not related to the desired behavior, the effectiveness of the training is low.

The planned change model is an ideal alternative to organizational change and development. There are two common ways to plan for change. The first – training – is the most common form of change. Indeed, all kinds of interference at the individual, group, or organizational level are accompanied by some form of training, even if it involves only the introduction and development of innovations.

The second way to apply the planned change – organizational development – is the most daring form of the mixture. Its purpose is to thoroughly transform a broad segment of the organization, or the entire system as needed, using appropriate techniques; structural reorganization; job updating; selection; placement; etc.

Training is defined as systemic change in the behaviors of members of the organization, any process that serves to increase the productivity and efficiency of the organization. The goal of any training is to change personnel according to the goals and interests of the organization.

Training plays an extremely important role and is gaining in significance. Accord-

ing to one estimate, in the future, firm managers will be forced to retrain their employees several times over the course of their careers. It is estimated that as far back as 1975, \$4 million was spent by business organizations on external training and \$1.6 billion on internal organizational training. Naturally, these data have grown significantly since.

The key issues of training and development are: building a training program; training theory and principles; and specific training techniques, their strengths, and weaknesses. Training programs have become the subject of research in industrial and organizational psychology.

It is necessary to analyze the organization, determining the goals of the organization and the extent of their achievement. The purpose of the organizational analysis is to link strategic planning with training outcomes to determine if training a suitable way to solve the problem. Clarifying the organization's climate is also useful for such analysis. If the organization is weak in any area, the question should be asked as to whether it is possible to solve the problem through training. An organizational analysis should not be limited to current problems and should be able to anticipate potential problems so that, through training, you can avoid them in the future.

EU and CENN Work to Increase Civil Society Organization Capabilities



Sigrid Brettel, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Georgia, opens with remarks to the attendees of the kickoff event. Photo by Mike Godwin

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Georgia's outlying regions are largely still developing when it comes to social support programs, youth development initiatives, and financial support structure for their municipalities. This has been further complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic and efforts to raise community standards and promote human rights. With this as the core of their mission of outreach and monitoring, one organization has made it their goal of engaging with Civil Society Organizations.

Organization CENN, with the support of the European Union, has launched a new initiative aimed at bolstering the effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The project, titled 'Empowering CSOs to Promote Inclusive and Green Post-Covid Recovery,' has three primary outline objectives;

- Capacity building of civil society organizations;
- Strengthening participatory democracy practices at the local level;
- Financial support for local initiatives to improve social services.

The program is set to go through to early 2025 with a budget of over €1.1 million.

Focusing on the two regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, the project is aimed at improving social services and building bridges between community leadership and the people in these outlying regions. The four-year project is based on a baseline of data taken from the aforementioned areas through interviews and surveys of both community members and leaders.

This baseline established the current situation of social services, the engagement of CSOs in the affected regions, and where resources may be best invested. Iago Kachkachishvili, a research team leader, presented his findings based on Context Analysis research concerning



The program is set to go through to early 2025 with a budget of over €1.1 million



social services and civil society. According to this research, several areas of focus were examined.

This data consisted of 600 adults in both regions for a total of 1,200 interviews of community members. This also included eight focus groups, with both Georgian and non-Georgians involved as both regions contain Armenian and Azerbaijani ethnic populations. Separately, 17 expert interviews were conducted with local officials and leaders.

In short, Iago explains that the expert analysis and population perceptions are in line with predicted outcomes, but the data deserves a deeper examination. One note, he states, is that there is insufficient awareness of social programs by the public. This is particularly worse with ethnic minorities due to language barriers with non-Georgian speaking populations and documentation or official notices not being in an understandable language.

This has resulted in a low participation in social services. According to the data, 75% of people surveyed in Kvemo Kartli and 88% in Samtskhe-Javakheti did not participate in social support and development programs. The majority of the usage that did occur were one-time support payments, potentially due to a lack of explanation of the bureaucratic process to those that may be interested.



There is insufficient awareness of social programs, particularly among ethnic minorities, due to language barriers when documentation or official notices are not in an understandable language



Another point made during the interviews was the application process for these social benefits. Interviewees explained that the process seems complicated and overly burdensome for the perceived benefit. This was largely due to a fractured communications framework between the municipalities and the residents, Iago explained. This lack of contact and potentially trust is of particular focus for the program.

The contact between the two entities was another stark figure to note. 83% in Samtskhe-Javakheti and over 80% in Kvemo Kartli said they had no contact with local government officials. While some of this may be due to a lack of genuine need, the trust levels surveyed may explain the reason for these numbers. When asked about their satisfaction with the performance of local officials, Samtskhe-Javakheti residents polled at 48% approval, with Kvemo Kartli residents only at 30% approval.

These figures about awareness and engagement paint an interesting picture and outline the need for CENN in these regions. With this baseline data, they explain that by mobilizing community institutions into a CSO-led coalition will revitalize these regions. A "Regional Social Service Alliance," together with additional

partnerships with like-minded organizations, is structured to offer these social and healthcare initiatives to the residents, particularly women, youth, disadvantaged, excluded, and marginalized groups.

In addition to these, the establishment of special programs will aid in the bolstering of the infrastructure of support in these regions. Youth Professionals Program (YPP), special development and training courses for target partners, international study programs, and various women's civic activity groups will mobilize these residents to become more active members in their local communities and more robust participants in the local democratic scene.

CENN's Human Rights Based Approach (RBA) is at the core of their logic when launching this expansive endeavor. The outlying regions of Georgia's more rural communities have had to rebuild and repair much of their community infrastructure in a post-pandemic environment. Along with local leadership, existing community support organizations, and the backing of the European Union, CENN has built a framework to address each of the aforementioned areas of note to bring social services and assistance to these affected communities.

The Road Arrives: Etseri, Svaneti



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

We are all used to our fixed travel surfaces being static while we move. This is normal in most situations, earthquakes being a major exception. Rivers and airways aren't static, so that counts them out. But our roads and paths just lie there for our pleasure. Except when they are first being built, or renovated.

After a long time of waiting and rumors, last summer saw the beginning of the complete renovation of the main road through Etseri, running right past our house. While this won't be asphalted, like the one through neighboring Becho, it will consist of steel rebar grids in a concrete matrix, over grading and gravel. Last year the workers started from the top of the village and completed a section to within 1km of us; now, delayed by much rain but pressing on at last, the new road has reached the house. This evening I will be instructed to move my

car out of the yard to keep access to it for the following 3 days or so while the cement dries.

I have had plenty of time to observe the whole process of improving our terribly bumpy, washboarded hard clay road into its new incarnation. First, they dig and cement water channels lengthways, either on one or both sides of the old road. They add crosswise, slightly diagonal cement channels next, usually above houses like ours, to further carry water from rain or snow melt towards the river. (Our channel has already prevented almost all of the usual spring flooding of our yard this year by redirecting water elsewhere.)

They also put in large cement pipes and crossings where it's necessary for vehicles to go over the lengthways waterways. Then they grade the old road with a large digger, smoothing it out, taking off the high points and filling in the low ones. This is already a vast improvement for drivers. Large gravel goes on top of that, adding regularity.

Next, wood plank sides to contain the thick liquid concrete (cement, sand, gravel and water). The grid squares of

rebar, a few meters on a side, go down on the waiting surface, and finally the concrete, from a large mixer truck coming all the way from Mestia, closest such supplier, 30 km away. Once this dries, the side planks are removed and taken downhill to be reused.

We're not going with a camber, the slightly convex road surface, higher in the middle and lower on the edges, which serves the useful purpose of helping water reach the side channels. I don't know why; it might be a budget-breaker, or there might be a technical reason for not using it. I'm quite content with what we have and are getting, though. I don't NEED the rustic look of a bumpy clay road in the village!

A vital step is the smoothing of the newly-poured concrete. This is done first by a machine-powered heavy steel bar apparatus moving its way slowly downhill, perpendicular to the road length. A man at each end of this is harnessed to it by strong straps, and together they pull to keep it straight. Other men do final smoothing by hand, one with a flat tool to which he adds long handles for extension. They do a few tens of meters at a time, dependent on number of men, amount of concrete and its drying time in the finally hot sun. The last finish gives fine horizontal lines, applied by a long-handled stiff brush.

We also will have to see how the road edges will be softened a bit from their current right-angle hardness and height above the softer and lower shoulders of the road. It will be necessary somehow to drive between the two surfaces when one meets another vehicle; the road mostly isn't wide enough for two normal-width cars to pass one another easily without resorting to the shoulders, and we don't want too much height difference when doing so.

Time will be the big tell, as far as long-

term quality goes. The ravages of repeated winter melts and freezes can be hard on such roads, as the main road through Svaneti, of identical construction, bears out. Of course, that road also has to suffer rock fall bombardment from above, and much more and heavier traffic than ours. So we hope that its quality will suffice for many years to come. We HOPE.

My own eyes, untrained but still seeing, have observed in recent years brand new roads being laid, including asphalt, in certain larger mountain towns of Georgia, and ALREADY being ruined during the construction process, and roads a year old but already so potholed that their making was a complete waste of time and money. Asking one of our road guys here, I got the answer that they never should have used asphalt in such places, should have known that it would not work.

How much of the budget for these follies went sideways into the pockets of local politicians or work supervisors? The sight and experience of driving on these roads simply infuriated me; what must it be like for people who live there

and have to use them daily? I dare not think that we will have such issues here; at least everyone knows that I record and write about such village infrastructure processes as I can firsthand. There must be accountability. They also tell me that concrete and rebar are a much better choice for our location; that the nice asphalt road through about 5 km of Becho was a mistake; and that our road should last 2-3 decades, barring catastrophes.

Anyway, here comes the road. Our concrete load will arrive within the hour, and I'll be on hand for the photos. Then, you'll be welcome for a smoother traveling experience than you will ever have had in Etseri.

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



Tbilisi Pride Week 2022 Reviewed

Continued from page 1

"As a result of the mentioned, the law enforcement officers called on rally participants on the site to clear the roadway. The police also instructed them to continue the protest in a place where they would not interfere with or violate the rights of other citizens. Late at night, despite the warning of the Ministry, participants of the gathering did not obey the legal request of the police and offered resistance to police officers. Therefore, the police applied proportional force in accordance with the law and arrested 26 people based on Articles 173 and 166 of the Code of Administrative Offenses," stated the Ministry.

Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan, thanked police officers on site for providing for public safety.

"The United States affirms that all human beings should be treated with respect and dignity and should be able to live without fear no matter who they are or whom they love. As we honor the resilience of LGBTQI+ people, who are fighting to live authentically and freely, we reaffirm our belief that LGBTQI+ rights are human rights," she stated.

Ambassador of France to Georgia, Diego Colas, thanked Tbilisi Pride for celebrating freedom and fundamental rights and also thanked the police force for the excellent service and security at the event.

Pride Week ended with Tbilisi Pride Fest 2022. The festival opened in the afternoon on July 2 and lasted until the morning of July 3. Festival guests had the opportunity to listen to music, and see drag shows and dozens of performers.

Among the messages of this year's festival was solidarity with Ukraine.

Several thousand people attended Pride Fest.

Irma Chkheidze told OC Media she was very happy to be able to participate. "I am in a great mood. I feel like everyone here is creating a large island of



July 2021. Source: IPN

freedom, which is very important," she said. "Each person is representing their own individuality, which ultimately gives us a very colorful, diverse, and free society."

"Tbilisi Pride Festival is way more than an amazing night. It's our way to fight for equality, freedom and love. Our action is against hatred. This is our way to catch a breath in this unjust and unequal fight, to heal, recover, and support each other," stated the organizers.

DRI: A YEAR ON SINCE JULY 5, 2021 VIOLENCE, ORGANIZERS HAVEN'T BEEN PUNISHED

The Democracy Research Institute (DRI) this week presented the interim findings of its study of far-right groups and their activities.

The report is presented in three parts: media monitoring of far-right groups, rallies of homophobic groups, and judicial monitoring of the July 5, 2021 violent events.

The director of the Institute, Tamar Khidasheli, said that despite the fact that one year has passed since that July 5 event, the perpetrators have not yet been punished and the activities of ultra-right, pro-Russian groups have intensified.

She noted that as a result of the study, it was revealed that in some cases the

messages of the ultra-right, pro-Russian groups and the government coincide with each other.

"We are monitoring the activity of far-right pro-Russian groups on social media and we are also monitoring their rallies, we have also been monitoring the ongoing court proceedings related to the violence that occurred on July 5, 2021. As a result of this monitoring, it became clear that a year has passed since the violence, and yet the organizers of the violence have not been punished, despite it being proven by trial that there is evidence that the violence was indeed organized. Instead of taking proper procedures against these groups, they have strengthened, transformed into a political party, opened regional offices, and managed to mobilize financial resources.

"On observation of social media, unfortunately, in some cases, the messages of the far-right, pro-Russian groups, and the government overlap. This is especially noticeable when far-right groups talk about the opening of a second front in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war: we have also heard the same from government officials. It is a pity that their messages coincide with each other," Khidasheli said.

The attacks were committed by right-wing groups on July 5 and 6, 2021, in an

effort to prevent the Tbilisi Pride March from taking place. The attacks targeted civic activists, community members, and journalists who were peacefully exercising the rights guaranteed to them by Georgia's Constitution. The mobs went largely unchecked by authorities as they attacked citizens and also broke into and vandalized the offices of the Shame Movement, the Human Rights Center, and Tbilisi Pride, and attacked a long-term opposition tent protest outside of Parliament.

Following the violence, TV Pirveli cameraman Lekso (Aleksandre) Lashkarava was found dead in his home, though the official investigation concluded that the reason of his death was drug overdose.

PRIDE WEEK 2022: A POTENTIAL STEPPING-STONE FOR ENHANCING LGBTQI+ RIGHTS PROTECTION IN GEORGIA

A joint statement was issued by the United Nations Development Programme, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Embassies of Georgia of Czech Republic, France, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States:

We, the undersigned development partners, welcome the successful completion of Pride Week 2022. We congratulate the organizers, Tbilisi Pride and other community organizations, and express our solidarity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) communities and support their right, as citizens of Georgia, to exercise their Constitutional rights without fear.

We acknowledge that marking Pride Week is still connected to safety risks and other stressful situations that many have to live through on a daily basis. It is our sincere hope that this year's successful holding of events marks a step forward in protecting the rights of

LGBTQI+ persons, including their right to freedom of assembly.

We express gratitude toward the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police for their successful work in maintaining public order and ensuring safety during the Pride Week events. We appreciate the involvement of the Administration of the Government of Georgia in the coordination and preparatory process.

By protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, the state stands up for ensuring basic human rights protection for all and the building of an inclusive society that embraces diversity and empowers and protects all people, with no exception. We encourage further steps to be taken by Georgia to reinforce its national commitments in the human rights area, including through the adoption of a robust National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan.

A growing number of Georgian citizens welcomes diversity and believes that the protection of LGBTQI+ rights is important. It is vital for state policies and practices to embrace this social trend, align with Georgia's international commitments and ensure that every citizen can enjoy due protection of their human rights and liberties regardless of disability, religion or belief, national, ethnic or social origin, sex, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other grounds.

In this context, we also remind the Georgian authorities of the need to properly follow up on the events of 5 July 2021, including the full investigation and prosecution of the instigators and organizers of violence.

We remain committed to supporting Georgia to further enhance the protection of LGBTQI+ rights, prevent and combat discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ communities, and strengthen the social protection of vulnerable LGBTQI+ persons by providing housing solutions and improving access to employment, education and healthcare.

Art Agency Presents Brian Dailey's Oeuvre for the First Time in Georgia: Exhibition TO LOOK IS TO THINK



The project addresses questions about democracy, diversity, identity, and stereotypes. '14 Stations at the Crossroads' is a narrative of the artist's journey and a portrayal of the decisions that helped define his identity and character.

The central focus of this exhibition is the series WORDS, the artist's seven-year investigation into the impact of globalization and its effect on key human structures of language, society, culture, and environment. WORDS MULTIMEDIA is a time-based art and engages the viewers in present day issues while invoking a communal sense among global citizens. In WORDS on WORDS, distinct single-word responses are layered in an immeasurable array of colors enhanced by the lenticular 3D effect. Interjecting his voice in a collaborative manner with the project's participants, Dailey creates iconoclastic yet playful statements reminiscent of Dada and Surrealist word play.

Dailey's project, which took him to 120 countries and all seven continents, seeks to discover the humanity at the heart of a baker's dozen of crucial social concepts: Peace, War, Love, Environment, Freedom, Religion, Democracy, Government, Happiness, Socialism, Capitalism, Future, and United States.

The finale of this exhibition is the popular video Jikai, which was projected for a month on all the screens of Times Square, NYC, in 2013. Like the moth drawn to the light in this video's hypnotic dance with death, we are all irresistibly attracted to danger despite knowing its potential for negative consequences. Making an allusion to Shakespeare's line in 'The Merchant of Venice, the moth in Jikai is a metaphor for human self-destruction and its fluttering around a light bulb is a meditation on societal disintegration.



BIOGRAPHY:

Perhaps no word better characterizes Brian Dailey (b. 1951) than polytropos, the first adjective Homer applies to Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. Translated from the Greek as "well-traveled," "much wandering," and, in a more metaphorical sense, as "the man of many twists and turns," polytropos suitably describes Dailey's life journey and its many peregrinations.

As a student at Otis Art Institute (MFA, 1975) and in his ensuing art career in Los Angeles, Dailey participated in the pioneering creative experimentation defining the prolific artistic milieu in California in this era. His early career launched him on a path that—before bringing him full circle back to his roots as an artist—took him through a twenty-year interlude working on arms control and international security. These unusual experiences, which he approached with the

same curiosity that has driven his current work, provide a fertile source of inspiration in his idiosyncratic and individualistic creative practice.

Based in the Washington DC metropolitan area and Carmel, California, Dailey is an artist whose work in a range of media, including photography, film, installations, and painting, draws on his multifaceted life experiences. His conceptual and performance based art expands the parameters of the mediums in which he works, defying easy categorization. Engaging with the social, political, and cultural issues of our times, his work is informed by his unusual background and unconventional evolution as an artist.

From June 30, 19:00 at Zurab Tsereteli Museum of Modern Art
Curated by: Stephan Stoyanov
The exhibition will last until August 25.

Brian Dailey's work for the past 20 years has focused on the social, political, and cultural issues of our times. From cosmic imagery to global engagement, conceptual works to visual riddles, military-industrial tableaux to socio-video collage; his art seduces the viewer by its beauty and only then is that person confronted with the serious issues of our times. In the artist's own words, "My art is about stories. I'm a chronicler of people's stories, what they say about themselves, the world, and life. I observe, I listen, and then I create."

This exhibition of Dailey's work brings together several different series from

2010 to the present. He draws upon his singular and quite unusual background to develop conceptual works that include portraiture, performance, video and words; while conveying an overarching theme of how language in all its nuanced forms becomes critical to communication.

The exhibition traces his personal research starting from his seminal work, titled 'America in Color' through the autobiographical series '14 Stations at the Crossroads'. Amidst the cacophony of the bitterly polarized political environment in the United States, the artist embarked on a multifaceted two-year endeavor of photographic portraiture.



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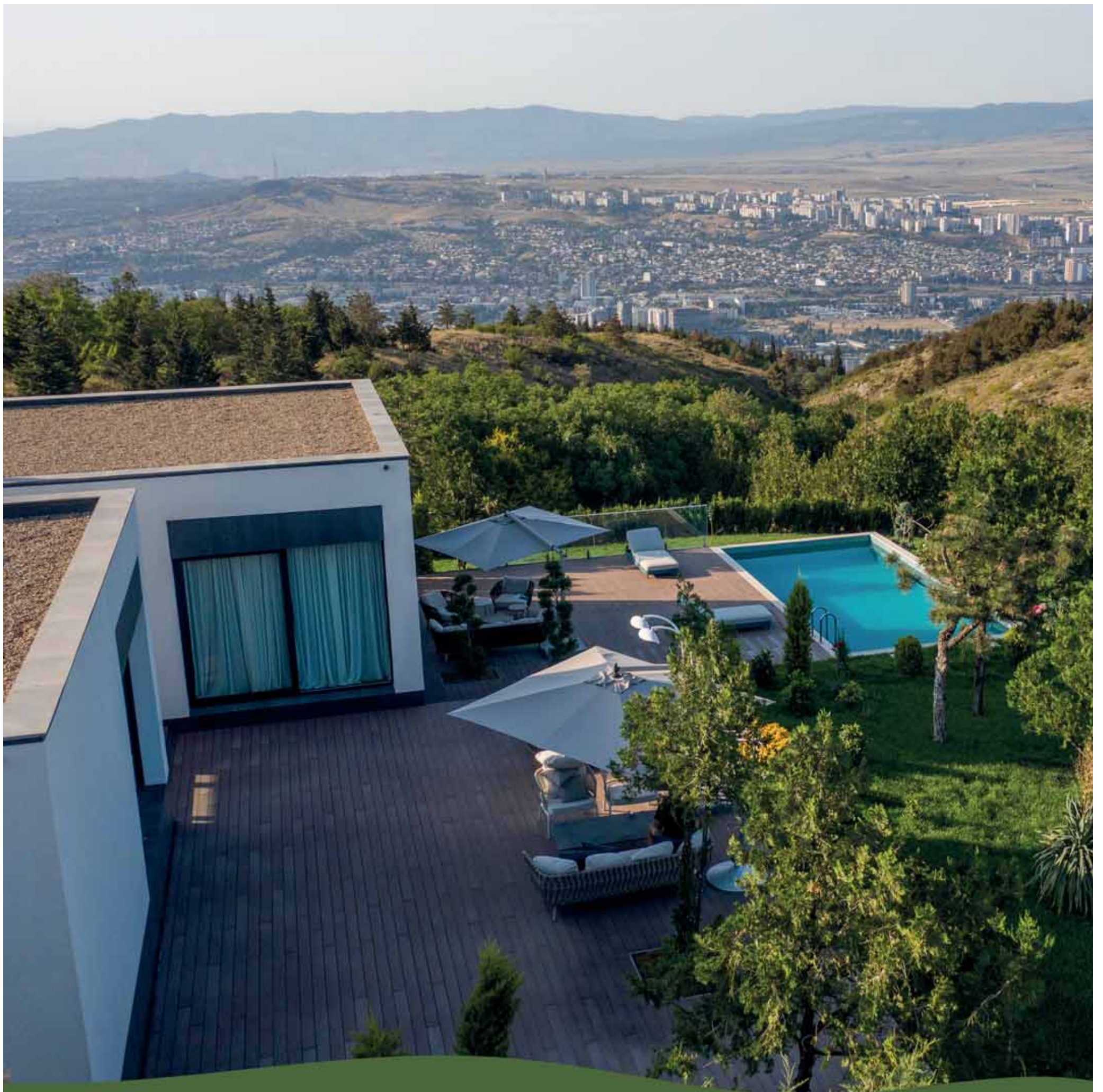
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